

Narrating ‘Katyń’: (Re)membering the event through myth, memory and justice

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Abstract

This thesis offers a critique of narrative structure via an analysis of Polish WWII narratives of history, with a specific focus on the Katyń massacre. The word ‘Katyń’ has come to represent the massacre of around 22,000 Polish citizens who, under Stalin’s orders, were executed and buried in mass graves during the Second World War. The first of the mass graves were discovered in 1943 by German soldiers in the Katyń Forest. The German government publicly announced the discovery of the graves and accused the Soviets of mass murder. The Soviet government denied responsibility for the massacre and retaliated by accusing the Germans of committing the crime. Successive Soviet governments maintained the narrative of German guilt, until documents that proved Soviet involvement were released under Mikhail Gorbachev in 1990. Katyń has become the source of much tension between Russian and Poland. This is evident in narratives on Katyń which are marked by a complex interplay of competing national myths, narratives of national identity, collective memories, conflicting histories, definitions of ‘truth’, and interpretations of justice and reconciliation. These narratives are the key focus of this thesis. My interest in these narratives is not motivated by an attempt to legitimate any one particular narrative or to uncover ‘truths’ within them. Drawing on poststructuralist theorists Michel Foucault, Jean-François Lyotard, and Jacques Derrida, this thesis proposes a critique of the tendency inherent in narrative structure to promote a particular version of events and present this as absolute ‘truth’. I aim to locate these narratives within the particular contexts that they are constructed in order to identify the discourses that inform them and the meanings that are (re)produced.

Originality Statement

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and to the best of my knowledge it contains no materials previously published or written by another person, or substantial proportions of material which have been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at Macquarie University or any other educational institution, except where due acknowledgement is made in the thesis. Any contribution made to the research by others, with whom I have worked at Macquarie University or elsewhere, is explicitly acknowledged in the thesis. I also declare that the intellectual content of this thesis is the product of my own work, except to the extent that assistance from others in the project's design and conception or in style, presentation and linguistic expression is acknowledged.

Signed

Date

Dedication

In memory of Edmund Fredericks.

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Like most things worth doing, this event started with a beer. If it weren't for Kate Munday, pursuit of this advanced degree would never have begun. Cheers, Kate.

List of Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Meaning
AK	<i>Armia Krajowa</i> (Polish Home Army)
CEE	Central and Eastern Europe
IAC	Interstate Aviation Committee
IMT	International Military Tribunal
IRC	International Red Cross
IPN	<i>Instytut Pamięci Narodowej</i> (Institute of National Remembrance)
PiS	<i>Prawo i Sprawiedliwość</i> (Law and Justice Party)
PO	<i>Platforma Obywatelska</i> (Civic Platform)
PPS	<i>Polska Partia Socjalistyczna</i> (Polish Socialist Party)
PRC	Polish Red Cross
PRL	<i>Polska Rzeczpospolita Ludowa</i> (Polish People's Republic)
PZPR	<i>Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza</i> (United Polish Workers' Party)
NKVD	Peoples Commissariat for Internal Affairs
ROPWiM	<i>Rada Ochrony Pamięci Walk i Męczeństwa</i> (The Council for the Protection of Struggle and Martyrdom Sites)
SB	<i>Służba Bezpieczeństwa Ministerstwa Spraw Wewnętrznych</i> (Polish Security Service of the Ministry of Internal Affairs)
TASS	Telegraph Agency of the Soviet Union
WWI	World War I
WWII	World War II

Introduction

‘Katyń’ (as a place and as an event) has long been the site of competing narratives, and the source of much tension between Russia and Poland. In recent years, a particular narrative of ‘Katyń’ has become widely accepted as ‘true’ (or at least as valid) by various historians and scholars working in this field. According to this narrative, following the Nazi-Soviet invasion of Poland in 1939, approximately 22,000¹ Polish men (and one woman) made up of generals, army officers, policemen, teachers, priests, rabbis and doctors were captured by the Red Army, then handed over to the Soviet Secret Police, the NKVD (Peoples Commissariat for Internal Affairs). The prisoners were kept in three separate camps at Kozelsk, Ostashkov and Starobelsk where they remained until March 1940. On the 5th of March 1940, the Politburo issued an order, signed by Stalin, to have the prisoners executed. The prisoners were shot and buried in mass graves in various locations throughout the Soviet Union and the Ukraine². In 1943, German soldiers (who then occupied the Smolensk area) discovered the graves at Katyń. It is because the graves at Katyń were the first to be discovered that the word ‘Katyń’ now refers to all the massacres.

On the 11th of April 1943, the German government made a public announcement via a German news agency in which they released details of their findings, and accused the Soviets of mass murder. The following day this was countered by a pro-Soviet Polish language broadcast from Moscow, denying the accusations, and maintaining that this was merely part of a German propaganda campaign designed to cover up their own guilt for the murders. Since the British and American governments had formed an alliance with the Soviet Union, British Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, and U.S. President, Franklin D. Roosevelt accepted Stalin’s claim that the German charges were false. The Polish Government-in-Exile was sceptical of Stalin’s alleged innocence and requested an International Red Cross investigation into the graves. Stalin responded by breaking off diplomatic relations with the Polish Government and requested a separate Russian investigation. With the support of the Allies, Stalin was able to maintain the narrative of German guilt throughout the war, and afterwards at the Nuremberg Trials. After the war, successive Soviet governments denied

¹ The exact figure varies between sources and depends on which deaths are included under the umbrella of ‘Katyń’. Generally speaking, about 14,500-14,700 are considered to have been executed from the three main camps (Kozelsk, Ostashkov and Starobelsk), while another 7,300 are believed to have been killed in NKVD prisons in Belarus and the Ukraine, as part of the same operation (see Sanford, 2005; Cienciala et al 2007:1; Szonert-Binienda, 2012: 652).

² The prisoners being held at Kozelsk were buried in mass graves in the Katyń Forest, the prisoners from Ostashkov were buried in Miednoye and those from Starobelsk were buried in Kharkov.

responsibility for the Katyn killings and in communist Poland censorship laws were implemented in order to sustain the Russian narrative. The British and American press also maintained this particular interpretation of events in the postwar years. Many writers claim, however, that most Poles did not subscribe to this narrative, and referred to the ‘official’ Soviet story as the ‘Katyn Lie’ (Etkind & Finnin et al, 2012: 5). This narrative was challenged in 1990 when Mikhail Gorbachev released some important documents that suggested that the NKVD was responsible. It was only after Gorbachev’s admission of Soviet involvement, that the whereabouts of the mass graves at Ostashkov and Kharkov were disclosed.

