Gendering the Language of Genocide: Linguistic Violence against Women in Nazi Concentration Camps

Abstract

Exploring the Holocaust through a gendered lens, this article examines linguistic aggression against women in Nazi concentration camps. While extensive scholarship connects language to genocide, the imbrication between gender, language and genocide remains an under-researched subject. To further this discussion, I analyze female survivors' memoirs to explore the processes of semantic deprecation through metaphorization. Relying on cognitive semantics (Lakoff and Johnson 1980), I concentrate on euphemistic and dysphemistic metaphors that construct women's identities in terms of otherness, by means of zoosemic and reifying conceptualizations, among others. The sources under examination encompass Jewish survivors Liana Millu (2001), Gisella Perl (2019), and Anne-Lise Stern (2004), and non-Jewish resisters Margarete Buber-Neumann (2008), Wanda Półtawska (1989), and Germaine Tillion (1997). Considering the relationship between metaphorical language and perceived stereotypes about women and the feminine, and focusing on specific lexical items, I hope to unravel the nexus between linguistic aggression and patriarchal structures in the concentration camp system. I argue that metaphorization reinforced women's inferior position and perpetuated gender stereotypes. I suggest that, paradoxically, this violence also triggered empowering processes of linguistic reappropriation, asserting the victims' agency.

Keywords: Holocaust, gender, cognitive semantics, metaphor

1. Introduction

Hegemonic narratives of genocide, both in academic and media discourse, tend to draw upon received gender-stereotypes. Relying on uncontested concepts of gender, as well as on stereotypes of women and the feminine blurs the scope of genocidal violence and relegates women to the margins of genocide narratives. Rescuing the voices of women, hence, contributes to defy the conventional conception of genocide, whose focus frequently lies on body counts, excluding other forms of genocidal weaponry (Snow 2018). In this attempt to expand our understanding of genocide, using intersectional feminism as a tool of analysis (Chrisler and Johnston-Robledo 2018; Lewis 2009; Mühlhäuser 2021), the exploration of linguistic aggression proves crucial. Delving into the Holocaust and, more specifically, into concentration camps, provides an insightful framework to continue to unravel the nexus and intersections of genocide, gender, and language. First, in the concentrationary universe, socially and culturally constructed gender norms were subjected to extreme pressure, mediating the experiences of victims (Waxman 2017). The Nazi perpetrator inverted the traditional hierarchy of the Jewish family: men were stripped of their role as providers and protectors, while women had to assume previously male responsibilities to provide for themselves and their relatives (Goldenberg 2013). Women's experience of the *Lager*[1] was defined by a constant threefold assault, as they were targeted maternally, reproductively, and sexually by both male prisoners and Nazi officials (Waxman 2017, 149).

Second, the extreme conditions of the *Lager*, where deportees were obliged to coexist with individuals from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, resulted in the weaponization of language: on the one hand, the perpetrator deliberately and

[1] *Konzentrationslager* or, simply, *Lager* was the official Nazi term used for the concentration camp system.

systematically endorsed linguistic chaos among prisoners as a political strategy to atomize and alienate them; on the other, every utterance produced by the Nazis to communicate with the victims served the function of dehumanizing them. Throughout the decade of Nazi domination, German Jewish professor Klemperer (2000) secretly collected his notes on what he named *lingua Tertii Imperii* (LTI), the language of the Third Reich, arguing that Nazism manipulated the German language as a deliberate, political strategy to indoctrinate citizens. The LTI triggered the processes of reification and bestialization of the enemy that released the perpetrator from moral misgivings. In the *Lager*, dehumanization crystallized in this LTI, the discourse that was endorsed to legitimize Nazi genocidal violence (Klemperer 2000, 16).

In their memoirs, author-eyewitnesses strive to evoke the dynamics of communication, shaping the camp as a deeply discriminatory and multilingual milieu, governed by the perpetrator's politics of *Sprachterror*, 'linguistic terror' (Aschenberg 2002). Indeed, the exploration of the *Lager* offers significant opportunities to foster both sociolinguistics and contact linguistics, particularly in connection to the role of language(s) in totalitarian spaces. Yet, because violence against women in the Holocaust has traditionally been excluded from the dominant narrative, these issues remain to be examined from a feminist perspective. I suggest that the concentrationary universe, a singular and isolated microcosm where socially constructed gender roles were brought under extreme pressure, embodies a unique context to shed light on the entanglement of gender-based linguistic aggression and genocidal purposes.

In what follows, I will explore female survivors' memoirs to critically look at linguistic violence, claiming women's experiences of linguistic aggression as a legitimate form of gendered genocidal weaponry. By targeting specific lexical items that metaphorized women in terms of otherness, I argue that violence performed in language

practice rendered victims vulnerable to genocidal practices. I also concentrate on strategies of linguistic reclamation, which construct narratives of female agency and demonstrate that victims were able to resist this dehumanizing ethos. First, in relation to metaphors fulfilling a euphemistic function, I explore the appellation *kochany*, an affective Polish vocative twisted to conceal sexual violence, and the productive German prefix *Sonder-*, whose institutionalized use in the Nazi LTI masked forced prostitution. Second, with regard to dysphemistic metaphorical realizations, I focus on the sets of epithets *Muselmann/Muselweib* and *Schmuckstück/Schmutzstück*, which metaphorized Jewish women in zoosemic, sexualized and reifying terms. Finally, I analyze the double-edged *Kaninchen/króliki* paradigm as an epitome of reappropriation, in order to illustrate the extent to which intention, context and performative function shape metaphors.

My approach harmonizes with current feminist scholarship on the Holocaust (Ephgrave 2016; Hedgepeth and Saidel 2010; Waxman 2017), which seeks to complete the memory of the *Shoah*[2] by reexamining the events through a feminist perspective. Though the discourse of Nazism has been the object of extensive research, it behooves us to reconsider the ways in which linguistic aggression played a significant role in laying a particular gendered genocidal foundation. After this introduction, I will go on to explore the Holocaust through a gendered lens. I will then introduce the data examined and the methodological approach undertaken. Afterwards, I will conduct my analysis of othering metaphors related to different socially-embedded conceptions of womanhood and the feminine, hoping to unravel the nexus between linguistic aggression and patriarchal structures and the implications of this reality in our attempts

[2] *Shoah* is the Hebrew word for 'catastrophe', used to refer to the genocide.

to approach genocide in relation to forms of gender-based violence that have traditionally been overlooked.

