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REPRESENTING AND TEACHING THE HOLOCAUST IN THE 21ST CENTURY: A PRACTICAL PROPOSAL

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More than seven decades have elapsed since the horrible Nazi machine was set into motion and, although some thinkers claim that "it is time to leave Auschwitz behind" (Burg 2008: 210), many of the debates concerning its representation and transmission still echo in contemporary societies. Among all the complex questions that the Holocaust brings to the fore, this article will focus on the conflicts over the role of history, testimony and literature in depicting the Holocaust and the traditional clash between the position of the historian, the witness and the artist when coming to terms with it. In the 1980s, Lawrence L. Langer exposed this conflict in the following questions: "To whom shall we entrust the custody of the public memory of the Holocaust? To the historian? To the survivor? To the critic? To the poet, novelist, dramatist?" (1988: 26). It is my contention that these questions are still very present within the field of Holocaust Studies and, thus, I will try to address some of them in the present article.

It is widely agreed that the literary representation of the Holocaust is problematic (Henke 1988: xiii; LaCapra 2001: 11; Lang 1988: 38; Luckhurst 2008: 69; Martínez-Alfaro 2010: 15), as

Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel put it: "by its uniqueness the Holocaust defies literature" (1970: 10). The well-known assumption in Trauma and Memory Studies that the representation of any traumatic episode is an aporetic phenomenon may bring some light into this problematic**.** As most of the well-known trauma critics have argued (Caruth 1995: 7; Granofsky 1995: 17; Hartman 2003: 257; LaCapra 2001: 184; Luckhurst 2008: 80; Vickroy 2002: 8-9; Whitehead 2004: 17), this paradoxical character stems from the contradictory nature of the phenomenon of trauma itself. Roger Luckhurst explains that any traumatic episode implies two main opposing impulses: the need to comprehend and deny the original traumatic event, turning the representation of the traumatic episode into a questionable act (2008: 89). Furthermore, focusing on the literary representation of trauma, Anne Whitehead emphasises that the term "*trauma fiction* represents a paradox or contradiction; if trauma comprises an event or experience which overwhelms the individual and resists language or representation, how then can it be narrativised in fiction?" (2004: 3). Taking these aporias into consideration, even more demanding questions arise when dealing with the Holocaust: what happens when the representation of trauma makes reference to historical episodes which have affected a vast number of people; which have implied a turning point in our understanding of history; which have been transmitted generationally, giving place to a feeling of identity based on the trauma itself?

In order to shed some light on these enquiries, I will start by summarising the evolution of the literary representation of the Holocaust, concentrating on the confessional culture that has predominated in the last two decades. An overview of the present-day vast number of Holocaust narratives as well as the memoir boom will lead me to question the dangers of the current overuse of trauma, mainly in relation to Holocaust narratives, and to focus on the key role of education in addressing and negotiating the meaning of the Holocaust when trying to educate "the future generations on the democratic and citizenship values that failed drastically in Europe seven decades ago" (Pellicer-Ortín, Martínez-Alfaro and Fernández-Gil 2015: 161). Thus, one of my main claims will be that the texts and activities teachers prepare for their classrooms may offer an invigorated space of encounter for the students to develop empathic bonds which could help them see the Holocaust through new-fangled prisms. I will illustrate some of these key aspects with a practical exercise that I carried out in some academic workshops, and which could be used in educational contexts to raise students' awareness about the dilemmas posed by the representation of the Holocaust. After presenting these practical activities, I will discuss the possible results of such exercises as well as the potential path that the field of Holocaust Studies may take when it comes to educate the future generations in dealing with one of the darkest

episodes of our era and in making them be aware of the ideological structures that lie behind the predominant literary modes and confessional genres of our given time.

Representing the Holocaust: Debates and Evolution

The depiction of the traumatic events happened during the Nazi regime is always linked to certain ethical and historical limits that try to avoid its trivialisation. Thinkers, historians and artists such as Jean-François Lyotard, Tim Armstrong, Elie Wiesel, Claude Lanzmann, Arthur Cohen, Theodor Adorno or Maurice Blanchot among many others (Rothberg 2000: 5, 19) have argued for the unrepresentability of the Holocaust. For example, the philosopher Berel Lang has claimed that the Holocaust cannot be accessed through any artistic representation but only through historiographic discourse (1988: 38). Ideas supported by Irving Howe when he highlights the difficulties for writers of fiction in making sense of the Holocaust: "what can the literary imagination, traditionally so proud of its self-generating capacities, add to – how can it go beyond – the intolerable matter [the Holocaust] cast up by memory?" (1988: 187).

