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***Why remember:*** *what place has history in the modern contemporary art space - object, materials and presentation across art form and culture.*

I am tempted to invert this question and ask 'Why *not* remember?' or even 'How would I *not* remember?' We are remembering all the time, even in our silences. One of the basic lessons of psychoanalysis is that to ignore or to deny is not the opposite of remembering. Indeed, as Cathy Caruth has pointed out, 'The historical power of trauma is not just that the experience is repeated after its forgetting, but that it is only in and through its inherent forgetting that trauma is first experienced at all' (1991: 187). I start with this both because memory can be plural and multidirectional, and also to help us think about silence and forgetting as not always the opposite of remembering. Most people agree that memory is a good thing – whether it is cultural or collective memory, national memory or personal memory. The question of *why* remember always takes us back to *how* we remember.

The second question I might ask is: 'Why theatre?'

When we ask what place history has in contemporary art spaces, then we quickly encounter artists who make remembering difficult for us. Difficult pasts require difficult artworks. One example that comes to mind is the Australian artist Jane Korman's video exhibition 'Dancing Auschwitz' that also went viral on the internet. The artist invited her father, a Holocaust survivor, and his grandchildren to dance to Gloria Gaynor's 'I will survive' in a number of memorial sites, such as Dachau, Auschwitz, and the site of the Lodz Ghetto. It feels like a home video, made for private family viewing, although it was in fact made for a mass international public, and an art audience in particular. Perhaps unsurprisingly, this outraged many viewers. As a spectator, I do not know how I fit into this matrix – what is expected of me? Am I being *confronted*, or am I being *invited* to co-celebrate, to survive alongside, to change the way I look at sites of Jewish death as also sites of Jewish life? I have been to all of the sites they visit, and I have remembered in them. I did not remember like this. Am I being asked to critique how I walk through these sites as a tourist, confident of my own moral conviction and uncritical in my act of commemoration?

No matter what your reaction to this artwork is, it is most likely mediated through the presence of a survivor, who has permission to remember these sites as he chooses. Doesn't he? And what about his daughter, his heir, the postmemory generation? Where does the burden of remembering originate for her? Remember that Art Spiegelman chose to represent his father's Holocaust testimony as a comic strip. If we agree that we *should* remember, we often don't agree about the *way* we remember. But is it not the job of the artist to help us to think differently about our habits, our expectations of the world, our own limitations?

Theatre and performance scholars like myself are interested in audiences, which means we are interested in acts of witnessing. I went to a conference on museums and staging history in Warsaw a few years ago and one curator said, 'Well, my gallery is highly theatrical, or I

mean performative. It's performative. Well, it's immersive. Is that theatrical?' She then asked, 'Well, you are a theatre scholar. What do I mean?' I had to reply that I would have to actually visit her museum before I could assess which of these terms she was employing. But the terms were obviously a problem for a lot of people.

First of all, if we are talking about staging history or staging the archive, what do we mean by *stage*? A theatrical stage is not the same as a stage that creates theatricality.

In the US Holocaust Memorial Museum, there is a train car that transported Jews to death camps. Museum visitors were invited to step up into this car so that they can empathetically and affectively imagine (cathect) what it might be like to share such a small space with a very large group of people over several days. The museum produces the train car as a stage. There is a frame, a raised platform, and there is an audience. Those who choose not to go up into the car watch those who do. In other words, it creates a distinction between those *doing* and feeling and those *watching* and feeling. It creates an actor and a spectator.

Actors are expected to empathise to do their jobs – we might call Geoffrey Hartman has called emotional transvestism. Spectators are expected to feel something if actors do their jobs well. Affect moves from one body to another. Many have argued that the Holocaust museum has failed with the display of this train car. This is because, I think, there is a sense that a stage is synonymous with entertainment – often understood as cheap, sentimental, inauthentic and superficial – and this is not how we should remember difficult pasts.

But what if we mark a difference between theatrical (as overblown spectacle) and theatricality (the *way* we look at something)?

Tracy Davis has offered a new way of understanding this distinction. She takes issue with the OED's definitions of theatricality, the first usages of which are by Thomas Carlyle in his book on the French Revolution. In the moment of watching the public assemblages he did not sympathise – in refusing his sympathy, Davis argues, he realised the political context and the political stakes of his own historical moment. Theatricality then was about an act of looking that was connected to an act of comprehension – it creates a public and a public sphere. In that case, history was staged in a way that made him think about his own position as a spectator.