2. Gendering the Holocaust

Resisting the historical neglect, women's experiences of genocide are acknowledged and examined in current feminist scholarship. For instance, there is growing consensus in theorizing mass rape as a deliberate strategy in several genocides, including Rwanda, former Yugoslavia and Bangladesh (Leydesdorff 2011; Stiglmayer 1994). In consonance with scholars such as Card (2010) and Snow (2018), bringing the voices of women into view demonstrates that genocidal violence extends far beyond the frame of body counts, and thus needs to be assessed through a gender-sensitive approach. Card (2010, 237) conceptualizes genocide as a social death, shifting the focus towards "relationships, connections, and foundational institutions that create community and set the context that gives meaning to careers and goals, lives and deaths". Snow (2018, 54) claims "that genocide is the destruction not just of individuals; genocide destroys worlds. […] It involves the destruction of human relationality". Language, as constitutive of reality, has the potential to establish, maintain or challenge social and power relations (Litosseliti 2013). The study of linguistic violence, hence, may open a new path to redefine genocidal aggression. In this article, through the exploration of specific lexical items, I seek to answer the following questions: How was this social death reflected in the figurative language that became weaponized to commit gender-based violence? In the *Lager*, how did these derogative, socially-embedded metaphors construct and define women's identity? How could women resist the language of genocide?

Before addressing these questions, it is essential to understand why it is significant to reexamine the *Shoah* through a gendered perspective. Unlike in other genocides, rape was not inherently a part of the genocidal plan during the *Shoah*—it was a result of the engrained misogynist values that shaped violence (Ephgrave 2016, 20). Evidence contradicts the assertion that Nazi laws against race defilement, which prohibited sexual relationships between Jews and 'Aryans', protected women from sexual assault, the line of argument traditionally deployed to dismiss gender-based violence. Women did suffer sexual abuse (Goldenberg and Shapiro 2013; Hedgepeth and Saidel 2010; Mühlhäuser 2021; Waxman 2010), and the physical and emotional harm caused by it was aggravated after the war because of society's widespread denial and social taboos, which not only shamed and blamed the victims, but also tacitly forbade women from seeking psychological counseling and ostracized those who dared to speak (Ephgrave 2016, 20). In reality, the fact that sexual violation was not a genocidal strategy "not only leaves the women who were raped unable to find a context for their violent memories but also makes any coherent analysis of sexual violence during the Holocaust highly problematic" (Waxman 2010, 126).

Feminist Holocaust studies employ gender as a conceptual framework to avoid a monolithic interpretation of the victims of Nazism and, instead, to understand the ways in which both their victimhood and their sense of self was gendered, as well as the central function that this social construction fulfilled during the Holocaust (Waxman 2017, 147). Gender, a constitutive element of human relationality based on perceived differences between the sexes, signifies relationships of power (Scott 1988, 42). Building on Austin and Searle's speech-act theory, Butler defines performativity in relation to gender as "the reiterative and citational practice by which discourse produces the effects that it names" (1993, 2). In our daily lives and mundane activities, every time

we engage in speech acts that convey hegemonic ideologies and conventions of the social world, we enact with our bodies those socially-constructed fictions and reproduce them as if they were reality. However, "gender cannot be understood as a role which either expresses or disguises an interior 'self', whether that 'self' is conceived as sexed or not. As performance which is performative, gender is an 'act', broadly construed, which constructs the social fiction of its own psychological interiority" (Butler 1988, 528). Consequently, to conduct a gender-sensitive reexamination of the Holocaust, scholars need to attest to the fact that pre-war normative social constructs coalesced into specific methods of dehumanization and terror, which targeted women's bodily integrity in different ways (Ephgrave 2016).

Upon arrival at the *Lager*, gender operated as an important arbiter of experience, due to which women were less likely to survive the initial selection. While any victim judged incapable of hard labor was sent to the gas chambers, pregnant women, perceived by the perpetrator as bearers of forbidden life, and those accompanied by children, were also immediately sentenced to death (Waxman 2017, 100). What awaited those who survived the initial selection was a constant assault on their bodies, which encompassed "violations of their 'womanhood', including the humiliation of forced nudity and head shaving" (Ephgrave 2016, 26-27), as well as "amenorrhea, sterilization, forced abortions, punishment for pregnancy and subversive childbirth, annihilation based on maternal status, and sexual assault" (Kremer 2010, 177). Goldenberg (2013, 121) has identified the performative function of the constant threats of rape and being sent to brothels as a specific form of sexual violence against female deportees. Indeed, central to the exploration of linguistic aggression against women is the threatening action of words, inasmuch as a threat "begins the performance of that which it threatens to perform; but in not quite fully performing it, seeks to establish, through language, the

certitude of that future in which it will be performed" (Butler 1997, 9). A threat of violence registers a certain force in language that presages and inaugurates a subsequent force, initiating in this way "a temporality in which one expects the destruction of expectation and, hence, cannot expect it at all" (Butler 1997, 9).

In recent years, significant landmarks have placed the emphasis on the exploration of sexual violence in the Holocaust (Goldenberg and Shapiro 2013; Hedgepeth and Saidel 2010; Waxman 2017). The extreme gender inequality laying the foundations of the *Lager* resulted in widespread and permanent forms of sexual abuse, which included, but were not limited to, rape, reprisals for rejecting sexual favors from Kapos[3] and soldiers, and consenting to sex in order to survive (Goldenberg 2013, 121). Because this violence significantly "reflected gender relations, gender identities, and gendered sexual norms and practices" (Mühlhäuser 2021, 34), its exploration may allow us to lead broader discussions on the imbrication of gender and power, and how it crystallizes in the violence of genocide. In relation to language, thus far, only Heinemann (1986) and Goldenberg (2013) have drawn attention to the fact that verbal abuse against female deportees frequently invoked the term 'whore', as well as its implications in relation to gender imbalance. In the same line, Oster (2020) has pioneeringly examined some linguistic creations of the *Lager* through a gendered lens. My contribution to this emerging area of feminist Holocaust scholarship is to examine processes of semantic deprecation through the analysis of specific othering metaphors fulfilling both euphemistic and dysphemistic functions. In the following section, I will address the selection of the data for this study the and the methodological approach undertaken.

[3] Kapos were inmates who were chosen by the Nazis to supervise working units and to serve in administrative roles over other prisoners. Kapos obscured the line between victim, perpetrator, and accomplice. Because they wielded functional power, some became morally corrupt.