There are a number of elements which have contributed to the construction of Katyn as a contentious event in the histories of both Russia and Poland – the Soviet invasion, the imprisonment of the officers, the killings themselves, the cover-up, the lack of a thorough investigation, the absence of a trial, the perpetuation of the dominant Russian narrative, and the lack of access to documents pertaining to the massacres – and as such, Katyn has become the source of much political, legal, and cultural tension between the two nations. This is evident in narratives³ on Katyn, which are marked by a complex interplay of competing national myths, narratives of national identity, collective memories, conflicting histories, definitions of ‘truth’, and interpretations of justice. These narratives – historical narratives, grand narratives, mythic narratives, messianic narratives, narratives of national identity, narratives of collective memory, narratives of justice and reconciliation – are the key focus of this thesis. This is not an analysis of a singular Katyn narrative, nor an attempt to arrive at a singular interpretation of Katyn. My main focus is the various structures within which these narratives (re)emerge, and how the logic of these structures inform these (re)constructions. This critique of the logic of structures is not limited to Katyn, but can be applied more broadly.

Drawing on poststructuralist theorists Michele Foucault, Jean-François Lyotard and Jacques Derrida, I develop a critique of the tendency inherent in narrative structure to promote a particular version of events and present this as absolute ‘truth’. In order to appear as a singular, unifying narrative, the construction of a narrative involves a silencing of multiple interpretations of events and human experience. A common thread throughout the works of Foucault, Lyotard and Derrida is a resistance to totalising narratives, but they each differ in their approach. Foucault is critical of the discourse of a particular tradition of History as an empirical discipline characterised by a search for ‘truth’ and ‘origins’. He proposes a

³ In this thesis I will be focusing mainly on national, historical, political, judicial, and personal narratives (in the form of biographies).

genealogical method of history that recognises that all narratives are time and place specific, and that these contexts shape the (re)production of particular ‘truth-effects’. Lyotard poses a challenge to the legitimacy of the grand narratives of the modern era, which attempted to provide a universal narrative of humanity and history, and in so doing, failed to acknowledge difference(s), and undermined minor narratives. Lyotard proposes that there is a tendency inherent in the structure of language to leave out, or ‘forget’ events that would disrupt the (appearance of) a cohesive narrative. Deconstruction, as practiced by Derrida, can be understood as a critique of Western metaphysic tradition, and a resistance to fixed meanings produced by established systems. Derrida’s deconstruction is an ethical project, which involves a responsible inheritance of narratives and a critique of the normalising effects they produce. I engage with an understanding of deconstruction as a “conceptual genealogy” in order to frame this thesis as a critique of inherited concepts – one of which is ‘Katyń’. In short, there are three main theoretical concepts around which this thesis focuses (and which all three theorists share). These are:

- A resistance to established meaning via the propagation of History/grand narratives/ /metaphysics of presence.
- A politics of singularity. Each theorist argues that these narratives obliterate difference and singularity in favour of a cohesive, universal narrative.
- Despite differences in approaches and terminologies, the work of all three theorists is shaped in some way by a certain ‘ethics’⁴. The resistance to totality and established systems is not merely a destruction of order, but a deconstruction of privilege and power. All theorists share a commitment to singularity, to difference, and to the ‘other’. Whether this is articulated via a genealogical approach to local histories, bearing witness to the incommensurable, or the anticipation of the trace of the other, all three theorists are motivated by an (ethical) commitment to the marginalised and the silenced.

With this framework in mind, the aim of this thesis is to engage with some of the most common narrativisations of Katyń, and to locate the significance of particular events within these interpretations. This thesis investigates what the significance of these various

⁴ Bear in mind that while Derrida uses the term overtly, he does so with caution, Lyotard and Foucault do not make explicit reference to ‘ethics’. For Lyotard, ethics is understood as bearing witness to the unexpressible or the incommensurable, and Foucault’s ethics can be located in his use of the term ‘freedom’.

narrativisations are, who or what is being silenced in these (re)tellings, and how a poststructuralist approach might enable a more ethical approach to these and other narrative(s).

In Chapter 1, I outline my methodology, differentiating my approach from a traditional (empirical) historical study. Drawing on the work of Foucault, Lyotard and Derrida, I propose a genealogical/poststructuralist critique of narrative. I then provide an overview of the most commonly accepted ‘narrative’ of Katyń as perceived by the majority of Katyń scholars working in the field today. I locate a number of ‘events’ that are significant to this particular narrativisation of Katyń in order to identify the multiple and shifting accounts of Katyń and the factors that impelled them, but also to investigate the assumptions that underpin some of these (re)tellings. The aim of this chapter is to provide a contextual background for the reader, and to interrogate the discourses that inform these narratives and the effects they produce. This chapter offers a genealogical analysis of dominant Katyń narratives, not a definitive ‘history’ of events.

In Chapter 2 and 3, I focus on myth and memory as elements of narrative and their role and function in (re)producing various Katyń narratives. In Chapter 2, I situate a particular narrativisation of ‘Katyń’ (which I engage with in Chapter 1 to an extent), as an effect of a very specific, mythic interpretation of Polish History. My main focus in this chapter is the various competing myths that have been used to define the Polish nation, and the ways in which these myths function at different times to (re)produce particular ideas about History and national identity. I look at two myths of origin that are particularly significant to Polish narratives – namely, the Jagiellonian and Piast myths. While these two myths are often posited as diametrically opposed, I argue that the relationship between these myths is not necessarily one of polarity but that in fact, the two overlap and pull against one another in complex ways – and this is particularly apparent in the ways that both myths are shaped by and shape the narrative of Polish Catholicism. Moreover, some of the effects they produce are similar (for example, a tendency to homogenise). I explore these nuances via a discussion of another myth – the messianic myth of martyrdom that emerged in the era of Polish romantic nationalism. This chapter demonstrates that these national myths continue to appear in twentieth and twenty-first century narratives of Polish History; and this includes discourses on ‘Katyń’. My aim in this chapter is to map complex relations between these myths and what informs them, and what effects they (re)produce. The repetition of these mythic narratives dictates *how* events are remembered, *which* events are remembered, and *what* is forgotten in this process.

In Chapter 3, I examine the use of the term ‘memory’ within Katyń narratives. Polish narratives of post-WWII history and identity are saturated with references to collective memory, cultural memory and historical memory. I briefly review these various theories and definitions of memory, analyse the relationship between memory and history, and put forward a definition of memory as a site of discursive struggle. I look at the ways in which Polish memory narratives are informed by an oppositional binary between Polish memory as pure, authentic and unmediated, and Communist “history” as tainted and false, and how this oppositional logic functions to (re)produce a narrative of Polish victimhood. I propose that a collective memory of victimhood shapes Polish World War II and Katyń narratives and I consider the effects of this memory via an analysis of how it functions within the censorship narrative (where it is tied to forgetting), commemorative practices, and sites of memory (specifically memorials and museums). Finally, I address the issue of conflicting historical memories by examining the emergence of collective victimhood within contemporary Russian narratives on Katyń.