In contrast, other critics have contended that the society of the future should concentrate on the remembrance of the events themselves and their value for educational purposes, much more so when the number of first-generation survivors decreases every day. This way, Geoffrey Hartman has insisted that "we are deep into the process of creating new instruments to record and express what happened. The instruments themselves, the means of expression, are now, as it were, born of trauma" (2002: 1). Among these instruments, he mentions the power of testimonies as well as fictional narratives (2002: 52); a claim that is also supported by other critics such as Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub (1992: xx). Moreover, the voices defending the role of literature as the most appropriate means to depict the Holocaust have increased in the last few years. For instance, Maja Zehfuss sees literary practices as the most suitable sites to negotiate these memories publically and to foster ethical attitudes in citizens when she argues that: "By stressing the fictionality of what might appear as information… literature disturbs our faith in knowing and thereby keeps open the question of memory" (2006: 229-30). Together with this, the tendency to undervalue the narrations that have not been written by first-generation survivors is still a controversial issue. As María Jesús Martínez Alfaro rightly puts it, "fictionalised accounts of the Holocaust… have been thoroughly questioned, or at least questioned in a way that survivors' narratives have not" (2011: 129). Some of the main reasons for this emphasis on

authority are the suspicions about a writer's reasons to write a fictional account on a collective traumatic event of such scale as the Holocaust and the unreliability assigned to these narratives.

The evolution that the literary representation of the Holocaust has undergone in the last decades may be very telling when considering these authorial concerns. More than sixty years ago, Theodor Adorno expressed his famous contention that writing poetry after Auschwitz was barbaric (2003: 160). However, some years later, he explained that what he meant was that literature needed to find new ways to represent the Holocaust, and that the victims had the task to voice their experiences, always respecting certain ethical limits (1973). After this initial advocacy of silence, the testimonial works of Primo Levi, Elie Wiesel, Jorge Semprún, and Jean Améry contributed to promoting the all-pervading idea that the genre of testimony was the most appropriate way to access the Holocaust (Winter 2010: 60). Holocaust witnesses assumed a kind of "liminal, mediating, semi-sacred role" (62), and the duty "to bear witness for the dead and for the living" (Wiesel 1958: xv).

However, in spite of this central role of the witness, artistic consciousness started to develop in the 1980s. The legacy of the Holocaust acquired a more relevant presence in US culture with the popular TV series *Holocaust* (1978) and William Styron's novel *Sophie's Choice* (1979), which was made into the well-known film in 1982. From that moment onwards, plenty of written, oral and visual testimonies of Holocaust survivors have been collected. Survivors and their descendants have narrated their experiences in literary forms. In fact, the second – and third – generations of Holocaust survivors have produced a great variety of hybrid accounts that show the descendants' struggles to cope with the inherited burden of the Holocaust. Also, writers who did not live the Holocaust have contributed to the current eclosion of Holocaust narratives. And what is more, false testimonies such as Helen Darville's *The Hand that Signed the Paper* (1995) and Binjamin Wilkomirski's *Fragments* (1996) have seen the light, turning into writings "of pressing generic concern" (Vice 2010: 155). In keeping with this, many recent critical works have even contributed to fostering the label of the so called "Holocaust novels" or "Holocaust genre": the great variety of fictional, semi-fictional or autobiographical works which have represented the Holocaust in recent times (Sicher 2005: xi). Their appearance has even given forth an overrepresentation of the Holocaust, which has made it accessible to a wider public. Accordingly, the latest stage in this evolution has been reached, as the Holocaust has become a metaphor to refer to diverse collective traumatic episodes suffered by different minority groups during the twentieth century.

The Memory Boom and New Testimonial Genres

This recent commodification and metaphorisation of the Holocaust goes hand in hand with the testimonial turn that contemporary culture has experienced since the 1990s. Although the great majority of trauma critics have agreed on the healing potential of trauma narratives (Auerbach 1989: vi; Bloom 2010: 210; Hartman 2003: 259; Henke 1998: xii-xiii; LaCapra 2001: 186; Laub and Podell 1995: 998), inspired, among others, by the pioneering theories of the "talking cure" elaborated by Sigmund Freud and Josef Breuer at the end of the 19th century (1991: 57-68), we should wonder to what extent the practice of "scriptotherapy" – "the process of writing out and writing through traumatic experience in the mode of therapeutic re-enactment" – has been deprived of its original healing meaning (Henke 1998: xii-xiii).

It is evident that a proliferation of life-writing practices and an increasing academic interest in autobiographical genres has recently occurred. In the light of this, Andreas Huyssen claims that memory has emerged as the key organising principle of critical and artistic work at the turn of the millenium (1995: 9). Duncan Bell has even argued that "the turn to memory represents a pathological condition of contemporary political life" (2010: 25). And Roger Luckhurst considers that this obsession has invaded the literary panorama in the form of a "memory boom" of unprecedented proportions (2008: 117). Within this context, an outburst of new autobiographical sub-genres has happened, as the need to narrate traumatic memories has led writers to look for genres that represent what in principle cannot be represented due its traumatic nature.