3. The data and method

3.1. Corpus of analysis

The focus of this article lies on the exploration of specific lexical items detected in survivors' memoirs. The metaphorical conceptualizations analyzed have been selected on the basis that, on the one hand, they convey socially-embedded conceptions of womanhood and the feminine which prove particularly enlightening to approach linguistic aggression against women from the perspective of cognitive semantics. And, on the other hand, because these items have remained in the margins of Holocaust scholarship, though they repeatedly emerge in the concentrationary corpus. The recent, feminist turn in the discipline, indeed, calls for a reconceptualization of gender-based violence in the *Lager* that also underscores language practice. First, in relation to metaphors fulfilling a euphemistic function, I explore the appellation *kochany* and the productive, LTI prefix *Sonder-*. Second, to analyze dysphemistic realizations, I concentrate the sets of epithets *Muselmann/Muselweib* and *Schmuckstück/Schmutzstück*. Third, I delve into the double-edged *Kaninchen/króliki* paradigm as an epitome of linguistic reclamation. To narrow the focus of this article, I have selected certain specific extracts from survivors' memoirs which illuminate the phenomena through the authors' meta-reflection on this violence, following the premise that we must read women's voices to revisit the Holocaust through a feminist lens (Waxman 2017, 147).

While this article concentrates on the ways in which violence in the camps was gendered, this violence was also and simultaneously racialized, political, bellicose, ableist, ageist… Any coherent analysis needs to understand Nazi oppression as

intersecting among different, multilayered factors that are impossible to untangle from each other, for ethical reasons. When we refer to women's bodies and identities, we need to be aware of intersectionality, in order to address women's experiences thoroughly, as "all women have an embodied self, but all bodies are not the same, nor are all bodily experiences reflected in the self in the same way" (Chrisler and Johnston-Robledo 2018, 6). Our perception of the world is embodied: mediated and shaped by the body—as such, women's experiences are as diverse as their bodies. Though the scope of this paper, and the data examined in it, is limited and does not allow sometimes such a comprehensive exploration as it would be needed, I encourage readers to understand violence in this light.

Intersectionality foregrounds a form of feminist enquiry that captures the multiple, interrelated axes of oppression and can overcome exclusionary approaches by representing the complexity of identities: an intersectional turn that reorients our perspective as feminist scholars "because it involves thinking simultaneously at level of structures, dynamics and subjectivities; it conjoins rhetoric of 'voice' and presence and rhetorics of discourse and institutional form" (Lewis 2009, 207). An intersectional approach to the Holocaust is fundamental to conceptualize the multiple forms of oppression Jewish women faced as women *and* as Jews, among other factors (Mühlhäuser 2021, 5). While I conduct my exploration of linguistic gendered violence, I will look at the events through an intersectional lens, to offer the nuanced and non-essentialist approach needed to examine Nazi oppression. To reflect the polylithic nature of the victims, the sources under examination encompass authors from diverse backgrounds.

For her part, Italian Jewish survivor Liana Millu joined the Resistance in 1943 and was deported to Auschwitz the following year. *The Smoke of Birkenau* (2001) is

articulated in six brief stories reconstructing the reality of women, where the author remains as the witness and voice that narrates the horror. Millu's rendition of linguistic violence against her fellow countrywomen is significant, as it exposes a community who not only did generally not speak German, but also did not understand Yiddish, unlike Eastern European Jews, and were thus even more isolated. Jewish survivor Anne-Lise Stern was born in Berlin in 1921, but the family relocated to France after the Nazis seized power. She was deported to Auschwitz in 1944 and transferred to several *Lager*. In 2004 she published *Le savoir-déporté*, exploring her experiences in the concentration camp and the aftermath of the war, which led her to become a psychoanalyst. Gisella Perl was a Hungarian gynecologist who strived to care for her fellow deportees in Auschwitz, treating venereal disease and performing hundreds of clandestine abortions to save pregnant women from the death chambers. One of the first women to publish her ordeal in *I was a Doctor in Auschwitz*, in 1948, her crucial work remained overlooked until reedited in 2019.

Finally, the sources under examination also encompass memoirs by non-Jewish inmates, who were deported as political prisoners. In *And I am Afraid of my Dreams* (1989), Polish resistant Wanda Półtawska evokes her experience in Ravensbrück as a subject of medical experimentation. Since Nazis believed Slavs to be '*Untermensch*,' 'subhuman', Półtawska's memoir is essential to explore other ways in which gendered and racialized violence intersected. Also central to the exploration of gendered violence is French resistance fighter Germaine Tillion's *Ravensbrück* (1975). Tillion, a central figure in contemporary thought, was an anthropologist who joined the Resistance, helped Jewish prisoners escape, and organized intelligence for the Allies. She spent two years in Ravensbrück, where she undertook a precise ethnographic examination of the

concentrationary universe that is central to understand Nazi oppression. German communist Margarete Buber-Neumann exiled to the USSR in the 1930s and was sentenced to the Siberian Gulag, accused of espionage. Under the German-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact, the Soviet government handed her over to the Gestapo, and she was deported to Ravensbrück in 1940, where she remained until the end of the war as a privileged, 'Aryan' prisoner who joined the underground to assist her fellow deportees.

3.2. Theoretical framework and procedure of analysis

To approach and analyze the specific lexical items detailed above, I conduct a qualitative exploration from the perspective of cognitive semantics, integrating the study of meaning and mind as it surfaces in socially-embedded metaphors. An essential characteristic of human cognition that has expanded with the development of language, metaphorization is the cognitive faculty that allows "understanding or experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another" (Lakoff and Johnson 1980, 5). Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) theory of metaphor understands it as a cognitive phenomenon that allows the creation of metaphors by mapping semantic characteristics from a source domain to a target one. Domains are idealized cognitive models that establish a structured set of elements, along with their properties, features and relations. Through the linking of two entities that are presumed to be conceptually divergent, aspects of the source domain become mapped onto corresponding aspects of the target and, by establishing this bidirectional association, something new emerges. Mapping from source to target is selective and highly ideological, as it tends to emphasize some features and conceal others. In

this ontological correspondence between source and target domains, the conceptualization may acquire and perform a euphemistic or dysphemistic function (Lakoff and Johnson 1980).