In Chapter 4, I situate narrativisations of Katyń within a broader political context of international law and justice, addressing some of the issues that have arisen in response to justice and reconciliation. My approach in this final chapter owes much to Derrida’s relentless critique of the logic of inherited concepts. I begin this chapter with an analysis of a widely disseminated concept of justice, which is located in our Western philosophical-legal (Christian) inheritance. I draw on Derrida’s sustained critique of this inheritance and the assumptions that inform our contemporary understandings of justice. Derrida refutes, for example, the existence of an established and inextricable relationship between justice and law. While Derrida does not reject the law entirely, he is sceptical of the perpetuation of grand narratives of law that attempt to appropriate the meaning of justice into a politics of finality and universality. In the deconstructive spirit of dismantling established meanings in order to open up new ways of reading, a Derridean intervention into the concept of justice offers a (re)interpretation of justice as a future-oriented opening towards the other.

Lyotard’s work on justice is also informed by a resistance to a traditionally Western, inherited concept of justice – one that associates justice with law (and consensus). Lyotard contests a practice of justice in which the preferred end result is the establishment of a single, consenting narrative, most often achieved via legal interventions. Lyotard views this as a violent movement of appropriation that silences the other – an injustice which Lyotard refers to as the differend. Lyotard is particularly critical of the privileging of international law as a response to injustice. Lyotard proposes that any judgment or ruling made in an international

court can only be made via the imposition of a universalising narrative of international law. The singularity of the experience, of the suffering of the victim, is silenced; therefore, international law is instrumental in the proliferation of more differends.

I draw on Derrida and Lyotard's insights in order to critique the limitations of normative interpretations of justice as they pertain to Katyn narratives. I survey some of the responses to the issue of justice in the case of Katyn and propose that 'justice' is another form of narrative. Katyn narratives on 'justice' are best understood as attempts to utilise the discourse of law in order to maintain and/or support a particular narrative. While in the first half of the thesis I focused primarily on the limits of the Polish messianic myth of nation, in this chapter I also critique the messianic structure of the Stalinist-Marxist narrative in order to highlight the dangers of totalising narratives of history, identity and justice. Using Derrida's critique of inheritance as a responsibility outlined in *Specters of Marx* (2004), I suggest a deconstructive approach to 'justice' which resists totalising narratives in favour of an open anticipation to the singularity of the event, and the singularity of the other.

Chapter One: Narrativisation(s) of ‘Katyn’

Introduction

Historical narratives on Katyn tend to focus on issues pertaining to historical ‘truth’, memory, justice, and reconciliation; terms that are problematic in that their common usage is underpinned by humanist assumptions regarding subjectivity and finality. Like most ‘historical’ narratives, narratives on Katyn perpetuate the idea that there is a ‘truth’ to be known, that this is a story of right and wrong, justice and injustice. The historian’s task, then, is to reveal the ‘truth’ of Katyn, condemn the wrongdoers, and bring a sense of closure to those who have lost loved ones. Whereas the task, or rather the aim, of the poststructuralist is to reveal the conflicts within these narratives, to open up a dialogue, and provide an alternative to the finality of History. The aim of this thesis is to focus on the ways in which discourses on Katyn are shaped by investments in particular narratives, rather than providing an in-depth historical analysis of the event. In this chapter, I provide a theoretical and contextual framework for this critique. This chapter, therefore, serves to engage with the most commonly accepted version of ‘Katyn’, that is, the dominant narrative that currently holds the most ‘authority’ in contemporary academic circles in the West, Poland and Russia, via a review of the Anglophone literature on ‘Katyn’. I am not presenting this narrative as a universal ‘truth’. Instead I focus on the tensions within narrativisations of Katyn that have operated at various times to (re)produce ‘truth-effects’, in order to reveal the mechanisms through which Histories are (re)constructed and (re)membered. I use the term ‘(re)membering’ to allude to the various parts that are (re)assembled to make up a whole ‘body’. A recurring theme throughout this thesis is a critique of various ‘bodies’, such as the corpus of Polish or Katyn literature, members of the body politic, or the remembrance of dead bodies.

‘Katyn’ as Metaphor

As I mentioned at the outset, the word ‘Katyn’ now refers to the killings that took place at all three of the separate campsites. While there was more than one collective killing, Katyn is often referred to as the Katyn massacre (not massacres). ‘Katyn’ is a figure that stands in for a series of events, giving them a sort of coherency. In Poland, the narrativisation of a particular

version of ‘Katyń’ has led to its constitution as a symbol of totalitarian oppression. Ellen Hinsey, an American writer, proposes that:

In certain ways it might not have held the same level of significance during the postwar period—and up until the present—if subsequent events had unfolded differently. Above all, the almost complete suppression of the crime during the war and into the postwar period meant that in Polish memory Katyń came to stand silently for “all the crimes committed by Soviet totalitarianism”⁵ (Hinsey, 2011: 146).

In other words, the impact of ‘Katyń’ was heightened by the ways in which the narrativisation of ‘Katyń’ unfolded, and in particular, the ‘silencing’ of Polish narratives about ‘Katyń’ during the postwar years. Many WWII and ‘Katyń’ narratives suggest that the Poles were doubly-victimised⁶ during WWII, first by the ‘crimes’ committed against them (including the betrayal of the allied powers)⁷, and then by the silence enforced by censorship. I will be engaging with some of these narratives in this chapter and throughout this thesis. More importantly – and this is what the quote so poignantly illustrates – ‘Katyń’, as a symbolic term, signifies a crime and its suppression. In other words, it is not really possible – at least not at this point in history – for ‘Katyń’ to operate as, for example, the name of a place, or as a ‘neutral’ descriptor. In short, the word itself, even without the story that often accompanies it, signifies injustice. This is an effect of narrativisation, but the effect has coalesced such that the word now operates metonymically – that is, in place of the narrative. And it is almost as though the metaphoric or metonymic character of ‘Katyń’ has been forgotten.

This is Nietzsche’s argument in the essay “On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense” (Nietzsche, [1873] 2006). In this essay, Nietzsche proposes that it is a “fundamental human drive” (Nietzsche, [1873] 2006: 121) to constitute life and meaning metonymically and/or metaphorically. A word becomes a ‘concept’ “insofar as it simultaneously has to fit countless more or less similar cases” (Nietzsche, ([1873] 2006: 117). The word “leaf”, for example, is a

⁵ Hinsey cites Debons et al (2009: 22).

⁶ Scharf and Szonert-Biniendam refer to the Poles’ “long history of double victimization” (Scharf & Szonert-Biniendam, 2012: 7) as something which prevents justice and reconciliation. They argue that the Poles were doubly victims “first by the horror of what happened to the Polish people and then by the overwhelming sense of helplessness and humiliation by not being able to see justice done” (Scharf & Szonert-Biniendam, 2012: 7).

