statuSQuaestionis
language text culture

Tom Vanassche
Independent Scholar

Screaming silences. Screen Memories and Postmemories of the Resistance and the Shoah in two French Contemporary Novels

Abstract

If the memory of the anti-fascist Resistance has served as a screen memory for collaboration and colonial violence, recent postmemories and the polemical debates they arouse are equally marked by telling silences. In this article, I analyse two contemporary French novels in which the memories of the Resistance and of the Shoah are entangled: Laurent Binet's *HHhH* and Yannick Haenel's *Jan Karski.* Nevertheless, these novels and the polemics in which they find themselves are still riddled with screaming silences concerning collaboration. These questions will be discussed alongside the novels' conscious use of fictionality as a metacommentary on processes of commemoration.

> *Detail is salient. [...] Silence is less obvious. One must be aware of it before it yields its information.*
> Raul Hilberg (2001, 160)

1. Introduction

If anything, the commemoration of historical and traumatic events is as much about what is not being communicated as about what is. In this paper, I will use the concepts of screen memory and postmemory to read two contemporary French novels, in which the memory of the Shoah is closely linked to the memory of the Resistance: Laurent Binet's *HHhH* provides this link through the figure of the perpetrator, while Yannick Haenel's *Jan Karski* (2009; transl. *The Messenger*, 2011) does so through the eponymous resistance fighter. While I pay specific attention to the silences these novels perpetuate, I also argue that tension between fiction(ality) and the historical account is created to fill the gaps of silence often found in postmemories. To be sure, the polemical potential of both novels, which hinges on the 'ownership' of the story rather than on the story itself, paradoxically creates an additional silencing. Before delving into these

analyses, I briefly sketch the historical background of the commemoration of the Resistance and the Shoah and the theoretical concepts of screen memory and postmemory, paying special attention to the advantages and the risks of the concept 'beyond' the 'second generation.'

2. Resistance as screen memory

If one looks at the early metanarratives surrounding the Second World War, one notes – at least in Western Europe and in Italy, but potentially elsewhere as well – a central role for the domestic Resistance against the Nazi occupation and its Fascist allies in France and Italy. Pieter Lagrou notes that these Resistance narratives served as relegitimization for the Belgian, Dutch, and French nation-states after years of collaboration and the liberation *manu militari* by third parties: "[r]esistance was crucial to the formation of a national epic. 'Being liberated' was too passive a mode to celebrate the recovery of national independence, and gratitude is a weak basis for national identity. For the three countries concerned [Belgium, France, the Netherlands], glorification was the only basis available for a true national myth" (2000, 26). Lagrou maintains that the memory of the concentration camp was a suitable compromise for the deportation of the Jews and of the resistance fighters (199). Dan Diner disagrees and notes that these memories were asymmetric in the first post-war decades: the commemoration of the Resistance, especially of the fighters deported to the concentration camps, was much more prominent than the commemoration of the Jewish victims deported to Birkenau and Sobibór (Diner 2007, 79-80). Alain Resnais's highly-acclaimed *Nuit et Brouillard* (1955) has been criticised for rendering the fate of the Jewish deportees nigh-invisible, lumping all deportees together in one undifferentiated group (Wilson 2006, 26–27; Dreyfus 2006, 43–44). This asymmetry may be explained with the concept of the screen memory: a memory that serves to "cove[r] up a traumatic event – another traumatic event – that cannot be approached directly" (Hansen 1996, 311). Such an understanding of 'screen memory' applies neatly to metanarratives about *the* memory of the Shoah, *the* memory of colonialism, *the* memory of postcolonialism. For the French context, the memory of the Resistance thus justifies the reinstallation of the French Republic as a nation-state, despite the unsettling and confusing Nazi occupation and the Vichy regime. The role of the Resistance, often exaggerated from a military perspective and presented in a Manichaean fashion, not only promotes active Resistance over passive victimhood (a binarity which is

admittedly problematic) but it also serves as a double screen memory: it allows precisely to cover up the complicity of the Vichy regime (*l'État français* as opposed to *la République française* in exile) and of individual collaborators.[1] Moreover, it deflects attention from the war in Algeria.[2] Dan Diner notes how, in an uncanny fashion, 8 May 1945 signifies in Algerian history and memory not (just) the victory over Nazi Germany but also the day of the Sétif massacre, during which the French military opened fire on a celebratory crowd flying the flag of the Arab independence movement (2007, 64–66). During the subsequent Algerian War, French soldiers did not shy away from torture methods or illegal executions, *inter alia* in the form of the infamous death flights.[3]

Perhaps such a broad understanding of "screen memory" is somewhat reductive when applied to literary criticism: it risks disregarding the complexity of literary texts and their reception. Michael Rothberg's re-reading of Freud results in his focus on screen memories as *revealing* what has been suppressed (as much as hiding it), adding the necessary nuance for the analysis of particular texts (2009, 13–14). Thus, in his use of the concept, the silence is never mute but speaks volumes, especially in the politics of representation and its concurrent violence.