While the result of such figuration is emotionally evocative, persuading and resonant, it also "has the power not only to point out, but also to create similarity, which is another way of saying that, just as it draws on conceptual structures, it also creates structures for thinking about and understanding the world" (Webber 2011, 20). Beyond a mere figure of speech, metaphoric conceptualization is a mode of thought and reason that allows language users to delimit and reify abstract notions in particular terms (Lakoff 1994). As a constitutive of reality, language has the potential to establish, maintain or challenge social and power relations and, in relation to gender imbalance, evidence suggests that metaphorical language can reveal underlying attitudes and convey dominant social beliefs which deprecate and trivialize women by sexualizing them and constructing them in passive positions (Litosseliti 2013; Weatherall 2002). Since Butler's (1990) landmark, countering the essentialist belief that gender is inherently determined by biological sex, current approaches to gender and language theorize, instead, that gender may be enacted and constructed in different ways across time, situations, and contexts (Koller 2011). However, hegemonic gendered and gendering discourses convey essentialist, established ideas about gender identity and appropriate gender behavior. Since Western society is largely governed by men, gendered patterns and norms of behavior have been dictated by them. As a result, men are taken as the norm of reference and language is highly androcentric and sexist—i.e., it encourages impertinent and derogatory stereotyping and distinction between the sexes (Fernández and Jiménez 2011).

In their analysis of metaphor, Lakoff and Turner (1989) turn to the concept of the Great Chain of Being, a cultural model that hierarchically positions different forms of beings according to their perceived attributes and behaviors. The Great Chain "allows us to comprehend general human character traits in terms of well-understood nonhuman attributes; and, conversely, it allows us to comprehend less well-understood aspects of the nature of animals and objects in terms of better-understood human characteristics" (Lakoff and Turner 1989, 195). Contemplating and assessing humans, animals, plantae, complex objects, and natural physical things, this hierarchy covers the metaphorical domains that were used in the camps with derogative intention in order to attack women. To approach this form of aggression, I concentrate on how women were metaphorized in terms of otherness to summon gender prejudice. Relying on Lakoff and Turner's (1989) contribution to cognitive semantics, I examine the lexical items targeted on this study on the basis of the presumed, ontological attributes that are mapped from the source domain—mainly animals and objects—onto the target domain—women. The intention of the language user to be evasive or abusive determines the potential euphemistic or dysphemistic metaphorical realization, because the same conceptual mapping can lead to both kinds of metaphors depending on the positive or negative attributes that are transferred from source onto target (Crespo Fernández 2008, 105-106). Offence or mitigation depend on the context of use and, thus, the euphemistic or dysphemistic quality is never an intrinsic attribute of the word, but a contextual, intentional one (Crespo Fernández 2008, 107)—a crucial idea that is epitomized in the *Kaninchen/króliki* paradigm, the final metaphor explored to illustrate reappropriation.

Euphemistic metaphors frequently correlate with the anthropological notion of taboo and the psychoanalytic idea of repression, which is frequently triggered by death

(and murder), sex (and birth) and the sacred (and the evil) (Chilton 1987). Language users tend to avoid the forbidden concept by either violating or preserving it: they turn to dysphemism, "the process whereby the most pejorative traits of the taboo are highlighted with an offensive aim to the addressee or to the concept itself", or to euphemism, "the semantic or formal process by which the taboo is stripped of its most explicit or obscene overtones" (Crespo Fernández 2008, 96). In the camps, I suggest, euphemism is crucial to understand aggression because it masks and normalizes sexual violence against women. Euphemism, as all metaphors, entails always a potentially ideological facet of language, as it proves "effective in preventing the construction and verification of mental models in certain kinds of ideological discourse" (Chilton 1987, 13). In the *Lager*, I will argue, established ideas on womanhood and the feminine are metaphorically conveyed in both dysphemistic and euphemistic tones: while certain gendered attributes and norms of behavior are conveyed through derogatory terms, others are concealed under euphemism. The following analysis explores this double-edged enactment of women's identities, hoping to offer new insights into the potential of othering metaphors to shape gender prejudice and violence against women.

4. Results and discussion

4.1. Euphemistic metaphors

Examining the language that emerged in relation to sexual violence is crucial to shed light on these issues. Female-authored memoirs portray the camp universe as a patriarchal society in which every female deportee was a potential victim of sexual

abuse by male prisoners, a reality that left an imprint in language. Due to the extreme power and gender inequality, women faced the need to trade sex for survival: "in essence, the men had food and other necessities and the women had their bodies" (Goldenberg 2013, 115). Bartered sex cannot be considered consensual sex, since "women who accepted food for sex were victimized and scheduled for death—in other words, women whose control of their lives was forcibly taken—and had few to no alternatives in order to live" (Goldenberg 2013, 115). As Goldenberg (2013, 115) has emphasized, male prisoners' opportunism was degrading and humiliating, as they took advantage of their position of power and of the weaknesses of their sister prisoners. In Auschwitz-Birkenau, where male Polish political prisoners held high positions in the *Lager* hierarchy, these exceptionally asymmetric relationships between a privileged male prisoner and a desperate woman were expressed through the term *kochanie*, a Polish affectionate vocative used to refer to someone dear. Italian survivor Liana Millu paradigmatically illuminates the nature of this kind of violence. An old, privileged deportee harasses a female teenager:

> "Hey, little one," he boomed.
>
> "Hello there!" […] "What is it?" she asked. The fellow didn't bother to answer. He reached out to grasp her by the chin, forcing her to face him, and when she tried to pull away, he laughed and leaned over her.
>
> "Oh, come on," he said, "what you so afraid of? You no want to be my *kochany*? Me and you, right?" Again Lili tried uselessly to push him away, but he bent still closer, his lips brushing her neck. "You my *kochany*, okay?" (Millu 2001, 40)

The term is preceded by a possessive determiner that legitimizes the abuser's ownership of the victim and his right to perpetrate both sexual and physical violence against her. In addition, *kochany* typically constructs the victimized woman in a passive object position. The meaning of this affectionate vocative—originally implying reciprocity, respect, affection—is twisted with utmost cynicism to refer to an extremely coerced and asymmetric relationship. The ruthlessness and irreverence in this euphemistic semantic transformation must have been conspicuous to Polish-speaking women, but also to foreign deportees who, like Millu's memoir reveals, incorporate the term into their lexicon, well aware of both its original meaning and its degeneration in the *Lager*. *Kochany* appears in several memoirs authored by women: the metaphor is significantly explored in Hungarian gynecologist Gisella Perl's *I was a Doctor in Auschwitz* (2019), which bears witness to specific spheres of suffering that only women endured. Perl defined these coercive relationships in terms of a "joyless sexual intercourse in which the body was used as a commodity with which to pay for the badly needed items the men were able to steal from the warehouses" (2019, 55).