This boom has also been studied by the sociological and anthropological current of critics that have been aware of the socio-political dangers that the invasion of trauma in general and of Holocaust images in particular may imply in our daily lives. Alan Young (1997: 3-4), Patrick Bracken (2001: 733), and Kirby Farrell (1998: x) are some of the thinkers who have criticised the current universalised notions of trauma and they have claimed for the decentralisation of the Western concept of PTSD. Other critics like Duncan Bell suggest that this "widespread use of trauma discourse in western societies has led to an abdication of individual and political responsibility and the emergence of an undifferentiated "victim culture" (2010: 9). This victim culture has contributed to the creation of what Dominick LaCapra has defined as "foundational traumas" (2001: 26), giving place to myths of origins that tend to justify violence in response to the traumatic experiences undergone by a given group. Further, another negative consequence of this abuse of trauma has been the increasing appearance of False Memory Syndrome cases, which sometimes have been directly or indirectly encouraged by society and therapists, mainly in those

cases related to sexual abuse. Drawing on this, this trauma paradigm, the "trauma culture" according to Roger Luckhurst (2003: 28-47) and "traumatological" in Philip Tew's view (2007: 190), is said to have invaded the media and a wide range of contemporary confessional literature.

Applying these ideas to the case of the Holocaust, I have already pointed a finger at the contemporary tendency to welcome the connections between the Holocaust and other traumatic collective events, emptying the Holocaust of its original meaning and making it part of our collective consciousness. This has had various positive effects, such as the fostering of a universal rights policy and the increasing upsurge of social movements against any form of violence. Nevertheless, its over-presence has also given way to several cases of trivialisation which, according to Manfred Gerstenfeld, contribute to far-fetched comparisons of the Holocaust with very diverse events in order to satisfy different ideological and commercial purposes (2008). Also, this has produced a drastic change in the general understanding of the figure of the survivor. If the term survivor was initially assigned a semi-sacred status, nowadays, "survival has become a paradigm of an identity-making trauma" (Roth 2011: 94-5). Together with this, diverse false testimonies have seen the light, being the object of an interesting controversy about the new -fangled ways of reading testimony and the ethical purposes of these new testimonial narratives. These phenomena, as well as Robert Eaglestone's conviction that "Holocaust testimony needs to be understood as a new genre, in a new context, which involves both texts and altered ways of reading, standing in its own right" (2004: 38), together with Sue Vice's further claims that false testimony may be seen as a new way "to view such constructs as nationality, ethnic origin, the experience of victimhood, gender, and subjectivity itself" (2010: 155), would challenge the traditional clash between Holocaust history, testimony and literature.

In short, tracing the evolution in the theories on the representation of the Holocaust leads us to realise that the fields of Trauma, Memory and Holocaust Studies are broadening their horizons so as to include previous neglected genres, modes and discourses and blurring the traditional rigid boundaries between fiction, autobiography, memoir, testimony and even history. Moreover, a turn to autobiographical and testimonial practices has been noticed and it has been closely related to the current individual and collective need to voice traumatic experiences, even though this ever-present issue of trauma in the Western socio-cultural realm has led to an abuse and over-use of the healing mechanisms initially provided by these narratives. Drawing on this, my next point for discussion would be: to what extent has this changing panorama affected the way the Holocaust, and by extension other traumatic historical episodes, is taught and encountered by readers/students in diverse literary texts?

Education: New Sites of Representation and Confrontation

It is not a coincidence that these voices demanding more flexible approaches to the Holocaust representation run parallel to the moment when education has become an essential aspect to consider in present-day Holocaust discussions. As Robert Eaglestone and Barry Langford argue, the Holocaust has not only become a major topic of research but it has also turned into a key issue to negotiate in pedagogical circles (2008: 1). The same complexities and difficulties that emerge when talking about Holocaust representation in the field of Holocaust Studies come to the fore in the field of pedagogy, becoming part of the vocabulary of the teachers of a good range of subjects and modules at various levels and in very different countries and contexts. Most of the disciplines and fields that have been mentioned so far converge when it comes to the issue of educating on the Holocaust. Although this interest in teaching the Holocaust is significant in many areas, the fields of literary studies, modern languages, and film studies have experienced a more significant surge in interest. Just as the research on this field has enormously increased in the last few decades, the texts dealing with these issues have been extensively analysed in the literature and media curriculum. Therefore, most of the controversies explained so far emerge in a similar way in the literature, film or culture classroom that tackles the Holocaust.