3. The shift in the conceptualisation of postmemory

While public commemoration may have focused on the Resistance in the early post-war decades, the Shoah was – of course – remembered and commemorated by the survivors, often within their families. Indeed, the boom of memory studies can be explained by the publication of "artworks, films, novels, and memoirs, or hybrid 'postmemoirs'" by artists and writers who belong to the so-called "second generation" – a term that Marianne Hirsch, too, puts in quotation marks (2012,

[1] That this complicity was hushed up is clear by the censoring of *Nuit et Brouillard*. The presence of French gendarmes guarding Jews at the Pithiviers concentration camp was censored (Dreyfus 2006, 38; Wilson 2006, 25). What remained in this nonetheless fascinating documentary film is a narrative of suffering at the hands of sadistic Germans in the concentration camps – causing the German ambassador in France to ask for the film to be removed from the Cannes Film Festival programme, which in turn caused outrage in the French press (Dreyfus 2006, 38–40).

[2] Indeed, the censoring of *Nuit et Brouillard* sat very uneasy with its director, who was committed to the anti-colonial and anti-torture movement in France (41). Resnais would, along with many of the French intellectuals situated on the Left (including erstwhile deportees), sign the Manifesto of the 121 in 1960.

[3] The French government is only slowly starting to admit the use of torture and extralegal execution: not before September 2018 did a French president do so.

3) – and which thematise the omnipresence of the parents' memories of the Shoah in the familial setting as opposed to the public (and relative) silence (1997, 22). Hirsch, herself a member of this 'second generation', labels the transmission of traumatic memory within the family context as postmemory, which "describes the relationship that the 'generation after' bears to the personal, collective, and cultural trauma of those who came before – to experiences they 'remember' only by means of stories, images, and behaviors among which they grew up. But these experiences were transmitted to them so deeply and affectively as to *seem* to constitute memories in their own right" (2012, 5). While Hirsch has originally favoured the familial context for establishing and describing the transmission of trauma between generations, she has more generally broadened her concept to denote "a *structure* of inter- and transgenerational return of traumatic knowledge and embodied experience. It is a *consequence* of traumatic recall but (unlike posttraumatic stress disorder) at a generational remove" (2012, 6). This broadening has been at times intensely criticised as risking the blunting of the analytical edge of Hirsch's concept (cf. Beiner 2014, 298–99). But it is not hard to see why Hirsch has opted to broaden her concept: it always contained a tension between two generations and between the private practices of commemorating and their broader dissemination in the artistic and literary works of the 'second generation'.[4] Moreover, apt though it already was for the commemoration of other instances of structural political violence (genocidal and otherwise), Hirsch responds to newer conceptualisations of memory, such as Rothberg's multidirectional memory, which led her to "explor[e] affiliative structures of memory beyond the familial" and to "see this connective memory work as another form of affiliation across lines of difference" (2012, 21). Indeed, her theorising of postmemory was inspired by hearing Toni Morrison read from *Beloved*, suggesting productive links between the memory of slavery and the memory of the Shoah – very much in line with Rothberg's multidirectional memory (11).

So now Hirsch distinguishes between 'familial' and 'affiliative' postmemory. While the first corresponds to her earlier conceptualisation of postmemory, 'affiliative' postmemory is "an extension of the loosened familial structure occasioned by war and persecution" (36). One way of rendering this extension hermeneutically useful would be to ask how the family is figuratively reconfigured, but perhaps another way is to pay close attention to silence. Silences

[4] This goes in both directions: transmissions of the past within the context of the family are influenced by public commemoration, too (Hirsch 2012, 30).

are "always present, and often central to the work of postmemory" (247). This is the unavoidable consequence of genocide, where the loss of life on a large scale tautologically mutes the victims' voices, but it is also caused by the physical destruction of the victims' traces (such as photographs and letters) or the extradiegetic narrator's forgetting (or ignorance) of family members' names. This silence is in turn thematised or depicted by means of empty frames, voids, or holes. And it poses a serious challenge to those enterprises which can be described as affiliative postmemory: a challenge "not to fill the space with projections that would allow these gaps to be screened or disguised" (248). In other words, the ethical and intellectual challenge is to refute the silence, which is, ultimately imposed, fundamentally, by the perpetrators, but without resorting to narrative fetishism, "the construction and deployment of a narrative consciously or unconsciously designed to expunge the traces of the trauma or loss that called that narrative into being in the first place [...]; it is a strategy of undoing, in fantasy, the need for mourning by simulating a condition of intactness" (Santner 1992, 144).