Examining the uniquely female experience of the *Lager* and its connection with language aggression, forced prostitution proves crucial. Himmler ordered brothels to be set up for non-Jewish male prisoners, reasoning that labor exploitation could be further enforced by allowing them to visit the brothel as incentive. The SS[4] established a bonus system throughout the entire concentrationary system, granting male prisoners visits to the brothel as payment for additional work (Sommer 2009, 109-111). The Nazis gave forced prostitution the appearance of voluntary recruitment. Camp authorities ordered non-Jewish women who were carrying out extremely hard physical labor outdoors to report, and promised those who volunteered their own rooms, clean clothing, abundant

[4] SS is the acronym for *Schutzstaffel*, 'protection squads', the Nazi organization responsible for the administration of the concentrationary system.

food, and a daily bath. Given the appalling conditions in the women's camps, this perspective was alluring, and led some to accept. Brothels were strictly regulated, and Nazi race laws of ethnic segregation were enforced: Jewish women were not allowed to work as prostitutes, and Jewish men could not visit the 'Aryan' prostitutes. The SS selected mostly German and Polish young women (Sommer 2009). In this context, *Mädchen*, the German word for 'girl', was the LTI term used to refer to the female deportees who were forced into prostitution in these brothels. In official letters between Himmler and Nazi doctor Rascher, for instance, they repeatedly wrote about the *Bordellmädchen*, 'the girls of the brothel' (Sommer 2009, 88-90).

Nübling (2011) has examined the pejoration of women's denominations in the history of the German language, exploring the ways in which meanings are semantically reduced or enriched to interpellate women through a patriarchal, androcentric perspective—which makes it possible for a word simply denoting youth such as *Mädchen* to be devaluated and sexualized so that it becomes a synonym of 'prostitute', as it happened in the *Lager*. Referring to women who were forced into prostitution as *Bordellmädchen*, 'the girls of the brothel', was a means to construct these women as naïve and reliant, as needing the guidance and protection that the brothel system, with its privileges, provided—and, thus, legitimizing their rape. As this metaphor was used with the intention to mask violence, its performative function made it abusive and condescending, embodying a form of aggression that was occluded behind a euphemistic tone. Using the word *Mädchen* was not an ingenuous act—this term was deliberately sanctioned by the Nazi system so as to remove potential moral qualms from male prisoners for abusing women's bodies: the denomination was a means of deagentization which constructed the subject as an immature, disposable object. In fact, *Bordellmädchen* appears in male survivors' memoirs, proving that they assimilated this

extremely misogynistic LTI, even those who were not native speakers of German (Semprún 2012, 632).

Finally, the exploration of forced prostitution provides more opportunities to further this gender-sensitive analysis of linguistic aggression. The official Nazi terminology referred to the brothel as the *Sonderbau*, 'special construction', to the victimized women as the *Sonderkommando*, 'special unit', and to the barracks where intercourse took place as the *Sonderbarracke*, 'special barracks'. The prefix *Sonder-*, 'special', 'distinct', 'unusual', was systematically used by the LTI to conceal the real nature of a facility or action behind a veil of military, aseptic vocabulary. More specifically, it was used as the euphemism for death and murder. In the concentrationary system, for instance, *Sonderbehandlung*, 'special treatment', was the official term for mass murder; *Sonderkommando* was also used for the work units, composed of Jewish deportees, forced to carry out the disposal of gas chamber victims (Sommer 2009, 160). In relation to the camp brothel, Sommer has highlighted the analogy between its name and location, since brothels were placed near deadly places: for instance, the brothel in Sachsenhausen was set up on the ceiling of the morgue; in Dachau and Neuengamme, the brothel barracks were near the crematoria; in Flossenbürg, next to where the executions were perpetrated (2009, 160). The weight of the evidence suggests that forced prostitution was directly connected to death and murder, both figuratively and physically. In this process, using *Sonder-* was a means of interpellating the victimized women in terms of otherness, a strategy that alienated them and, thus, made it easier to perpetrate violence against them.

4.2. Dysphemistic metaphors

Exploring how women were interpellated through the rhetoric of otherness in the camp discourse is key to understand language as an intrinsic part of the gender-based violence perpetrated. One of the most revealing lexical items in this regard was *Muselmann*, 'muslim', a ubiquitous term in survivors' accounts. *Muselmann* described the 'living dead' prisoners, those who had surrendered and were on the brink of death from abuse and starvation, at the lowest position of the *Lager* hierarchy, and routinely 'selected' for the gas chambers (Agamben 1999, 54). Though a central experience in survivor's testimony, the *Muselmann* has remained in the margins of scholarship on the destruction of European Jewry during five decades. However, this figure creates an essential paradigm to understand the *Lager* as "the site of an experiment beyond life and death in which the Jew is transformed into a *Muselmann* and the human being into a non-human" (Agamben 1999, 51). The semantic transformation that takes place in *Muselmann* suggests that the person who was physically and psychologically distilled by Nazism was interpellated as a stranger, as someone who did not belong to their own culture and religion (Aschenberg 2002).

The most likely explanation of the term stems from the Arabic literal meaning of the word 'muslim', 'the one who submits unconditionally to the will of God'. This sense elicited the racist narrative of Islam's supposed fatalism that originated in the Middle Ages with a deprecatory connotation and is still present in some European languages (Agamben 1999, 44). In the *Lager*, this attribute associated to the source domain through racial prejudice—Muslim submission to the will of Allah misinterpreted as resignation and indifference towards life—was resignified and mapped onto the target domain, defining the Jewish *Muselmann* of the *Lager* by their "loss of all will and consciousness" (Agamben 1999, 45). This ontological correspondence between source and target domain unveils an underlying racist ethos which, once again, calls for an

intersectional approach to violence in the *Lager*: the use and scope of *Muselmann* epitomizes linguistic, racialized violence inflicted not only by the Nazi perpetrator, but, as survivors emphasize (Stern 2004, 257), also by white deportees against non-whites in the same position.