⁷ Koczanowicz, for instance, claims that the “suppressed trauma acquired the dignity of a myth that reflected the double tragic figure of Polish fate as the country under the oppression of Russia and betrayed by powers that called themselves friends of Poland” (Koczanowicz, 2012: 815).

metaphorical concept that describes an ‘object’ (as if it were a single object), but which has many varieties. However, with continued use of the metaphor, we forget its metaphorical status and we begin to think of the metaphor as ‘truth’. For Nietzsche, then, truths are “illusions which we have forgotten are illusions - they are metaphors that have become worn out and have been drained of sensuous force” (Nietzsche, ([1873] 2006: 117). There are many ‘Katyń’s’ and everybody’s Katyń story is their story. These ‘Katyń’s’ become shared and the more they are taken as the truth, the more they become real. And not just intellectually, they are performative and integral to people’s being and the world that they know. ‘Katyń’ does not refer simply to the killings of Polish men, nor does it refer only to a geographical location. It also refers to other ‘concepts’ with metaphorical meanings (such as myth, memory, victimhood, genocide, betrayal, justice, and so on).

I propose an understanding of ‘Katyń’ as a narrative effect, or a ‘concept’. This is not a denial of the killings or the suffering that people have experienced as a result. My proposal is that ‘Katyń’ and its various manifestations are (re)produced as an effect of different investments. Throughout this thesis, when I place square quotes around ‘Katyń’, it is to acknowledge the symbolic, figurative and metaphoric narrativisation(s) of the killings. When I write Katyń without the quotes, it is because I am referring to a particular narrativisation of ‘Katyń’ in which the event is constituted as an absolute truth. This thesis engages with these various narrativisations. I will be drawing on poststructuralist theorists Michel Foucault, Jean-François Lyotard and Jacques Derrida in order to critique normative understandings of ‘truth’, ‘history’, ‘meaning’, and so on. Given this, I will briefly outline some of the key theoretical concepts I will be utilising.

History and Genealogy

In this section, I draw on the work of interdisciplinary scholars Michel Foucault and Wendy Brown, in order to articulate a genealogical analysis of ‘Katyń’ as a narrative(ised) event shaped by particular, situated political ontologies, and in doing so, to problematise the ‘common-sense’ view of ‘Katyń’ as an unmediated historical fact whose ‘truth’ can be determined. Throughout this thesis, when I use the term ‘History’ with a capital ‘H’ I am referring to History as an academic discipline, one that is associated with or defined by particular disciplinary practices. This does not mean that all historians practice historical research in exactly the same way. But it is the kinds of methodological aims and questions

which have, historically, been associated with History as a disciplinary practice (with a definable set of objects, aims, conventions, and so on), that are problematic from a genealogical perspective insofar as they assume that the event they set out to study (in this case ‘Katyń’) is, to varying degrees, an historical fact.

Cultural critics and historians have questioned the traditional view of History as an authoritative and impartial discipline, in recent years. The changing role and function of objectivity in American History, for example, has been interrogated in Peter Novick’s *That Noble Dream* (1988). Novick defines objectivity as a “sprawling collection of assumptions, attitudes, aspirations, and antipathies” which rests upon a “commitment to the reality of the past, and to truth as correspondence to that reality” (Novick, 1988: 1). This understanding of historical objectivity implies that there are clear distinctions between fact/fiction, truth/lies, and so on. The “ferocity” with which ‘historical objectivity’ has been defended by historians (against “objectivity” in the late nineteenth century and “relativism” in the last half of the twentieth century), leads Novick to describe objectivity as a functional “myth” that has served to sustain the “professional historical venture” (Novick, 1988: 3). What follows is an analysis of the role of ‘objectivity’ in three key American historical periods (the founding of the American historical profession in the nineteenth century, WWI, and WWII and the Cold War). Novick’s critique is not an argument about whether historical objectivity is right or wrong, but an investigation of the various historical contexts that have shaped the objectivity narrative and provided the discipline of history with validation. Novick’s text reveals the mechanisms of power that shift over time in order to (re)produce particular idea(l)s and assumptions about the nature of historical research.

In *Telling The Truth About History* (1994), Appleby, Hunt, and Jacob suggest that the democratisation of American society has led to the proliferation of discourses on scepticism and relativism that pose a challenge to the discipline of History. The authors argue that it is necessary for historians to respond to these changing societal views and to “rethink the understanding of truth and objectivity” (Appleby et al, 1994: 194). Appleby et al appear to be aware of the functions of power that operate within historical narratives, acknowledging that history is always perspectival and informed by particular subjective positions⁸. However, they maintain a traditional stance when it comes to the role of ‘truth’ in history, arguing that a democratic view of “history thrives on a passion for establishing and communicating the truth” (Appleby et al, 1994: 11). This commitment to establishing the truth is supported by the

⁸ They write that history “always involves power and exclusion, for any history is always someone’s history, told by that someone from a partial point of view” (Appleby et al, 1994: 11).

authors' defence of empirical evidence as a disciplinary practice. The authors maintain that "the presentation of evidence imposes definite limits to the factual assertions that can be made" and "even sets up boundaries around the range of interpretations that can be offered about an event or development" (Appleby et al, 1994: 256). This claim rests on an assumption that the 'truth' exists as a knowable (singular) entity, and fails to acknowledge that 'evidence' is also perspectival and open to (re)interpretation and as such, is problematic from a genealogical perspective.

Rather than revealing 'truth' or 'fact', Foucault claims that the creation of "histories" always takes place within particular networks of power and this shapes the ways in which narratives are (re)constructed. Foucault⁹ is critical of a particular approach to 'history' that attempts to "capture the exact essence of things, their purest possibilities, and their carefully protected identities" (Foucault, 1977a: 142). Foucault offers a genealogical approach to history which rejects the "pursuit of the origin" (Foucault, 1977a: 142), proposing a critique of the various discourses and discursive practices that function within Historical narratives to produce 'truth-effects'. I utilise this genealogical approach throughout this chapter and this thesis, in an attempt to locate the discourses and mechanisms of power that function to (re)produce particular understandings of 'Katyń' as a singular truth. This can be seen, for example, in the conceptualisation of 'Katyń' as a figure, a discursive construct that holds together and unifies a series of events that were, to some extent, disparate. Genealogy differs from a particular practice of History in which History is presented as a carefully constructed and coherent narrative, a linear series of events culminating in a grand historical truth. According to Foucault, History, as an ontologically specific and situated practice, aims to dissolve the "singular event into an ideal continuity – as a teleological movement or a natural process" (Foucault, 1977a: 154). A genealogy (or what Foucault describes as an 'effective' model of history), on the other hand, must "record the singularity of events outside of any monotonous finality" (Foucault, 1977a: 139). Where a linear History privileges 'grand events' (such as important battles, great leaders, and so on), a genealogy "deals with events in terms of their most unique characteristics, their most acute manifestations" (Foucault, 1977a: 154), identifying "accidents" and "minute deviations" (Foucault, 1977a: 146) – the unexpected and unpredictable. This rejection of universals in favour of a 'politics of singularity' is something that Foucault, Lyotard and Derrida share, and which I will return to throughout the thesis.