So here, as with the screen memory, postmemory is marked by silences that speak – in the familial setting, they are the very index of the genocide; in affiliative postmemory, the silences are not disavowed but rather the space where cross-cultural, 'cross-traumatic' solidarity can manifest itself. Notwithstanding the fact that both kinds of silences (can) speak volumes, the connotations are decidedly different: in the first case, the silence speaks in spite of itself, almost betraying a secret, whereas in the second case it offers the opportunity for actively engaging the traumas of the past and denying the perpetrators their final victory.

4. Changes in memory dynamics

Eventually the memory of the Shoah became decoupled from the overall war between 1961 (the start of the Eichmann Trial) and 1979 (the airing of the miniseries *Holocaust* on German television) – depending on the commemorative community. By the turn of the century, the Shoah had become prominent, a negative founding myth for the European Union and a reunified Germany (Assmann 2012, 29–39; Elsaesser 2014, 54; Lagrou 2000, 203; Elsaesser 2005, 73).[5] Around the same time, a shift in 'the' French commemoration took place: in 1995,

[5] Indeed, the Shoah has doubtlessly become a screen memory for the histories of European colonisation – but that is a topic in itself and cannot be adequately addressed in this paper. The interested reader may want to consult Diner (2007), Rothberg (2009), Leggewie (2011).

President Jacques Chirac acknowledged the French co-responsibility for the *Rafle du Vél d'Hiv* in July 1942 – still a central topos for the French commemoration of the Shoah. Similarly, the trial against Maurice Papon, an erstwhile Vichy official and post-war prefect (and even Minister), raised questions about the function of the memory of the Résistance.[6] As Caroline Wiedmer noted in the late 1990s, "[t]here is a growing awareness in France that the imposing monuments erected on French soil during the late 1950s and early 1960s [...] circumvented the question of France's own culpability in the persecution of the Jewish people" (Wiedmer 1999, 32).[7]

I would assert that since the 1980s, the memory of the Resistance has – to some degree – left the framework of the nation-state and gone transnational. Moreover, there seems to be a trend to establish links between the memory of Resistance and Shoah.[8] This is exemplified in two novels which on the surface take similar approaches to the intertwined commemoration of the Resistance and the Shoah but also differ substantially when it comes to their relation to a 'parental' or 'fraternal' intertext. Moreover, the issue of silence is differently constructed and has different ethical stakes.

Similarly, the relation between both kinds of silences and fiction(ality) differs. Whereas screen memories (as Rothberg understands them) tacitly point to the mythological character of national memories, and thus to grossly inaccurate (or at least incomplete) representations of the past – precisely *because* tangible political and biographical issues are at stake – postmemories resort to fictional narratives in order to fill the silences. Whether the mythological character of the screen memory as regards the fictivity of such postmemorial (re)constructions is overt or not must be discussed for each work of postmemory individually.

[6] The trial started in 1997 – after years of legal procedures: deportation orders signed by him had already surfaced in 1981. During the Fourth Republic, Papon was responsible for the massacring of protestors against the Algerian War on 17 October 1961 in Paris (Rothberg 2009, 234–35).

[7] Notwithstanding these monuments, the erstwhile Résistance failed to achieve its political goals for the post-war nation, most notably in its desire for epuration of collaborators (Novick 1969, vii).

[8] By this I mean connections that do not depict Jewish resistance and uprisings as in Warsaw (April-May 1943), Treblinka (August 1943), Bialystok (August 1943), Sobibór (October 1943), Birkenau (October 1944) and the joining of various partisan formations throughout Europe.

5. A screen memory: Laurent Binet's *HHhH*

The plot of Laurent Binet's *HHhH* (2009), winner of the prestigious *Prix Goncourt du premier roman*, follows the assassination of Reinhard Heydrich in 1942 by Jozef Gabčík and Jan Kubiš, two British-trained Czechoslovak parachutists. But Binet also sketches the biographic backgrounds of the protagonists and the antagonist; the history of Bohemia and Moravia; other depictions of Heydrich and of the assassination; and its aftermath: the eradication of the village of Lidice. Binet also reflects extensively on the act of writing, fictionality in historical discourse and the purposes of commemoration. The book cover of various editions is a crystallisation of two of the book's themes: thematically, Heydrich; epistemologically and stylistically, the uncertainties within the historical record and the fictionalisation that serves to fill these gaps – and which Binet initially refutes. In lieu of a mimetic representation of the antagonist stands the eponymous acronym, which stands for 'Himmlers Hirn heißt Heydrich' – Himmler's brain is called Heydrich (Martens 2015, 164). In both form and content, it is quite witty and was supposedly popular among the Nazi brass in the 1930s, but this is hard to verify. In this sense, the novel announces the ambiguity central to life-writing, myth, history, and memory. It is an ambiguity which the narrator initially refuses but does embrace eventually.