Yet, drawing on the teaching experiences collected in Robert Eaglestone and Barry Langford's study (2008: 9-14), the generic distinctions that still worry many literary critics are not so relevant in the classroom. The traditional either/or opposition between viewing literary texts in terms of historical fact or experimental poetic narratives does not help students to grasp the complexity of the Holocaust, as what they should grasp is the immeasurability of the Holocaust and the impossibility to fully comprehend it. Although some historical facts have always to be taught, the Holocaust challenges the main tenet of any educative process, i.e. the transmission of knowledge and factual data, since, in spite of the great number of historical and testimonial reports, "the evidence is not sufficient to provide us with a knowledge of the events" (Donalds and Glejzer 2001: 159). Therefore, a good starting point for a literary course dealing with Holocaust narratives would be to make students aware of the blurring line existing between factual, historical and fictional representations of the Holocaust and help them unveil the range of narrative mechanisms that can be used to put into words such unspeakable events as those undergone under Nazism.

A Practical Exercise: Looking for Authorial Traces in Holocaust Narratives

In order to satisfy this educational purpose, I would like to illustrate the exercise I carried out with the audiences participating in the Conferences "The Future of Holocaust Studies" (Southampton, July 2013) and "AEDEAN" (Barcelona, November 2011), and which could be used with undergraduate or postgraduate students attending any course that is related to the literary and/or cultural representation of the Holocaust. According to Marianne Hirsch and Irene Kacandes' postulates exposed in their work *Teaching the Representation of the Holocaust*, where they claimed that when teaching the and through the Holocaust "one can introduce students to philosophical debates about good and evil; to sociological theories of violence, authority, obedience, conformity, resistance, and rescue; and to psychological theories of tolerance and prejudice, of trauma, memory, and survival" (2004: 6-7); these are the main issues that the exercise proposed is aimed at arising in any class or workshop where it could be implemented. Furthermore, it should be borne in mind that the teacher that introduces the Holocaust in the classroom can have access to the great number of resources offered by institutions like the UNESCO, the Holocaust Educational Trust, the Centre for Holocaust Education in London, or the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum which offer recommendations about how to teach through the Holocaust. As may be read on the website of the USHMM: "When you as an educator take the time to consider the rationale for your lessons on the Holocaust, you will be more likely to select content that speaks to your students' interests and provides them with a clearer understanding of a complex history". This is the principle that was applied to the selection of the texts needed for this particular activity, together with some of the guidelines they offer when carrying out similar activities to the one presented here: "Do not teach or imply that the Holocaust was inevitable / Avoid simple answers to complex questions / Strive for precision of language / Strive for balance in establishing whose perspective informs your study of the Holocaust / Avoid comparisons of pain / Do not romanticize history. / Contextualize the history / Translate statistics into people / Make responsible methodological choices." Finally, Marianne Hirsch and Irene Kacandes also explain that the literary and testimonial texts chosen should make use of experimentation and indirectedness so as to prevent the readers' over -identification with the experiences depicted and in order to expose readers to a variety of extreme situations which might urge students to rethink their ethical positions (2004: 16).

Taking these premises into account, the exercise entitled "Looking for Authorial Traces in Holocaust Narratives" consists of analysing various narrative fragments concerned with the Holocaust. They may be testimonial works written by Holocaust survivors, false testimonies, or

literary works produced by non-survivors. The teacher does not initially provide any background information of the author and the text, as they are going to focus only on the stylistic traces displayed. The students should identify different aspects in their analysis, such as the narrative voice, the variety of rhetorical figures, the use of verbal tenses and grammar, and the genre of the text – the aspects that Robert Eaglestone and Barry Langford describe as the most relevant to discuss in the class at the level of the discourse (2008: 4). After the analysis, the students should guess which texts are real memoirs and which ones are fictional narratives, and provide some textual evidence for their choice. Then, the teacher will reveal the context of each text and the whole class will check if they were right in their assumptions, which will promote appealing questions for the students' reflection. The choice of texts to be analysed can vary depending on the context, the syllabus and the teacher's preferences. Here, I propose those that I used in the workshops where this exercise was carried out.

Example 1

O you who know

Did you know that hunger makes the eyes sparkle that thirst dims

Them

O you who know

Did you know that you can see your mother dead

And not shed a tear

O you who know

Did you know that in the morning you wish for death

And in the evening you fear it

O you who know

Did you know that a day is longer than a year

A minute longer than a lifetime

O you who know

Did you know that legs are more vulnerable than eyes

Never harder than bones

The heart firmer than steel

Did you know that the stones of the road do not weep

That there is one word

Only for dread

One for anguish

Did you know that suffering is limitless

That horror cannot be circumscribed

Did you know this

You who know.