⁹ Who was influenced by Nietzsche.

Genealogy is also distinct from a method of History that seeks to rediscover lost narratives of identity, by introducing “discontinuity into our very being” (Foucault, 1977a: 154). In texts such as *Madness and Civilization* (1989), *The History of Sexuality* (1978), and *Discipline and Punish* (1977b), Foucault provides a critique of narratives in which identity is presented as a stable and fixed ‘truth’, highlighting the constructedness of such narratives. Wendy Brown argues that like Nietzsche’s *Genealogy of Morals* (1967), these texts provide genealogical accounts of the self. She writes:

Each begins with an account by which our epoch commonly recognizes itself – morally good, intrinsically reasonable, sexually liberated, politically humane – and asks not only whether these stories are ‘really true’ but what function of power each purported Truth serves, what each particular fiction conceals and, even more importantly, produces (Brown, 1998: 38).

Like the texts Brown identifies, this thesis begins with an account of Katyń ‘by which our epoch recognises itself as morally good, intrinsically reasonable, and so on’, and proceeds to ask what function(s) of power the purported truth of ‘Katyń’ tells, and what this discursive figure (and its narrativisations) conceals and produces. I begin with an account of Katyń which is now commonly understood to be ‘true’, and which is believed to be a story of right and wrong, justice and injustice and so on. My aim is not to reveal a particular ‘truth’ or to condemn any one person, political party or nation; this thesis is not a moral commentary on right and wrong¹⁰. Rather than (re)iterating these dominant accounts of Katyń, my aim is to interrogate the functions of power that operate within these various narrativisation(s) of Katyń, and investigate how these discourses function to (re)produce truth-effects. I am not dealing with one discourse on ‘Katyń’, but a “multiplicity of discourses produced by a whole series of mechanisms operating in different institutions” (Foucault, 1978: 33). This is not a critique of History *per se*, but of the structures in and through which ‘Katyń’ accrues the status of fact. I challenge the logic of ‘History’ because ‘Katyń’ is seen as an historical event, and because History is another form of narrative. In the following chapters, I look at the ways in which the (re)construction of Historical narratives intersects with other narratives such as myth, memory, justice and law.

¹⁰ As Wendy Brown argues “genealogy neither prescribes political positions nor specifies desirable futures. Rather, it aims to make visible why particular positions and visions of the future occur to us, and especially to reveal when and where those positions work in the same register of ‘political rationality’ as that which they purport to criticize” (Brown, 1998: 40).

Lyotard and 'Bearing Witness'

Lyotard maintains that all narrative structures are problematic. Lyotard opposes the tendency in much storytelling to leave out, or 'forget', elements that would disrupt the cohesion of a straightforward, linear narrative. In *The Postmodern Condition* (1984), Lyotard criticises what he refers to as the 'grand narratives' of the modern era, which attempted to provide a universal theory of meaning. Lyotard proposes that in the modern age (beginning with the Enlightenment in the eighteenth century), "knowledge is justified, or legitimated, through narrative" (Daniell, 1999: 393). Lyotard points out two narratives that have particular relevance: "the speculative narrative and the narrative of emancipation" (Brügger, 2001: 79, see also Lyotard, 1984: 31-32). The legitimacy of an idea, a work of art, a political movement, or a scientific discovery, depends on how it contributes to one of these two narratives¹¹. According to Lyotard, in the postmodern age, we have rejected legitimating grand narratives in favour of little narratives. He contends that these 'little narratives' (Lyotard, 1984: 60) are more useful in explaining the often contradicting and complex ways in which we come to understand things. He describes these 'little narratives' in terms of Wittgenstein's language games in order to argue for the "relative autonomy and incommensurability of specific social/linguistic practices" (Dunn, 1993: 194). Lyotard recognises that there are many systems of language and ways of interpreting events, and these different approaches to generating meaning take shape within specific, local contexts. Lyotard suggests that a resistance of the meanings reproduced via metanarratives (that is, grand narratives), is necessary if we wish to search for new meaning in old language games.

For Lyotard, what is perhaps most problematic about these 'grand narratives' is that that they legitimate particular idea(l)s/positions/'truths' with reference to a metadiscourse (or transcendent authority) which claims that knowledge is absolute (that is, singular, knowable, static, exclusive, and so on). Those deploying this model of knowledge are thus able (they presume) to speak and determine the truth. Consequently their 'truth'/knowledge excludes all other forms of seeing and knowing. Lyotard views this as an injustice because it fails to recognise its own status as perspectival and it silences knowledges that are not able to claim truth status under the terms by which it legitimates itself. In effect, it sets itself up so that it

¹¹ Lyotard writes that the "mode of legitimation... which reintroduces narrative as the validity of knowledge, can thus take two routes, depending on whether it represents the subject of the narrative as cognitive or practical, as a hero of knowledge or a hero of liberty" (Lyotard, 1984: 31).

does not have – and more particularly, cannot have – any competition. The problem is that there always are competing knowledges and thus those who deploy this model of knowledge have to work increasingly hard to assert it – even to the extent of exterminating others whose presence might pose a threat to it (something I will return to in Chapter 4).

Lyotard explores this issue further in *The Differend* (1988). He suggests that when one narrative dominates over all others, this incurs an injustice, which he calls the differend. The differend is an effect of the structure of language. Language requires the linking of phrases¹² into patterns, in order to produce a coherent narrative. However, Lyotard claims that there is always a certain motivation behind any discourse and that this determines “what is at stake in linking phrases” (Lyotard, 1988: 84), thus influencing the types of ‘truths’ that are revealed within narratives. These genres determine the ultimate *meaning* of a narrative by “eliminating those that are not opportune” (Lyotard, 1988: 84). Lyotard proposes, however, that there is “no particular logic or genre... that makes it necessary to link particular phrases in any particular way” (Dunn, 1993: 195). It is this experience of incommensurability, which generates the differend (Dunn, 1993: 195). Lyotard argues that one must bear witness to the differend by recognising that an injustice has been done. He writes, “What is at stake in a literature, in a philosophy, in a politics perhaps, is to bear witness to differends by finding idioms for them” (Lyotard, 1988: 13).