In many regards, *HHhH*'s poetics are juxtaposed to Jonathan Littell's *Les Bienveillantes* (2006; transl. *The Kindly Ones*, 2009),[9] and indeed, the novel was initially published without Binet's scanting remarks about Littell's premises, which were only reintroduced in later editions. These remarks concern the fictivity of the details in Littell's account:

> Je me demande bien comment Jonathan Littell sait que Blobel, le responsable alcoolique du Sonderkommando 4a de l'Einsatzgruppe C, en Ukraine, avait une Opel. Si Blobel roulait vraiment en Opel, je m'incline. J'avoue que sa documentation est supérieure à la mienne. Mais si c'est du bluff, cela fragilise toute l'oeuvre. Parfaitement ! [...] [*V*]*raisemblable* n'est pas *avéré*. Je radote, n'est-ce pas? Les gens à qui je dis ça me prennent pour un maniaque. Ils ne voient pas le problème. (Binet 2012, 307)

To be sure, *The Kindly Ones* is, despite Littell's meticulous research, a fictional text: its protagonist, Max Aue, is Littell's invention without a historical equivalent named Max Aue. As such, Binet's remark may come off as pedantic or

[9] Gunther Martens adds a narratological juxtaposition: he sees *HHhH* as "a third-person antithesis" to Littell's autodiegetic narrative (2015, 155).

even unfair, and one wonders whether the compliment at the end of the following utterance is sincere or strategic:

> Evidemment, on se sera douté que la parution du livre de Jonathan Littell et son succès m'ont un peu perturbé. Je peux toujours me rassurer en me disant que nous n'avons pas le même projet, je suis bien obligé de reconnaître que nos sujets sont assez proches. [...] Il faut que je réprime [mon] envie. Je mentionnerai simplement qu'il y a un portrait d'Heydrich au début du livre. Je ne citerai qu'une seule phrase: "ses mains paraissaient trop longues, comme des algues nerveuses attachées à ses bras", parce que, je ne sais pas pourquoi, j'aime bien cette image. (309)

There seems little doubt that these remarks were initially left out to avoid a commercial backlash, and perhaps to avoid literary polemics. Only after the good reception (and commercial success) of *HHhH* as a novel in its own right could such sneers be reincluded. In other words, the initial silencing, which was supposed to avoid an uproar, can safely be undone without risking a belated uproar. Yet Lev Grossman has mixed feelings about Binet's distancing metanarrative remarks: "[i]t's obviously not arrogance. Binet is nothing if not self-deprecating in his autobiographical cameos. [...] But sometimes one wishes for even more self-deprecation than that. When it comes to true humility in the face of history, nothing beats complete silence" (2012).

Indeed, Binet judges his own writing by the same harsh standards as any other depiction of the war. Yet whereas Grossman's position amounts to aniconism, Binet 'merely' refutes fictionality – only to ultimately give up on this strict position. The death scene of the 'good guys' is delayed on the discourse level: in the actual story-time, the final fight with the SS in 1942 took a couple of hours (accounts vary from two to over fourteen); in *HHhH* it takes over three weeks.[10] It is no coincidence that the literary death scene starts on 27 May – on this day in 1942, Heydrich was ambushed by Gabčík and Kubiš, yet the final fight with the SS took place on 18 June 1942. The year 2008 presumably refers to the writing process: the novel was released the next year. Binet stretches the death struggle of his (story's) heroes from mere hours to over three weeks, but ultimately cannot give in to the narrative fetishism of letting them miraculously escape and survive.