We need to stage history for many reasons. We need to commemorate and to mourn, we need to learn and understand, we need to question and interrogate. And the stage asks us to do this *together*. Not necessarily as a community – communities are often exclusive and competitive – but as an audience. An audience that witnesses, but *not* first hand. One way we remember is through representation. We know that representation has a profound impact on our understanding of the past. Peggy Phelan in one of her most famous essays explains how former US President Ronald Reagan allegedly told Israeli Prime Minister Yitzak Shamir in 1983 that 'the roots of his concern for Israel could be traced to World War II when he photographed the Nazi death camps'. He later repeated the story to Simon Weisenthal. Phelan reminds us that Regan never left California during the WWII, but he did see the raw, unedited footage taken by the Allies of the liberation of the camps when it arrived in Culver City. Looking at those films had an enormous psychic impact on him. Phelan, rather than

calling Reagan a liar, as many did, was more forgiving. She argued that representation also changes our experience of the world – and it can feel *real* to us, just as that footage was so real for Reagan that he felt like a witness to those events. To events he did not experience.

One term that is used to describe this is Alison Landsberg's concept of prosthetic memory. This is an encounter with memory that is not limited to apprehension or learning, but includes the adaptation of 'a more personal, deeply felt memory' of a past through which you did not live. Memory is in this way not owned by witnesses or their families or ethnic groups. It becomes transportable. Prosthetic memory starts from the point of difference rather than recognition or similarity. It shapes the person you are in the world.

Memory is also about the body. And this brings us to the difference between theatricality and performativity.

POLIN, the Museum of the History of Polish Jews in Warsaw was curated by a Performance Studies scholar, Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett. I was fascinated by this. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett argues that POLIN stages 1000 years of Polish Jewish history in chronological order as a continuous visual narrative that is organized in acts and scenes. In other words, she staged that history like a play.

Stages frame things for us. Reminds us that history is also genre. It is comedy, it is tragedy. Sometimes it is melodrama – right now, for example.

When we watch a play we may know what is coming next – our twentieth viewing of *Midsummer Night's Dream* – but we still experience as if we don't. And maybe this is a problematic way of remembering. Should I 'suspend my disbelief' – pretend in POLIN's nineteenth-century gallery that I do not see the Holocaust coming so that I may better understand how these events unfolded over historical time for those who experienced them?

Those are questions for theatricality.

In another part of the city there is the Warsaw Uprising Museum, which has the soundtrack of a beating heart, an intense emotionally stimulating environment that disguises its political agenda – anti-communist, pro-PiS and deeply nationalistic. My own heart beat increases in this space, as if I am watching a horror film.

In POLIN, I walk downstairs, a feeling like walking into a tomb or crypt. Walking down as an act of commemoration. My body feels heavier. I feel the silence of the gallery and I try to mirror that silence. My behavior is shaped by the space; I cite gestures of commemoration.

These are concerns of performativity.

Bryoni Trezise has summed this up as the difference between *feeling as* and *feeling for*. When as a tourist in Poland I choose to visit Auschwitz between my trip to the Salt Mines and my dinner that has been pre-booked at a well recommended pizzeria, I am caught between two forms of memory. My empathetic understanding – how I *feel for* the history of

the site I am visiting. And my own body moving through the space, wondering what it was like for prisoners to move through the same site. How all of our bodies are guided through this site in a ritual of commemoration. *I feel as*. Performativity connects these forms of memory. What is my body doing and what is it expected to do?

This something ANU does well. It syncopates our time, past and present, as Rebecca Schneider might say, through our bodies. The actors, fully present, are also invoking the ghosts that haunt these sites. Their bodies recover and transmit difficult pasts.

Images of the past, Paul Connerton writes in *How Societies Remember*, commonly legitimate a current social order, and we'll 'experience our presents differently in accordance with the different pasts to which we connect' (2). Some have been critical of the emphasis on emotion in the Polish history museums. Many museums would find this unacceptable and use a more documentary style of display. Such as the exhibition that opened in 2016 in Buchenwald. This gallery suggests that the memory of difficult pasts should be unemotional, objective, cool tempered. Objects under glass, white walls – like the walls of the art gallery – neat black writing with historical context. Perhaps underlying this is a real anxiety about what we might call the theatrical.

So, we see in the question of remembering that we have form and representation, acts of witnessing, our own bodies, our feelings and our political allegiances. We also have our grief and our joy. When asking 'why remember?', my answer would be: history is being staged all the time, all around us, and not only by theatre makers and curators. And when witnesses die what we have left is representation and ritual. I think Phelan was right, is still right. What we need is an ethics of spectatorship. And that is what *performance* can teach us.