In *Introducing Lyotard: Art and Politics* (1991), Bill Readings articulates what he understands as Lyotardian ethics of reading. A deconstructive reading of a text does not seek to (re)produce a text’s original meaning (because this would constitute an injustice). In order to do justice to a text, a deconstructive reading involves “listening to the points at which the content of a text is torn apart by a difference that they cannot express, yet must express” (Readings, 1991: 128). The “ethical implication of deconstruction after Lyotard” is to make us “aware of the ethical necessity of judgment at points where the apparatus of conceptual representation seeks to bury the conflict, to reduce difference” (Readings, 1991: 128). We must testify to the incommensurability. Because one always sees from a particular perspective – one that is shaped by one’s embodied history – then one’s view of an event will inevitably be different from that of someone who is positioned entirely differently in relation to that event – for example, the Polish prisoners and the Russian soldiers who shot them. If this is the case, then whose version of events do we believe? On what basis do/can we decide which account is ‘true’? Since we cannot ever take a God-like position of seeing from

¹² Lyotard uses the concept of the ‘phrase’, as an element of language, to refer to the “various discourses which attempt to give meaning to the event” (Readings, 1991: 115).

nowhere/everywhere, any judgment we make will always be perspectival; it will always be formed from and by a specific situated perspective. In short, it will always, be ‘biased’ if you like. This is why, for Lyotard, what is more important than taking a position (which can only ever be limited, situated, and so on) is focusing on the differend, the tensions, gaps, and clashes, that play across and between different accounts of an event and that open up opportunities for alternative ways to narrativise the event. Rather than deciding which historical narrative is ‘true’ and which one is a ‘lie’, my task in this thesis is to critically interrogate dominant narrativisation(s) of Katyn and to bear witness to the multiple ways in which the event has been articulated. For Lyotard, bearing witness is not just a response to the problems of language, but an attempt to recognise injustices. Lyotard proposes that we create new idioms, new ways of expressing the inexpressible. Lyotard calls us to bear witness to the heterogeneity of ways of knowing and to consider what such an approach might make possible. With this in mind, I question how one might begin to bear witness to ‘Katyn’ without falling into the dominant narratives that I will be critiquing.

Derrida and Deconstruction

Deconstruction – a philosophy now associated with Jacques Derrida – can be understood as an ongoing critique of the Western philosophical tradition, one that “involves thinking against the grain of inherited concepts” (Janover, 2005: 225). In his essay “Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences”, for instance, Derrida critiques the concept of ‘structure’ that has come to dominate Western metaphysics, one that is propagated by an “ethic of nostalgia for origins” (Derrida, 1978: 369). Like Nietzsche and Foucault, Derrida refutes the idea that a search for origins leads to the revelation of ‘truth’. Derrida’s dissatisfaction with metaphysics is outlined clearly in *Limited Inc.* (1988). Derrida defines metaphysics as:

The enterprise of returning ‘strategically’, ‘ideally’, to an origin or to a priority thought to be simple, intact, normal, pure, standard, self-identical, in order then to think in terms of derivation, complication, deterioration, accident, etc. All metaphysicians, from Plato to Rousseau, Descartes to Husserl, have proceeded in this way, conceiving good to be before evil, the positive before the negative, the pure before the impure, the simple before the complex, the essential before the

accidental, the imitated before the imitation, etc. And this is not just one metaphysical gesture among others, it is the metaphysical exigency, that which has been the most constant, most profound and most potent” (Derrida, 1988: 236).

Derrida argued that Western philosophical thought has produced a way of understanding meaning via binary oppositions. Derrida’s deconstructive interventions reveal the way(s) in which oppositional thought tends toward a hierarchy of meaning, privileging one side of the opposition over the other. The search for origins, for instance, relies on an understanding of time, which privileges presence over absence – one that sees the present as pure and innocent (Derrida, 1978: 369). For the purpose of this introduction, and the framework I will use throughout this thesis, I will focus briefly here on Derrida’s critique of logocentrism (which privileges speech over writing); and his critique of a metaphysics of presence (which privileges presence over absence)¹³.

In *Of Grammatology*, Derrida challenges the inherited concept that speech is the origin of language and meaning. Logocentrism relies on an idea that words (or signs) refer to an original thought, thus stabilising the meaning of that word. The binary that privileges speech over writing relies on an idea that writing is a representation of speech. Speech is *present* whereas writing is the *absent representation* of that speech. Derrida sees a heterogeneity in the “traditional concept of the sign” (Spivak in Derrida, 1997b: xvi), proposing that it is an “ineluctable nostalgia for presence that makes of this heterogeneity a unity by declaring that a sign brings forth the presence of the signified” (Spivak in Derrida, 1997b: xvi). The logic of the sign relies on an understanding that what existed in the past can be recalled in the present. Derrida proposes that all signs refer to other signs – there is no original event, experience, object, or thought that the sign refers to. Like Nietzsche, Derrida argues that things have no meaning in themselves: “The text has no identity, no stable origin, no stable end” (Spivak in Derrida, 1997b: xii). Derrida uses the term “arche-writing” to describe an understanding of writing not as the signifier of an originary signified, but as a text that functions in the absence of the writer – the meaning of which can never be present as such¹⁴.

¹³ As Spivak points out, Derrida uses the word ‘metaphysics’ “very simply as shorthand for any science of presence” (Spivak in Derrida, 1997b: xxi).

¹⁴ According to Eaglestone, Derrida “constantly renames his insights to avoid them becoming systematic and in order to fix them in definite responses to certain texts” (Eaglestone, 2002: 31). Derrida’s deconstruction of the relationship between language and meaning has also been explained via the term *différance*. *Différance* can be understood as resistance to fixed meaning and the “reliance on established systems of analysis” (Fuery and Mansfield, 2000: 167).

But the point of Derrida's interventions, is not simply to reverse the binary and thus to privilege writing over speech, absence over presence, and so on. Eaglestone argues that in *Of Grammatology*, Derrida's task is to "open a reading" (Eaglestone, 2002: 28) in a way that "questions or reframes the framework in which the work appears" (Eaglestone, 2002: 28). Derrida proposes that a deconstructive reading, one that challenges the binary logic of absence/presence, exposes a 'trace'¹⁵. Spivak describes the trace as "the mark of the absence of the presence, an always already absent present, of the lack at the origin that is the condition of thought and experience" (Spivak in Derrida, 1997b: xvii). Derrida's understanding of the trace refutes the logic of origins. The trace cannot be used to 'trace' the logic of origins as there is no original thought, no original event. For Derrida, what we consider to be 'present' is always informed by and disrupted by the 'past' and the 'future'. Thus 'absence' is paradoxically also 'present' in some way (see Derrida, 1982: 29-68). Presence is always preceded by the trace of prior event(s) which prevents us from ever being in a "pure" present (see Derrida, 1973: 68). As Caputo explains it:

What is really going on in things, what is really happening, is always 'to come'. Every time you try to stabilise the meaning of a thing, try to fix it in its missionary position, the thing itself, if there is anything at all to it, slips away (Caputo, 1997: 31).

Derrida encourages a politics of "unremitting deferral" (Janover, 2005: 227) in order to leave things open to possible (re)interpretations in the future. Ethics is located in the 'to-come' in order to resist totalising narratives (of truth, History, identity, and so on). I will explore this notion further in Chapter 4 via a Derridean deconstruction of the concept of 'justice'.