This is precisely why Binet speaks at all: his narrative comprises of a Manichean battle of Good versus Evil. The Good win but are betrayed and die – the material of tragedy. On top of that, Binet's fascination with the assassination plot (11-12) amounts to a narrating of the self, the subject of autobiography. But

[10] The differentiation between story and discourse stems from structural narratology, cf. Chatman 9.

more interestingly, and while staying in a Manichean framework, he frames Czechoslovakia as the victim of British and French betrayal during the 1938 Munich conference (102, 110, 130). Binet seems aware of the French post-war screen memory of the Resistance, to which he does not wish to subscribe. Instead, he connects the Shoah and the Resistance through the perpetrator instead of the deportee: Heydrich had successfully eliminated the Czechoslovak resistance, but he was also in charge of the infamous *Einsatzgruppen* in Poland and the Soviet Union. Moreover, he was the convenor of the infamous Wannsee conference in January 1942. What complicates this matter is that Heydrich was not assassinated because of his role as *génocidaire*, but in all likelihood because of the prospect of a posting to France: the British did not need their network of agents in France eradicated. As such, Binet's refusal to remain silent (apart from his apparent incapacity) causes the paradox: one screen memory is refuted, only to be replaced by another one. Binet refuses a narrative of the Résistance in a way that exculpates France. Instead, he uses a different foil which points to the French geostrategic role prior to the war. Yet his equally Manichean narrative shows that he is still to be situated in the French post-war mythologies concerning the Resistance. The role of Vichy is, after all, limited to a few short (albeit no less fierce) remarks on René Bousquet, the secretary general of the Vichy police force and in that function, co-responsible for the deportation of the Jews from France (321-325).

6. A postmemory? Yannick Haenel's *Jan Karski*

Yannick Haenel's *Jan Karski* does not feature such extensive metanarrative passages. Haenel does not inscribe himself in autofictional fashion into his narrative, yet his narrative dwells nonetheless on the thin line between fictionality and non-fictionality.[11] *Jan Karski* consists of three parts, each one having a different approach to the story of Jan Karski, who, as a member of the Polish resistance, infiltrated the Warsaw ghetto in order to testify to the Allies what was happening to the Jewish population of Poland. As such, here we have a protagonist who provides the link between Resistance and Shoah – not the antagonist. Karski had already featured prominently in Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah* (1985). And indeed, the first part of *Jan Karski* constitutes an ekphrasis of

[11] A first (albeit rather weak) signpost for this hybridity is constituted in the motto chosen: "Who bears witness for the witness?" which is attributed to Paul Celan. Yet Celan did not pose the question; the poem *Aschenglorie* ends with an answer in the negative: nobody bears witness for the witness.

Lanzmann's interview with Karski – as is admitted in the peritext. The second part is best described as a 'summary' of Karski's 1944 account, *Story of a Secret State*. As such, the book leaves the ekphrastic mode and turns to intertextuality in a narrower sense. It also constitutes, on the discourse level, an analepsis: the reader leaves Karski's 1978 New York flat and goes back in time 34 years. The third part belongs clearly to the realm of fiction. In it, "Karski" (or Haenel *as* Karski, as Mark Baker would have it) recounts his failure to spur the Allies into action. The date of narrating is not specified, but can be assumed to be in the 1990s, since this Karski claims to have been haunted by nightmares for over 50 years (and the real-life Karski died in 2000). This constitutes a prolepsis on the discourse level: the reader is taken from 1944 and beyond 1978 to the 1990s. Its fictionality allows the correction of historical mistakes in 'the real' Karski's autobiographical wartime account – a reflection on the unavoidable fictivity found in non-fictional eyewitness accounts: "[c]'est en rapport avec le camp d'Izbica Lubelska, celui qui, dans mon livre, je confonds avec Belzec. À l'époque où je me suis infiltré dans ce camp, je ne pouvais pas savoir s'il s'agissait oui ou non de Belzec" (Haenel 2015, 190).[12] The fictional Karski also renounces the Allies for not having interfered in the Shoah. The accusations are not new: before the war few visa were issued to Jewish emigrants, the railways to Auschwitz were never bombed, and neither were the gas chambers (Hilberg 1985, 1109–32).

The polemics addressed both this fictional depiction of Karski and the ekphrastic depiction of his interview included in *Shoah*. According to Lanzmann, Haenel's fictionalisation of Karksi –in autodiegetic fashion, moreover – amounts to a distortion of history and its protagonists, notably American President Franklin Roosevelt. *Jan Karski* indeed features a Roosevelt who does not listen to the messenger, a Roosevelt who is not interested in the fate of the Jews (Wieder 2010). To be fair, this accusation is understandable. Annette Wieviorka notes that Haenel's account seems to be informed by a contemporary anti-Americanism, and certainly amounts to anachronism, by interpreting the past in hindsight (Wieder 2010). Perhaps this contributed to Lanzmann's verdict: by making 'the Americans' the bad guys of his story, Haenel does not address anti-Polish anti-Semitism at all, and offers – through Karski – the image of a Polish resistance which profoundly cared about the Jews (Assouline 2010). A few days later, Haenel reacted to Lanzmann's accusations by claiming that the latter had left out