Oster (2020) has questioned the male figure of the *Muselmann* as a universal trope of mass suffering and unescapable death, by exploring it through a gendered lens. She contends that Holocaust scholarship has incorporated the *Muselmann* narrative uncritically, and defends the need to reconsider the androcentric version of this term: "what about the women closest to death? Although female concentration camp prisoners were worked to death like the men, at death camps the majority were killed immediately upon arrival, often together with their children" (Oster 2020, 199). This article does not intend to establish a hierarchy of suffering: I hope to untangle how linguistic aggression against women intersected among various factors, supporting Jones' (2006) idea that any kind of genocidal targeting of a group is always gender-specific and pertains to the embodied experience of victims. The denomination *Muselmann* proves that ethnic oppression was one of such intersecting factors. Oster (2020, 206) claims that "*Muselmann* is by definition a male-gendered term", but this word etymologically stems from Persian *musilmān* and, thus, the Germanized ending *-mann* denoting masculine gender is of folk etymological origin (Pfeifer 1993). Though *Muselmann* was applied in the *Lager* to both female and male deportees, the question that I would like to address is whether the term was interpreted as intrinsically masculine and if, consequently, speakers felt the need to create a feminine variant. Auschwitz survivor Anne-Line Stern's testimony proves crucial in this regard:

> In one of our first *Kommando* marches, I happened to see a group like that staggering towards us, on the edge of the *Lagerstrasse*. I asked, horrified, "Who is it? What is that? (I meant, as a disease). Response from an old woman: "*Muselmann*. *Muselmänner*." I understand right away (those djellaba-like rags falling to their feet, those big sunken eyes). I am surprised though: "*Männer*? Men?" "*Muselweiber*" was the answer, a little exasperated. (Stern 2004, 257-258)[5]

This excerpt suggests that Anne-Lise Stern, a newly arrived prisoner, interpreted the term as masculine-gendered and, surprised, demanded an answer as to why it was applied to female inmates. The other woman, an older deportee with more camp experience, instinctively feminized the term into *Muselweiber.* While Holocaust scholarship has centered the narrative around the figure of the *Muselmann*, Stern's memoir hints at its coexistence with a feminine variant, *Muselweib*, a fact that has only been acknowledged by German sociologist Sofsky (1997, 329). Though the first scholar to undertake a systematic analysis of the concentrationary society, Sofsky merely mentioned the existence of this term and equated its performative function with that of *Muselmann* and certain zoosemic metaphors, failing to account for the gender-related implications of this slur. Yet *Muselweib* is, indeed, worth analyzing from this perspective. In the semantic path of devaluation of women, *Weib* has evolved from a neutral term into a derogative word for 'woman', encompassing severe socially-embedded connotations of sexualization, functionalization and degradation (Nübling 2011, 346-347). This derogative use of *Weib* in reference to women, furthermore, directly intertwines with zoosemy and animalization, because its usage was increasingly

[5] Translated from the French by the author.

being more frequently used to refer to the sex of female animals and, as such, when applied to women, it tends to fulfill a dysphemistic function.

In the concentrationary universe, in the process of creating a female variant for the *Muselmann*, instead of adding the ending *-frau*, the feminine equivalent of *-mann* with neutral connotations, language users intentionally constructed the denomination for female prisoners through *Weib*, whose performative function acquired a derogative and misogynistic dimension, becoming thus a clear example of language aggression through a dysphemistic metaphor. Anne-Line Stern epitomizes the racist ethos of the *Lager* society and intersectional oppression from white concentrees to non-whites in the same position. While *Muselmann* and *Muselweib* shared the meaning of 'living skeleton' (Agamben 1999, 54-55) and the connotation of otherness, the neologism created for women mirrored the intersection between gender and ethnic oppression, while fulfilling a dysphemistic function. *Muselweib* demonstrates that Jewish women, even on the brink of death, keep being gendered, racialized, and dehumanized to enhance otherness—in spite of their shaved heads, their emaciated bodies, and the complete violation of gender norms of women's femininity. The function of *Weib* as a metaphor in dysphemistic use, which interpellated women in zoosemic and sexual terms, connects with the following lexical item of interest.

Schmuckstück emerged in the *Lager* as a metaphorical denomination for Jewish women that sheds further light on the assault on women's bodies. Germain Tillion's account of Ravensbrück defines the *Schmuckstück* as a female version of the *Muselmann*, "far past what is usually called emaciation and almost at a fatal stage of malnutrition, […] incapable of personal or social discipline, unwashed, resigned to the lice, clothed in unbelievable rags, and covered with every kind of running, infected sore" (Tillion 1975, 23). *Schmuckstück* means 'trinket' and was used among Nazis,

guards and fellow prisoners with fierce verbal sarcasm. An illustrative example of language aggression, *Schmuckstück* ironically reduced women to the camp refuse, to "worthless objects, the opposite of all the gold, coins, possessions, and other wealth that had been confiscated from them (often through violent vaginal searches)—a currency with no value at all" (Oster 2020, 208). Simultaneously, *Stück* translates as 'piece'—and it was the official Nazi euphemism to refer to their victims' cadavers in a dehumanizing way. As an adjective, *schmuck* can mean both 'spruce' and 'pretty', which evidences the cynicism and irony of using it for concentration camp inmates. Anne-Lise Stern (2004, 346-347) significantly connects this term to motherhood: "It's a matter of jewelry: *Schmuckstück*. The *Schmuckstück* that we yelled at each other over there, as an insult: a kind of trinket. But also, the treasure that a small child represents for their mother. […] *Schmuckstück* while alive; *Stück*, 'pieces', when dead". In her original French account, Stern puns with *bijou*, which means 'trinket', but also 'treasure' as an affectionate vocative. *Schmuckstück*, thus, seems to echo with maternity, which posed a serious threat to women.

In addition to these meanings, *Schmuck* is Yiddish slang for 'penis', while *Stück* may also refer to 'a trick' or 'a scheme'. Considering this polysemy, Oster (2020, 208-209) argues that *Schmuckstück* also functioned as a sexual slur, a synonym of 'whore' which must have felt extremely brutal to the Jewish women who understood it—indeed, "the possibilities for crassness and cruelty with the term (particularly directed at Jewish women) seem multifold". *Schmuckstück* needs to be understood as a parody of another almost homophonous word: *Schmutzstück*, 'garbage, filth', another prototypical insult uttered by Nazi perpetrators. As Oster (2020, 210) has emphasized, *Schmuckstück* and *Schmutzstück*, interchangeable slurs addressed only to women, exacerbated the ironic tensions between treasure and poverty, inanimate object and human corpse, filth and

sexual slur, motherhood and sexual violence: ultimately, these terms retain the "rhetorical tensions between the brutal attitudes of Nazis and those who internalized them", adopting the language of race-hatred, "which aimed to reduce women, Jewish in particular, to the status of despised and useless objects, trash, with a unique misogynistic twist".