Critchley and Kearney describe Derrida's approach in his later works as a "form of conceptual genealogy" (Critchley & Kearney in Derrida, 2001a: viii–ix). They write:

¹⁵ Derrida acknowledges that he owes his understanding of the trace to Heidegger and Levinas (Derrida, 1997b: 70). Derrida claims that his concept of the trace relates to a "Heideggerian intention" which signifies the "undermining of an ontology which, in its innermost course, has determined the meaning of being as presence and the meaning of language as the full continuity of speech" (Derrida, 1997b: 70). Derrida also owes his use of the 'trace' to Levinas's "critique of ontology" (Derrida, 1997b: 70), which entails an ethical understanding of subjectivity in relation to the other. The trace is significant to Levinas' ethics in that it marks the absence of the other – reminding us of our infinite responsibility to the other.

He selects a concept from what he always describes as ‘the heritage’ – let’s call it the dominant Western tradition – and then proceeds, via an analysis that is at once historical, contextual, and thematic, to bring out the logic of that concept (Critchley & Kearney in Derrida, 2001a: viii–ix).

In this thesis, I take this approach with ‘Katyń’. I propose a deconstructive (re)reading of the assumptions behind the narrativisations of ‘Katyń’ as a (fixed) sign, a descriptor of a pure and unmediated ‘event’. ‘Katyń’ does not refer to an originary (singular) *meaning*, but a series of ‘meanings’. At the same time, this analysis includes a critique of the inheritance of other concepts such as myth, memory, and justice in order to examine how they function to (re)produce particular conceptualisation(s) of ‘Katyń’. By thinking “against the grain” of these inherited concepts, I aim to “bring out the logic” of these concepts, in order to “stretch the sense and meaning of philosophical and ethical ideas, to turn them to the light and the shade in order to see them afresh and to think them differently” (Janover, 2005: 226). This is not to destroy the various ‘meanings’ of Katyń, or to wholly reject them, but to open up new ways of “thinking and responding” (Eaglestone, 2002: 28) to these concepts¹⁶. I consider how this (re)reading enables one to locate the shifting ‘meanings’ behind ‘Katyń’ and arrive at an understanding of ‘Katyń’ as a concept. That is, not as a grand narrative or sign that refers to an ‘original’ but as a metaphorical signifier – one whose meaning has never been simple, stable, authentic, pure – a meaning which is not unanimous but conflicted depending on time and circumstance, a meaning that has developed, evolved and continues to change. In so doing, I establish a framework within which we can read all events/texts as products of particular systems of meaning.

A Note on the Historical Texts

What I am (re)presenting in this chapter and throughout this thesis is a (re)construction of other (re)constructions of events – (re)presentations of a ‘past’, which can never be fully present. From the disciplinary perspective taken, ‘Katyń’ is a narrative(ised) event which is materialised in and through a range of structuring structures such as memory, memorialisation, and calls for and practices of apology, justice, forgiveness, reconciliation

¹⁶ Eaglestone has argued that deconstruction is “not a method, not an approach that can uncover novelty” (Eaglestone, 2002: 28), rather, he views Derrida’s work as a “way of thinking and responding” (Eaglestone, 2002: 28).

and compensation. Consequently, it is such structures – rather than personal stories or official documents in themselves – that are the focus of critical interrogation. It is important to mention that I have limited my analysis to the Anglophone literature on Katyń, and to acknowledge the role of these texts in shaping my own narrativisation(s) of Katyń. For Polish, Russian, and World War II histories, I draw mainly on the writings of Brian Porter¹⁷, Norman Davies¹⁸, Timothy Snyder¹⁹, Adam Zamoyski²⁰, Tina Rosenberg²¹, and Geoffrey Hosking²². My main sources on ‘Katyń’ include Joseph Mackiewicz’s *The Katyń Wood Murders* (1951); Polish-American historian Janusz K. Zawodny’s *Death in the Forest* (1962)²³; *The Crime of Katyń* (1989)²⁴; and American journalist Louis Fitzgibbon’s *Katyń: A Crime Without Parallel* (1971). These publications were printed prior to Gorbachev’s revelation and were primarily concerned with the question of who killed the prisoners, and what had become of the prisoners from the other two camps. All of these early publications concluded that the Soviets were responsible for the massacres.

Of course, a lot has happened since the collapse of Soviet communism so while I refer to these earlier texts, I draw largely on contemporary accounts of ‘Katyń’. Notable publications include *Katyń and the Soviet Massacre of 1940* (2005), written by George Sanford²⁵, and *Katyń: A Crime Without Punishment* (2007), by Anna M. Cienciala, Natalia S. Lebedeva²⁶, and Wojciech Materski²⁷. Other important English texts in the field include Victor Zaslavsky’s *Class Cleansing: The Massacre at Katyń* (2008); Eugenia Maresch’s *Katyń 1940: The Documentary Evidence of the West’s Betrayal* (2010); Allen Paul’s *Katyń: Stalin’s Massacre and the Triumph of Truth* (2010); Benjamin B. Fisher’s article “Stalin’s Killing Field” (2000); Joanna Niżyńska’s article “The Politics of Mourning and the Crisis of Poland’s Symbolic Language after April 10” (2010); Ellen Hinsey’s article “Death in the

¹⁷ A Polish-American historian who specialises in nineteenth century Polish history.

¹⁸ An English historian who specialises in Eastern Europe history.

¹⁹ Snyder is also an English historian who specialises in twentieth-century European history.

²⁰ A Polish historian.

²¹ An American journalist who wrote a detailed account of Europe after communism (see Rosenberg, 1995).

²² A British historian who specialises in Russian history.

²³ First published in the U.S. in 1962, Zawodny’s book was reprinted in England in January 1971.

²⁴ This text was first published in 1965 by the Polish Cultural Foundation, and an American organisation dedicated to the preservation of Polish culture and heritage (see *Polish Cultural Foundation*, 2012). I refer to the 5th edition of this text, published in 1989.

²⁵ A British specialist in Polish and Eastern European history.

²⁶ Natalia S. Lebedeva was one of the Russian historians to have discovered documents that proved Soviet guilt during Gorbachev’s glasnost era.

²⁷ All of whom are Polish and Russian historians. Written by an American (Cienciala), a Russian (Lebedeva), and a Pole (Materski), this text has been labelled the “definitive account in English” (Hinsey, 2011) of the Katyń Massacre, providing translations of the “most important documents to come to light since the fall of the Soviet Union” (Paul, 2010: xi).