[12] Towards the end of his life, Karski himself noted that he had "faithfully and honestly reported what [he] remembered." Thus, the fictional Karski simultaneously distances himself from the 1944 error and is in line with the elder non-fictional Karski, who equally pointed towards inaccuracies due to "limits on what could be published" (qtd. in Karski 2012, s.p.).

part of the interview where Karski accuses the Allies of non-interference, and he started a polemic to promote the imminent screening of *Shoah* on Arte (Haenel 2010). Lanzmann, in turn, reacted by releasing his film *Le Rapport Karski*, which consists of the footage shot in 1978 but which did not make the final cut for *Shoah*. In later years, he has additionally accused Haenel (without naming him explicitly) of plagiarism – which pertains not to the fictional part, but to the ekphrasis in part one (*Film by Claude Lanzmann: Jan Karski Report Introduced by Claude Lanzmann (The Allied Powers Response to the Holocaust Conference)* 2015, 12:35-15:45). I do not wish to judge who is right and who is wrong in the debate but would rather point out the similarities between Haenel and Lanzmann. These are bigger than the polemics would suggest – and not just because of the topic or of the ekphrasis.

Firstly, the figure of the witness is central to both works (it is no coincidence that Annette Wieviorka, author of *L'ère du témoin* [1998], joined the debate). As is well known, Lanzmann consciously opted for a different depiction of the Shoah than Resnais: he has not included archival footage, he does not show the genocide directly. Instead, Lanzmann documents the post-war silence – which suited the perpetrators and bystanders very well – as much as the events. As such, he documents a silence that speaks. This is not so different from *Jan Karski*. As Baker notes, this book is "a mediation on [...] the impossibility and the imperative of remembering, what Haenel will describe as a 'silence that speaks' through the cracks of memory" (2011, vii). Moreover, in their own ways, Haenel and Lanzmann manipulate their witnesses – Haenel by fictionalising him, Lanzmann by urging them to testify, even when they would rather remain silent (or return to silence).[13]

Secondly, Lanzmann's film can be considered a screen memory. Omer Bartov suggests that by depicting Polish anti-Semitism and collaborators, the filmmaker doesn't need to point to the role of *French* collaborators, a fact which may, aside from its incontestable cinematic brilliance, partially explain the film's huge popular and critical success (2003, 165). Indeed, in his later films, Lanzmann has explicitly referred to Polish pre-war anti-Semitic thought and policy considerations. From this perspective, and as hinted at above, Lanzmann's fierce

[13] As to Lanzmann's manipulation, the testimony of Abraham Bomba, who was forced to cut the hair of the soon-to-be-gassed victims in Treblinka and who is delivering his testimony in Shoah in a barber shop, is more relevant than Karski's – unless one would consider Lanzmann's omission of the material released as *Le Rapport Karski* in as manipulation. But would this not imply that *all* decisions as to including or excluding material are manipulative? And let us not forget that the material out of which *Shoah* was compiled clocks off at over 300 hours.

reaction is not necessarily informed by jealousy, as Haenel suggests, but rather is the consequence of a clash of screen memories: in this argumentation, Lanzmann emphasises Polish anti-Semitism without depicting French anti-Semitism, whereas Haenel's anti-Americanism distracts from Polish anti-Semitism. But if one considers *Jan Karski* a screen memory, what is the traumatic past that cannot be accessed directly? Is this text really a screen memory, or rather a novel that instrumentalises the past for contemporary critique instead of contemporary distraction?

The works of both Lanzmann and Haenel demonstrate the paradoxes of silence: for the first, it is something to be broken, to restore a voice to the drowned, even though there remains an excess which cannot be accessed (Lanzmann 2007, 30); for the latter, testimony serves the restoration of humanity, which is purportedly destroyed by the Shoah, which gave rise to testimony in the first place. The tension is obvious: could testimony ever restore the state of the world as it was before the genocide? This is a philosophical question that extends beyond the novel, which instead highlights the mediation of testimony, and hence, the illusion of any direct access to the past. By extension, it highlights the illusion of a *complete* shattering of the silence. I hope to have shown that the apocalyptical (Lanzmann) and eschatological (Haenel) philosophies of history have more in common than it would appear at first sight. *Jan Karski* points – just like *Shoah* – to the intrinsic paradoxes of silence: it serves the perpetrators, ought therefore to have been broken, wishes to break the silence surrounding the role of the Allies, yet in doing so, it detracts from its purported aim: to restore the voice of the actual *victims* of history. Or, if that is too much to ask, to give a voice to them.