Though both Tillion (1975) and Stern (2004) associate this term with Jewish inmates, there is evidence that it may have also been used for certain prisoners with the black triangle, belonging to the category of '*Asoziale*' according to the Nazi hierarchy. The perpetrator established a taxonomy, enforced by visual insignia such as the different colored triangles, which classified deportees according to prejudice. 'Asociality', was "a summary stigma devoid of social homogeneity", as it included, among others, prostitutes, Roma women, the unemployed, alcoholics… (Sofsky 1997, 124). German Ravensbrück survivor Buber-Neuman connects *Schmuckstück* to "a high proportion of such women among the Asocials and their lot was unenviable, for they were beaten and ill-treated by their fellow prisoners as well as by the guards" (2008, 182). She emphasizes their aggravated mental health: terribly abused by their fellow prisoners, "they lived in constant anxiety and their condition grew worse" (Buber-Neuman 2008, 183). An intersectional approach to linguistic aggression considering ethnic oppression cannon ignore Buber-Neumann's hint that *Schmückstuck* may have also been applied to Romani women, among other victims, pointing, once again, at the violence inflicted against non-white concentrees—as well as at its impact on women's psyches. Though this final idea requires further scrutiny, *Muselweib*, *Schmuckstück* and *Schmutzstück* epitomize the chain of linguistic abuse in the *Lager*, and its special ruthlessness towards non-white women, who were interpellated through dysphemistic figurative language.

4.3. Reappropriation

A final insight into semantic deprecation through animal imagery and its potential to trigger strategies of linguistic reclamation seems crucial to finish this discussion. *Kaninchen* is German for 'rabbit', and it refers to animals used for vivisection. In Ravensbrück, *Kaninchen* was the generalized name for a group of Polish women who were subjected to regular experimental operations. The testimony of those who survived, like Wanda Półtawska (1989), assumes incredible significance. Półtawska's detailed account shows the outspokenness and active rebellion of the *Kaninchen*, who openly defied the perpetrator. They became a symbol of resistance, fostering sisterhood and solidarity among women. Półtawska's testimony explains the origins of the metaphor, recalling the moment when Nazi doctors were about to experiment on her: "A single thought chased round my mind: But we're not guinea-pigs […] I must have kept repeating this sentence throughout the operation, and afterward some of the others took it. No, a thousand times no, we were not guinea-pigs" (1989, 80). She then explains how the term became widespread: "the term stuck. We used it of ourselves, and soon the whole camp came to know us as the guinea-pigs. The name was so apt that everyone, even the camp doctors, used it" (Półtawska 1989, 81).

Though the English translation does not reflect it, Półtawska's statement on the operating table was '*wir sind doch keine Versuchskaninchen*', invoking the term in the master's language. Among them, these deportees generally called themselves *króliki*, the Polish word for 'rabbit', as a way to convey their sorority, mutual solidarity, and shared ordeal—as a means to construct a strengthened 'us'. The Nazi perpetrator stole this term and adopted it in German to banalize and efface their in-group mark and, thus, to semantically derogate and dehumanize them. In the vast landscape of language, word

choice mirrors underlying ideological assumptions, and the same term varies in function depending on the speaker's mindset. Though Nazi doctors also conducted inhumane experiments on male prisoners, the term *Versuchskaninchen* became only widespread to allude to these women in particular. As a significant instance of zoosemy in reference to female individuals, this metaphorical denomination needs to be acknowledged and explored.

Examining the poetry written in Ravensbrück by female deportees, Constanze Jaiser has recovered "*Króliki*", an anonymous poem reconstructing their reality (2000, 66-68)[6]. The poem begins by painting a vivid picture of the operating room: "A large, bright room, a white table, white coats. / Shining instruments, tools and people, ghosts. / Bent over the table, / curious, strong and hard hands, / stronger and harder human glance, watching the agony". The poet then summons the suffering of the animal: "Professor—the doctor explains. / Touches the little animal. / And from the table rabbit eyes full of fear. / The bound body trembles with pain, / when the lancet stabs". Then, she evokes the relationship between victim and perpetrator: "From the table, / desperate rabbit's eyes meet the human / merciless eyes. / The life of the rabbit so short, / its heart so small".

In the original Polish text, the initial cold, ruthless description of the operating room and the Nazi perpetrator contrasts sharply and abruptly with *zwierzątko*, an emotional and affectionate diminutive of *zwierzę*, 'animal'. In the poem, when uttered by the victims, zoosemy transcends the purely representational potential of metaphor as a rhetorical trope, and instead epitomizes the poet's empathy with the rabbit, experiencing the ordeal through its eyes. While *króliki* was used by the female victims

[6] The poem was written in Polish and translated into German by Iwka Kahlauch. The author has translated it herself.

as a marker of solidarity, empathy and in-group membership, male Nazi doctors exploited its capacity to derogate semantically, turning to zoosemy in an attempt to frame "the concept of woman as male chattel; themes of male conquest, domination and exploitation" (Whaley and Antonelli 1983, 220). Prototypical patriarchal discourse, indeed, turns to zoosemic terms to deprecate women through sexualization and deagentization (Weatherall 2002, 26). 'Rabbit', as a matter of fact, connotes both an animal used for vivisection and an animal with exacerbated reproductive and sexual capacity. Though male prisoners were also subjected to experimentation in several camps, *Kaninchen* only prevailed for this group of women.