Some of the aspects that were noticed in the workshops were that this is a poem whose lyrical subject is a Holocaust survivor trying to put into words the horror of a concentration camp and addressing the reader to be involved in this tricky task. The contrast between the survivor, who appears to know what the reader is unable to know, and the readers, who wrongly think that they know what happened, creates an intentional distance between the survivor and the rest of the humanity. Although the initial possibility of understanding seems to be established ("you who know", line 1), this possibility is demolished by the sequence of images that point at the incomprehensible nature of the camps. Formally, the poem presents various rhetorical devices that could be commented during the class. For example, the poem consists of anaphoric constructions addressing the readers ("O you who know"), and this is followed by the questioning "did you know that". This repetitive appeal to the readers forces them to enter the dynamics of the poem and question themselves each of the camp images described. Among these images, body images evoking corporeal sensations and feelings are identified ("hunger makes the eyes sparkle", "thirst dims them", "legs more vulnerable than eyes", "nerves harder than bones", "heart firmer than steel"), which show the dehumanisation suffered by the camp prisoners. This dehumanisation achieves a climax when the lyrical subject evokes how one can see his or her mother dead and be unable to cry under those extreme situations. The poem also displays various antithesis and contradictions ("wish for death" – "fear it", "a day longer than a year" – "minute longer than a lifetime"), which represent the incapability of the human psyche to confront this horror. Other linguistic mechanisms are the recurrent comparative structures that show the author's impossible search of some referent with which life in the camps may be compared. As the poem advances, the problem of language is directly addressed ("one word for dread, one for anguish", lines 18-19), concluding that the Holocaust cannot be expressed. Also, the constant mixture of past and present tenses alludes to the mixture of time dimensions in the world of the concentration camps, i.e. the question is in the past but the horror of the camps belongs in an eternal present for the survivors. Finally, the poem lacks any sign of punctuation, which increases the overpowering feelings evoked by the succession of questions. In fact, this is meant to assert that the reader cannot know any of the images described throughout the poem. When talking

about the generic conventions, the students could point at some of the problems emerged when aestheticising the Holocaust, and try to decide if they think that this poetic licence may have been carried out by a survivor.

Example 2

> So – my suspicions were right. I've fallen into a trap. The oven door is smaller than usual, but it's big enough for children. I know, I've seen, they use children for heating too. Wooden bunks for children, oven doors for children, it's all too much. As I thought this, I suddenly raised up the cellar stairs and into my room. My thoughts were falling over each other. I was right. They're trying to trick me. That's why they want me to forget what I know. The camp's still here. Everything's still here.

To begin with, the students could identify this text as prose and distinguish that there is a first-person narrator, suggesting that this is an autobiographical narrative. The narrator is homodiegetic, s/he takes part in the action narrated, and extradiegetic, as an older narrator is remembering the past now that some time has elapsed. In fact, the first part of the fragment ("So… it's all too much") corresponds to his/her traumatic memories of the camps, while in the second part ("As I thought this… Everything's still present") the trauma comes to the surface when the compulsive repetition of the past makes the subject live in a constant state of anxiety. Students could notice that this episode seems to be very typical in those testimonial trauma narratives in which the subject is living a present situation that reminds him or her of the traumatic past, which is re-enacted in the present. In this case, the traumatic images of the people being burnt in the ovens by the Nazis ("they"), more concretely of children in bunks being cremated, reappear in the narrator's consciousness as part of the stage of repetition-compulsion. Further, the final sentences ("The camp's still here. Everything's still here") go in line with what was explained in the previous extract about the survivors' refusal to leave the memories of the Holocaust behind. This could lead the students to think that this is a real testimony, as part of the survivors' duty to keep Holocaust memories alive.

Example 3

> Three days after the liberation of Buchenwald, I became very ill: some form of poisoning. I was transferred to a hospital and spent two weeks between life and death.
>
> One day when I was able to get up, I decided to look at myself in the mirror on the opposite wall. I had not seen myself since the ghetto.
>
> From the depths of the mirror, a corpse was contemplating me.

The look in his eyes as he gazed at me has never left me.