7. Summarizing: two kinds of memory, two kinds of silence

I hope to have made clear that in both cases one must ask which silences are maintained, and which ones are indeed broken – despite all uttered intentions. *HHhH* can hardly be described in terms of postmemory: the silences it leaves are not primarily due to the trauma of the Shoah – on the contrary, the novel offers a story of justified resistance but without mentioning that the Shoah was not an argument for executing its convenor. Moreover, while hinting at the role of French collaboration, this is done mainly through the 'screen' of French betrayal – not in 1940-44, but in Munich in 1938. That other screen memory, the Algerian

War, is never mentioned in the novel.[14] The silences inherent to the historical record, which can in many cases be considered of secondary importance, since they give us no better understanding, no better explanations of the past, are addressed through Binet's polemics against Littell – a matter of style more than of salience. Binet refutes fictionalisation – mostly – in order to fill these little gaps and prefers resorting to the metalevel to indicate these gaps. Despite its self-reflexivity in terms of the shapes and functions of commemoration – and its desire not to fictionalise, not to falsify – *HHhH* bears several traits of a screen memory. That is perhaps unavoidable, given its Manichean logic.

By maintaining a close distance to *Shoah*, a screen memory which simultaneously denounces the post-war silence, *Jan Karski* poses fundamentally different questions concerning silence and testimony. Though *Shoah* is clearly marked with the voids – the empty landscapes, the lack of archival footage, the few remaining ruins – it is hard to conceive of this film as postmemory: although it occasionally, in the case of the Zaidls, refers to the silences between the survivors and their children (and how *Shoah* apparently caused the daughter, Hanna, to hear her father's story completely for the second time), the film obviously transcends the familial framework. And if one considers the subject matter or the ekphrasis in *Jan Karski* of *Shoah* to constitute a metaphorical familial tie between both works (say, a fraternal or father-son bond),[15] then it is a family strife with fights. The familial metaphor would also run the risk of skewing the proportions: let us not forget that the larger part of *Jan Karski* is not dedicated to Lanzmann's depiction of Karski but to Karski's autobiography and to Haenel's take on the story. Yet whether his fictionalisation of Karski, which is a reaction to the historical record gap between 1944 and 1978 (for Karski's life, that is), really offers a way of connecting traumata, or whether the voices of the victims are not usurped along the road to contemporary political critique, remains a poignant question. It seems, perhaps despite its author's intentions, that it cannot really live up to the ethical standards that Hirsch has set for affiliative postmemory. It sees a void in the historical record, purports to fill it, but tells us little more about either this void – or any other.

[14] And claiming that it shines through in Binet's referral to the French Foreign Legion's activities during the Second World War in Algeria (215) is perhaps wishful thinking for it to fit at all cost.

[15] Women are, indeed, largely absent from *both* works – as well as from *Shoah*, for that matter (cf. Hirsch and Spitzer 1993).

Bibliography

Assmann, Aleida. 2012. *Auf dem Weg zu einer europäischen Gedächtniskultur?* Wiener Vorlesungen im Rathaus 161. Wien: Picus Verlag.

Assouline, Pierre. 2010. "Lanzmann contre-attaque sur Karski." *Le Monde*, January 21 2010, sec. Livres. https://www.lemonde.fr/livres/article/2010/01/21/lanzmann-contre-attaque-sur-karski_1294712_3260.html#ens_id=1296450

Baker, Mark. 2011. "If We Are the Message." In *The Messenger*, v–ix. Berkeley: Counter Point.

Bartov, Omer. 2003. *Germany's War and the Holocaust. Disputed Histories*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press.

Beiner, Guy. 2014. "Probing the Boundaries of Irish Memory: From Postmemory to Prememory and Back." *Irish Historical Studies* Vol. 39, no. 154: 296–307. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021121400019106

Binet, Laurent. 2012. *HHhH*. Paris: Grasset

Chatman, Seymour. 1978. *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Diner, Dan. 2007. *Gegenläufige Gedächtnisse. Über Geltung und Auswirkung des Holocaust.* Essays zur jüdischen Geschichte und Kultur 7. Göttingen: Vandenhoek & Ruprecht.

Dreyfus, Jean-Marc. 2006. "Censorship and Approval: The Reception of *Nuit et Brouillard* in France." In *Uncovering the Holocaust. The International Reception of Night and Fog*, edited by Ewout van der Knaap, 35–45. London & New York: Wallflower Press.