While the Nazis refashioned the meaning of *króliki* to create a slur, Półtawska (1989) reveals the deportees' powerful strategy to salvage this word from the Nazi-induced derogative connotation, reclaiming the authority of their ownership behind the term. When the war was coming to an end, the *króliki* began to call themselves *królowie*, 'rulers, monarchs', since the two terms stem from *król*, which in Polish means both 'rabbit' and 'monarch'. Nazi appropriation of the term *Kaninchen* as a pejorative epithet that stigmatized and disabled these women paradoxically enabled the target's resistance and ignited a process of counter-appropriation. The *Kaninchen* turned to linguistic reclamation, taking the authority to define themselves and restoring the term back to their mother tongue, which asserted their idiosyncrasy and prevented the perpetrator from accessing its meaning: "laying claim to the forbidden, the word as weapon is taken up and taken back by those it seeks to shackle—a self-emancipation that defies hegemonic linguistic ownership and the (ab)use of power" (Brontsema 2004, 1). Indeed, as enlighteningly captured by Butler:

> In being called an injurious name, one is derogated and demeaned. But the name holds out another possibility as well: by being called a name, one is also, paradoxically, given a certain possibility for social existence, initiated into a temporal life of language that exceeds the prior purposes that animate that call. Thus the injurious address may appear to fix or paralyze the one it hails, but it may also produce an unexpected and enabling response. If to be addressed is to be interpellated, then the offensive call runs the risk of inaugurating a subject in speech who comes to use language to counter the offensive call. (Butler 1997, 2)

Eventually, the *Kaninchen* became the monarchs of the *Lager*, turning to linguistic resignification as a political act that allowed them to regain control of their identity and embodied "a tool for disarming the power of a dominant group to control one's own and others' views of oneself, to categorize oneself or one's group in a totalizing way" (Godrej 2011, 111). *Króliki* and *królowie* unveil a narrative of female agency that challenges the traditional discourse of women's passive victimhood and, instead, shows them as active, empowered agents who escaped the poison of the LTI and turned to linguistic practices to renegotiate and subvert the relations of power.

5. Conclusions

Reexamining the Holocaust to explore linguistic aggression against women not only allows us to obtain a more nuanced understanding of this event, but also to continue to illuminate gender discrimination within genocidal violence, as it crystallizes in speech acts. The *Lager* provides a singular context to examine the connections between gender-

based linguistic aggression and genocidal purposes. In its extreme conditions, social constructs led to gender-specific methods of dehumanization, which targeted women's bodily integrity maternally, sexually and reproductively. Standing on the shoulders of feminist Holocaust scholarship (Ephgrave 2016; Hedgepeth and Saidel 2010; Mühlhäuser 2021; Waxman 2017), I have sought to demonstrate the extent to which the gendered nature of the *Shoah* permeated language, arguing that linguistic aggression against women embodied a legitimate form of gender-specific genocidal weaponry that validated the systematic assault on women's bodies, reinforcing power and gender imbalance.

This violence originated with the Nazi LTI and was then perpetrated and exacerbated by the abuse of male inmates, which left its own linguistic imprint. The highly misogynistic and racist underlying ethos of the camp society was made manifest in this chain of verbal abuse. Such ethos became linguistically enacted through a discourse that intentionally reduced women to sexual and biological functions and legitimized in this process certain spheres of violence. This rhetoric deliberately constructed and interpellated women in terms of otherness, validating the assault on their bodies by removing any potential moral misgivings from the perpetrators. This discourse simultaneously reveals and conceals the reality that women's bodies, though dehumanized and reified, remained available to be used and abused by men. Exploring metaphorization through the lens of cognitive semantics, I have concentrated on specific othering metaphorical realizations that acquired euphemistic or dysphemistic functions in order to perpetrate violence against women. Racist, zoosemic and reifying metaphors in the *Lager* epitomize Lakoff and Turner's (1989) Great Chain of Being, which hierarchically positions different forms of beings according to their perceived attributes.

In the camps, women were metaphorized in terms of animals and objects in order to summon gender and racial prejudice.

Specifically through dysphemistic zoosemy, certain ontological features and behaviors associated to the source domain—dirtiness, lack of intellect and individuality, uncontrollable sexual instincts, obedience and submission, replaceability—were mapped onto the target domain. When applied to women, these categories seemed to encompass connotations of functionalization and social degradation, such as the racist epithet *Muselweib*, which exemplifies, furthermore, ethnic oppression against Jewish women. Indeed, any coherent analysis of violence needs to understand Nazi oppression as a result of multilayered factors that functioned intersectionally: to address women's experiences thoroughly, we need to acknowledge diverse bodies and bodily experiences. This analysis has argued that women continued to be gendered, dehumanized, and racialized until the very end, and that brutal linguistic violence was perpetrated against non-white concentrees by other prisoners in the same position. Objectifying metaphors, such as *Schmuckstück*, intensified the cynical tensions between gender norms and dehumanization, object and cadaver, dirtiness and sexism.

While dysphemistic conceptualizations intertwined with racial oppression, euphemistic metaphors seemed directly connected to sexual violence. Some of these lexical items were created by male inmates, whereas others belonged to the official Nazi terminology. As for the first kind, *kochany*, a Polish affectionate vocative, was twisted with extreme cynicism to refer to a coerced relationship between privileged men and desperate women. Regarding the terms enforced by the Nazi system, the denomination of *Sonderkommando* concealed forced prostitution behind aseptic, impersonal, military vocabulary. On the one hand, the prefix *sonder-* interpellated the victimized women in terms of otherness, alienating and dehumanizing them and, thus, made it easier to

perpetrate violence against them. Referring to these women through the diminutive *Bordellmädchen*, on the other hand, was a means of deagentization which constructed the subjects as usable and disposable objects. By targeting specifically revealing lexical items that emerge in the *Lager*, I have been able to examine the relationships between linguistic aggression and the misogynistic, racist structures of the camps.

While male prisoners were also dehumanized as pests, objects and beasts, the uniquely female experience of the *Lager* that I have underscored in this article is, precisely, the process thereby these categories, only when mapped onto women, transferred specific features that conveyed essentialist gender prejudice. Metaphorical language triggered by reifying and zoosemic conceptualizations of women and the feminine conveyed gender stereotyping, but also ethnic oppression and racialized violence, epitomizing the ways in which the various factors that shape violence work intersectionally. I suggest that this language reinforced power, gender, and racial imbalance in the camps. Nevertheless, as *króliki* suggests, women were also able to resist this violence through strategies of resignification, which construct narratives of agency and empowerment, demonstrating the victims' struggle to challenge the dehumanizing ethos. Indeed, the study of the *Lager* presents significant opportunities to promote sociolinguistics and contact linguistics in relation to the function of language(s) within totalitarianism. Further exploration of such resistance through language is needed to advance in this field of research. Current feminist reexaminations of the Holocaust could benefit from this intersectional approach to violence, which will shed new light on the ways in which linguistic aggression contributed to laying the foundations for gendered violence during the *Shoah*.

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