The next example would be analysed in a similar way to the previous one, since this is prose and there is a first-person narrator recounting his or her life in the retrospective. The narrator is homodiegetic and intradiegetic as the main character implied in the action; and the focalisation is internal too. This episode refers to the liberation of the camp of Buchenwald and to what happened to the narrator afterwards, the way s/he perceived that moment and the consequences it had for him/her. Instead of making use of sentimental language and complex rhetorical figures, the syntax is very simple. The most relevant aspect in terms of language comes at the end of the paragraph: "From the depths of the mirror, a corpse was contemplating me. The look in his eyes as he gazed at me has never left me". As in other accounts by Holocaust survivors (Agamben 2000: 41-89), the narrator splits his/her self into the self that experienced life in the concentration camp ("the corpse") and the self that survived it ("me"). The narrator objectifies his/her own persona by making reference to the self s/he was in the camps (Agamben 2000: 156-7), and from that moment, s/he dissociates that traumatic self from his/her present consciousness. Also, it is very telling that the verbal tenses change here from the past used throughout to the present perfect ("has never left me"). This implies that this traumatised corpse belongs in the past but it continues to have present consequences. This strategy might be highlighted by the students and they could discuss whether it is negative, as the dissociated self can never reach a stable sense of identity, or positive, as this might be a strategy to cope with the Holocaust.

Example 4

Does it matter if they were from Kielce or Brno or Grodno or Brody or Lvov or Turin or Berlin? Or that the silverware or one linen tablecloth or the chipped enamel pot – the one with the red stripe, handed down by a mother to her daughter – were later used by a neighbour or someone they never knew? Or if one went first or last; or whether they were separated getting on the train or off the train; or whether they were taken from Athens or Amsterdam or Radom, from Paris or Bordeaux, Rome or Trieste, from Parczew or Bialystok or Salonika. … None of that obsessed me; but – were they silent or did they speak? Were their eyes open or closed?

I couldn't turn my anguish from the precise moment of death. I was focused on that historical split second: the tableau of the haunting trinity – perpetrator, victim, witness.

In this case, the prose makes use of a more elaborated style than in the example two and three. Again, the narration is made in the retrospective as the narrator collects the thoughts s/he had when s/he was in the camps. These thoughts show that the narrator was obsessed with the moment of death experienced by the victims, but here s/he does not only focus on the victim but sees the executions that happened in the camps as a three-side event in which perpetrators, victims and witnesses took part. The metaphor of the "trinity" is used to refer to this triangle, made of the three agents implied in the Holocaust. The narrator's thoughts are rendered as rhetorical questions s/he asked her/himself trying to make sense of the Nazi killings and, although an answer is not given, this accumulation of questions implies that none of the killings can make sense to human reason. Another strategy that could be noticed is that the narrator uses particular examples of cities, countries, and household appliances to turn the unknown and nameless victims into real people. The author also uses verbal tenses for his or her own dramatic purposes: all the actions that the narrator renders when thinking about the Holocaust are in the past but there is one action told in the present: the first question posed by the narrator ("Does it matter"). Again, the use of the present is aimed at turning the Holocaust memory into an everlasting presence.

Discussion and Possible Results

Drawing on the guidelines offered by the USHMM, the development of this exercise could continue as follows: the first thing that the students should check is the biographical background of the author and they should see if they were right in their assumptions, thus, we will be providing a specific and historical context where the text was produced (as the guidelines "Contextualize the history" and "Translate statistics into people" clarify). The first text corresponds to the first part of Charlotte Delbo's trilogy *Auschwitz and After* (1995: 11), translated from the original French *Auswitch et Aprés*. This is a trilogy divided into three parts: *None of Us Will Return*, *Useless Knowledge*, and *The Measure of Our Days* in which she narrates her experience in Auschwitz and Ravensbruk – where she was sent because of being a non-Jewish member of the French resistance – and her posterior return to France after her liberation. Delbo finished the first volume in 1946 but she did not feel prepared to publish it until 1965. Also, the second volume was written between 1946 and 1947 but it did not see the light until 1970, and it was soon followed by the third part. Although Charlotte Delbo has written many plays and essays, she is mainly known for this trilogy. Regarding the genre and style of this work, we can expand on the main ideas they will have suggested in the analysis and explain that this is an experimental

work that mixes a variety of genres in order to express the unspeakable. Charlotte Delbo exemplifies the writer's urge to find a discourse that can explain the Holocaust, whereas it unveils its intrinsic inexplicability. As mentioned by Lawrence L. Langer, "her unique blend of poetry and prose, result[ing]s in a lyrical rendering of atrocity that is alarmingly beautiful, an aesthetics of agitation" (1988: xvi); which is a fruitful reflection to discuss if it is ethical to turn the horror of the Holocaust into art and beauty. This is the style that Michael Rothberg defines as the most appropriate to represent the Holocaust, the traumatic realism "in which the unsymbolizable real persists within and disrupts the mimetic narrative of everyday reality" (2000: 144). We could also talk about the reception of this work and consider to what extent the readers can bear the suffering they are faced to when reading Holocaust narratives (always trying to avoid simple answers to the complex questions emerged when discussing the Holocaust, according to the USHMM).