Elsaesser, Thomas. 2005. *European Cinema. Face to Face with Hollywood*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

Elsaesser, Thomas. 2014. *German Cinema: Terror and Trauma. Cultural Memory since 1945*. New York and London: Routledge.

Grossman, Lev. 2012. "Assassination Fascination: A Review of Laurent Binet's Prize-Winning HHhH." *Time*, April 25, 2012.

http://entertainment.time.com/2012/04/25/assassination-fascination-a-review-of-laurent-binets-prize-winning-hhhh/

Haenel, Yannick. 2010. "Le recours à la fiction n'est pas seulement un droit, il est nécessaire." *Le Monde*, January 25, sec. Tribune. https://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2010/01/25/le-recours-a-la-fiction-n-est-pas-seulement-un-droit-il-est-necessaire-par-yannick-haenel_1296378_3232.html#ens_id=1296450

Haenel, Yannick. 2015. *Jan Karski*. Folio 5178. Paris: Gallimard.

Hansen, Miriam Bratu. 1996. "'Schindler's List' Is Not 'Shoah': The Second Commandment, Popular Modernism, and Public Memory." *Critical Inquiry* vol. 22, no. 2: 292–312.

Hilberg, Raul. 1985. *The Destruction of the European Jews. Revised and Definitive Version.* 3 vols. New York and London: Holmes & Meier.

Hilberg, Raul. 2001. *Sources of Holocaust Research. An Analysis*. Chicago: Ivan R. Dee.

Hirsch, Marianne. 1997. *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative, and Postmemory*. Harvard University Press.

Hirsch, Marianne. 2012. *The Generation of Postmemory. Writing and Visual Culture After the Holocaust*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Hirsch, Marianne, and Leo Spitzer. 1993. "Gendered Translations: Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah*." In *Gendering War Talk*, edited by Miriam Cooke and Angela Woollacott, 3–19. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Karski, Jan. 2012. *Story of a Secret State. My Report to the World*. Edited by Andrew Roberts. London et al.: Penguin Books.

Lagrou, Pieter. 2000. *The Legacy of Nazi Occupation. Patriotic Memory and National Recovery in Western Europe, 1945-1965*. Studies in the Social and Cultural History of Modern Warfare 8. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lanzmann, Claude. 2007. "From the Holocaust to 'Holocaust.'" In *Claude Lanzmann's* Shoah. *Key Essays*, edited by Stuart Liebman, 27–36. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Lanzmann, Claude. 2015. *FJan Karski Report Introduced by Claude Lanzmann (The Allied Powers Response to the Holocaust Conference)*. Jerusalem. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JQ7Y1dc6sbQ

Leggewie, Claus. 2011. *Der Kampf um die europäische Erinnerung. Ein Schlachtfeld wird besichtigt*. München¨: C.H. Beck.

Martens, Gunther. 2015. "Unreliability in Non-Fiction: The Case of the Unreliable Addressee." In *Unreliable Narration and Trustworthiness. Intermedial and Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, edited by Vera Nünning, 155–70. Narratologia 44. Berlin: De Gruyter.

Novick, Peter. 1969. *The Resistance versus Vichy: The Purge of Collaborators in Liberated France*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Rothberg, Michael. 2009. *Multidirectional Memory. Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization*. Palo Alto: Stanford University Press.

Santner, Eric L. 1992. "History beyond the Pleasure Principle: Some Thoughts on the Representation of Trauma." In *Probing the Limits of Representation. Nazism and the "Final Solution,"* edited by Saul Friedländer, 143–54. Cambridge, MA & London: Harvard University Press.

Wieder, Thomas. 2010. "Polémique autour de 'Jan Karski.'" *Le Monde*, January 25 2010, sec. Livres. https://www.lemonde.fr/livres/article/2010/01/25/polemique-autour-de-jan-karski_1296377_3260.html

Wiedmer, Caroline. 1999. *The Claims of Memory. Representation of the Holocaust in Contemporary Germany and France*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press.

Wilson, Emma. 2006. *Alain Resnais*. French Film Directors. Manchester & New York: Manchester University Press.

Tom Vanassche submitted his PhD on the pathos of anti-pathos in Shoah literature and historiography in December 2019 at Freiburg University. His publications are on documentary literature and theatre, the codification of emotionality and literary translation. In 2020, he will publish various articles and *Ko-Erinnerung: Grenzen, Herausforderungen und Perspektiven des neueren Shoahgedenkens/Co-memoration: Limits, Challenges, and Possibilities in*

Contemporary Shoah Remembrance (co-edited with Daniela Henke; De Gruyter). He is currently conceptualising a postdoctoral project on the representation of climate refugees in literary fiction, journalism and autobiography/testimony.