The second text is a fragment from Binjamin Wilkomirski's *Fragments: Memories of a Childhood, 1939-1948* (1997: 125). This work has given place to a strong controversy, since it was published as this author's memoir, it was initially praised by the critics and it even won several prizes. In this memoir, he presented himself as one of the Jewish survivors from Riga and the concentration camps in Poland. However, in 1999 it was discovered that his real name was Bruno Grosjean, he had been born in Switzerland and given in adoption to a Swiss family when he was four years old. Thus, if this text had to be ascribed to a generic category it would be that of false testimony. Sue Vice emphasises the impact of this work as *Fragments* inaugurated the debate on the role of false testimonies and, although most of the initial reactions to this work criticised the morality of such practices (2000: 141), it has been explained that current critics have started to look at them as singular literary genres. This exercise would prompt the most challenging questions for the students, as this text could make them conclude that there is a lack of textual differences between real and false Holocaust testimonies.

The third text is the final part of Elie Wiesel's testimonial narrative *Night* published in 1958 (here 2008: 115), a key text to study when approaching the Holocaust and the testimonial narratives written by survivors. Winner of the Peace Nobel Prize, Elie Wiesel survived Auschwitz and Buchenwald and devoted his life to voicing this horrible episode through testimonial narratives, essays, and lectures. This fragment may be very useful to highlight the minimalism that characterises many survivors' testimonies. For Raul Hilberg, this is the rule that should be obeyed by Holocaust narratives. Indeed, he points at *Night* as the perfect instance of this minimalism, "the art of using a minimum of words to say the maximum" (1988: 23). Therefore, this text will probably raise questions about the genres that are more suitable to depict life in the camps.

The final text is an extract from Anne Michaels' novel *Fugitive Pieces* (1997: 139). The Canadian writer was very acclaimed with the publication of this poetical novel on the transgenerational connections with the Holocaust; however, it was also criticised for being excessively poeticised. Indeed, during the storm of publicity surrounding *Fugitive Pieces,* a journalist asked her to confirm whether she was Jewish and she refused to do so because she considered that the key thing in her *oeuvre* was the text and its lyrical power but not her life and roots (in Crown 2001). The reactions to this novel exemplify what Sue Vice described as "scandalous", since "they invariably provoke controversy by inspiring repulsion and acclaim in equal measure" (2000: 1). The students' answers to this text could agree with these views, since the message of *Fugitive Pieces* has gone further than the biography of its author.

Finally, after providing the solutions to the students, it could be highlighted that, despite the authorial differences, all the texts address the impossibility to rationally understand what happened in the camps, the paradoxes of representation and the problem of language, the impossibility to leave these memories behind, and the active role of the readers in getting involved in the dialectics of comprehending the Holocaust – aspects which seem to coincide with Marianne Hirsch and Irene Kacandes' tenets exposed above (2004: 6-7). In addition to this, this discursive analysis of textual Holocaust representations responds to "a responsible methodological choice" on the teacher's part by fulfilling other relevant guidelines offered by the USHMM. For example, this exercise fosters the "precision of language" needed both to write and read a text approaching the Holocaust; it provides different perspectives on the Holocaust (those belonging to political prisoners, Jewish survivors, bystanders, perpetrators and victims); it makes students read various genres (fiction, autobiography, false testimony); and it avoids any kind of competence for victimhood by placing all the narratives at the same textual level, emphasising that all of them are, in the end, narrative constructions whatever the original source may be. Furthermore, an exercise like this goes in line with the spirit fostered by the USHMM, since it can invite thinkers and teachers alike to question our own roles as educators and critics, agreeing that we, as members of diverse educational communities in our different institutions, can make a difference in our students' perceptions of the Holocaust according to the readings we choose and the texts we analyse in class. Drawing on Yehuda Bauer's claim that Holocaust education should be part of the modern societies' "general attempt to create a world that will not be good, but possibly slightly better than the one we live in now" (2014: 181), we could state to a great extent that that education has now a big responsibility in the future development of Holocaust Studies.

Representation and Education: A Common Path towards the Future

Considering the main debates concerning Holocaust representation, the evolution from the initial silence regarding these events to the current overrepresentation of trauma as well as the confessional boom witnessed at the present moment, together with the practical exercise presented here; I would like to contend that the future of Holocaust Studies *is* particularly linked to education. As has been shown, the evolution traced in the literary representation of the Holocaust and the theories on its representation have reached the educative world. Moreover, the increasing appearance of Holocaust images in cultural representations and the globalization of this traumatic episode have turned the Holocaust into "a global reference point for education that has both particular historical significance and universal meaning. This perspective corresponds to a change of paradigm in how the Holocaust is studied" (Fracapane and Hab 2014: 12). In other words, the Holocaust has come to be seen as a defining element when studying traumatic collective episodes and other histories of genocide and abuse, and it has acquired a paradigmatic nature, making it part of our collective consciousness. Therefore, this shared presence in our society's consciousness would explain why many of the dilemmas that had been initially confronted by historians, artists and philosophers are now being faced by educators and students alike. In addition to this, it has become quite clear that the present-day imperative need to verbalise traumatic memories has promoted the appearance of new literary and testimonial genres that try to verbalise these experiences. Moreover, the boom of narratives dealing with traumatised lives has also increased the society's interest in studying the phenomenon of trauma itself. In the case of the Holocaust, the emergence of new liminal testimonial genres out of the second and third generations of survivors' need to deal with their traumatic legacy; the appearance of false testimonial narratives; and the proliferation of metaphorical representations of the Holocaust would suggest that current societies are more than ever confronting the Holocaust at the moment when most of the survivors are passing away.

All the enquiries proposed so far would point to some possible future lines of development in the field of Holocaust Studies. Alongside Robert Egalestone and Sue Vice, Antony Rowland has recently argued that "future analyses of testimony must also focus on its literariness, and even on the reconsideration of previous neglected testimonial forms like false testimonies as literary practices, since testimonial genres struggle to find new ways of seeing the Holocaust for the non -survivors" (2010: 114). Conceptions like these could force critics to reconsider works which had been previously neglected on the grounds of their lack of authority and reliability, that is, because of being fictional or not belonging to first-generation Holocaust survivors. Moreover, this

development seems to point out that in the next few years the fields of Trauma, Memory and Holocaust Studies will have to continue uncovering the political implications of this boom of testimonial genres, whereas it will have to be admitted that these new genres appear to offer new productive channels for the representation of some of the main traumatic episodes of our era. As Duncan Bell wisely put it, and going against those critics who could say that the Holocaust is an outdated issue, "the dialectic of memory and forgetting, and the ethical questions raised by the dynamics of this process, look set to disturb us for the foreseeable future" (2010: 25).

Far from being over, the Holocaust is still an important presence in the modern globalised world, and the responsibility of knowledge goes hand in hand with the development of a responsible and rigorous Holocaust education. It is us, as educators, thinkers and critics, who should develop new educational practices which engage the future generations in the debates within the field of Holocaust Studies. Regarding the specific exercise that has been proposed in this article, it seems to be a constructive exercise – according to the criteria established by Robert Eaglestone and Barry Langford, Marianne Hirsch and Irene Kacandes and the USHMM, and which have been followed when elaborating the set of activities and selecting the texts – not only to make students observe the evolution in the representation of the Holocaust, examine the current explosion of testimonial narratives (and the ideological conditions that have led to this upsurge of liminal autobiographical practices), and help them be aware of the dilemmas that appear when dealing with the representation of the Holocaust, but also to support the current group of critics who insist on focusing on the added value that a text on the Holocaust can teach us instead of basing our understanding and criticism of a given text on the author's biography and/or background. Thus, drawing on the generally accepted assumption that "the Holocaust changed our intellectual maps of the world" (Eaglestone 2004: 146), it could be concluded that we have the duty to guide the new generations through those maps by "identify[ing] the evil, unmask[ing] it, depriv[ing] it of its poisonous power – which is hatred – and then try[ing] to understand and to make people understand its incomprehensible nature and extent" (Wiesel 2010: 5) through, among other many initiatives, innovative teaching practices such as the one proposed in this small-scale study.

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ABSTRACT

Representing and Teaching the Holocaust in the 21st Century: A Practical Proposal

This article draws on the well-known assumption in Trauma and Holocaust Studies that the representation of traumatic episodes that have affected a huge number of people is usually an aporetic phenomenon. In the case of the Holocaust, the portrayal of these horrible events is always linked to some ethical and historical limits that try to avoid its trivialisation. The first part of this study provides an overview of the evolution of the literary representation of the Holocaust and of the main controversies that have always surrounded the narration of this episode. Then, this evolution will be related to the current „memory boom" and confessional culture that has invaded the cultural panorama, which in the case of the Holocaust has been manifested in the emergence of new hybrid testimonial narratives and the overuse and even commodification of such a traumatic episode. My main contention is that these complex questions have reached the educational context too and thus, the worlds of history, literary criticism and education seem to collide to challenge the future generations' answers to the Holocaust. All these ideas are finally exposed in a practical exercise that could be carried out in the classroom to discuss whether or not there are textual differences between various testimonial genres, and to figure out how the Holocaust can be kept alive ethically. It will contribute to supporting my closing argument that

education has acquired an extremely relevant role within the field of Holocaust Studies, becoming the new site where its meanings and possible representations may be fruitfully negotiated.

KEYWORDS

Holocaust, representation, fiction, testimony, education, memory, trauma, ethics

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