Forest” (2011); and more recently, Leszek Koczanowicz’s article “The Politics of Catastrophe: Poland’s Presidential Crash and the Ideology of Post-postcommunism” (2012); Danielle Drozdewski’s article “Knowing (or Not) about Katyń: The Silencing and Surfacing of Public Memory” (2012); and Alexander Etkind and Rory Finnin et al’s *Remembering Katyń* (2012). The authors of these later texts are less concerned with the question of who killed the prisoners of war (and now all agree unanimously that it was the NKVD under Stalin’s orders), and tend to explore issues pertaining to truth, memory, justice and reconciliation. Contemporary commentators such as Hinsey, Niżyńska, Drozdewski, Etkind and Finnin et al focus more specifically on how the event is narrated and remembered. I also refer to a few bibliographies including *Night Never Ending* (1975), written by a Kharkov survivor, Eugenjusz Andrei Komorowski; *When God Looked the Other Way* (2004), written by Wesley Adamcyck, the son of a Kharkov victim; and *Children of the Katyń Massacre* (2006), in which Polish journalist Teresa Kaczorowska, interviews a number of Poles whose fathers died at one of the ‘Katyń’ locations.

This is not an exhaustive Historical study of ‘Katyń’ as some of the above mentioned texts claim to be, but a genealogy. The following genealogy involves making decisions as to which events to include and which events to leave out. Like Foucault, I will select events that are indicative of a movement, or illustrative of the ways in which different discourses compete for relevance. I am making this process explicit in order to acknowledge that as a narrator, I am not an impartial observer. These decisions are informed by what I believe to be relevant to my thesis, and also by my position as an English-speaking Australian academic with limited access to Polish and Russian language texts. As noted previously, my critique focuses on narrative structures and narrative effects and not on specific, individual stories. More importantly, however, it is worth noting that task of genealogy is to “expose a body totally imprinted by history” (Foucault, 1977a: 148). The body, *my* body, is, according to Foucault, the “inscribed surface of events (traced by language and dissolved by ideas)” (Foucault, 1977a: 148). Thus my (re)reading(s) of ‘Katyń’ are informed by a situated (geographical, historical, temporal) perspectival interpretation of events, and in particular, my Polish heritage²⁸. Throughout this thesis, I will be critically engaging with the effects of a

²⁸ I was encouraged by Danielle Drozdewski’s similar acknowledgement of how her Katyń research was informed by her Polish heritage. She writes: “Part of this post-structuralist analysis of Katyń memories has been acknowledging my position as researcher and the way my situated knowledge in turn creates new (and contingent) interpretations of the Katyń story. While none of my own relatives died at Katyń, I have interviewed several post-WWII and post-Socialist migrants whose family members were murdered there. My Polish heritage means that the Katyń memory is part of my grandparents’ history (and mine), yet I write this paper as partial outsider, as a non-Pole. The subsequent analyses are my interpretations of these articulations of memory, which

proliferation of very particular narrative(s) of Polish History within English-language texts on Katyń, one that is intertwined with very specific idea(l)s about freedom, nation, religion and victimhood, and which I did not notice at first. Partly, perhaps, because as an Australian with Polish heritage, the repetition of these narratives within my family meant that these histories had become inscribed on the surface of my body. I had unknowingly, inherited specific ideas about Polish History and identity that shaped my research. Moving to a genealogical approach has required that I interrogate these assumptions, while still trying to remain ‘faithful’²⁹ to my heritage.

Polish-Russian Relations

Like most traditional Histories, Katyń Histories begin with the identification of an original event as the source of series of conflicts, culminating in a grand event: Katyń. While ‘Katyń’ could be said to be a direct consequence of World War II, most historians agree that the death of approximately 22,000 men and 1 woman, now known as ‘Katyń’, should be viewed within the broad context of past Polish-Russian relations. Sanford claims that the relationship between Poland and Russia has been described as an “‘age-old antagonism’, which transcended the level of mere conflict between two major Slavonic states”³⁰ (Sanford, 2005: 5). The language used here gives the story a sort of authoritative coherence – ‘age-old’ implies that it is a narrative that predates History to some extent.

Polish and Russian historians contend that Russia has played a dominant role in Polish political life since the early 1700s. Cienciala et al note that for the majority of their shared History since 1772, “most Poles viewed Russia as the foremost enemy of Polish independence, whereas most Russians viewed the Poles as a threat to the security of the empire, and later the USSR” (Cienciala et al, 2007: 2). The ‘original’ conflict is often traced the era of the partitions. According to Snyder and Hosking, prior to the 1700s, the Poland-Lithuanian Commonwealth was a powerful rival state. Geoffrey Hosking argues that when the Polish state showed signs of weakening during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth

are unavoidably linked to my positionality and the connection I feel to Polish cultural memories and histories in these places” (Drozdewski, 2012: 304-305).

²⁹ I refer to Penelope Deutscher’s explanation of Derridean mourning in which she argues that Derrida “converts the issue of mourning into one concerning the ethics of alterity” (Deutscher, 1998: 166). For Derrida, a pertinent question regarding mourning is “how to be faithful to the other” (Deutscher, 1998: 166). This is not to be understood in terms of religious faith, but a respect for the ‘otherness’ of the other that will always remain outside of us, wholly other to us (see Derrida, 1986: 35).

³⁰ Sanford cites Budurowyc (1963: 188).

centuries, Peter I and his successors exploited the country's weaknesses in order to "keep Poland weak and to maintain a Russian hegemony over it" (Hosking: 1997: 29). As Hosking tells it, the consequent partitioning of the Polish nation took place in three stages – (in 1772, 1793 and 1795) – and was achieved with the aid of Austria and Prussia (Hosking: 1997: 29). Historical accounts of this period maintain that the third and final partition of 1795 wiped Poland-Lithuania from the map of Europe entirely (Snyder, 2003: 25; Burnell, 2009: 38) and the nation was absorbed into Russia, Prussia and then Austria in 1815. From then until 1830 there existed a semi-autonomous Polish Kingdom, nominally separated from Russia, but with the tsar as its king.

This History of conflict is often linked to a clash of competing ideologies, thus (re)creating a binary opposition between the two nations. According to Hosking, it was during the era of the partitions that it became clear that the Polish democratic ideal was incompatible with Russian autocracy (Hosking, 1997: 30). Porter claims that as a result:

[A]fter fifteen years of accumulated grievances, the Kingdom exploded with the November Uprising of 1830-1831. The insurrection was soon defeated, and what autonomy the Kingdom had enjoyed was eliminated: the constitution was nullified, the *sejm*³¹ was abolished, the army was disbanded, the *złoty*³² was replaced by the *ruble*³³, and many elements of Russian law were introduced (Porter, 2002a: 17-18).

A series of insurrections in 1846, 1848, and 1863 all ended in defeat. For the Poles, this era symbolised the loss of a very particular idea(l) of the nation, and it was this loss that fed into the construction of a specific Polish myth of History and national identity. The era of the late 1700s-1800s marked the establishment of a new political order in Europe as old regimes were overthrown. This changing political climate was also the backdrop for the emergence of modern concepts of the nation and nationalism. Influenced by the romanticism of the day, Polish intellectuals, poets and patriots developed a narrative of History and national identity, which has come to be known as 'Polish messianism'. I will be discussing this narrative in much more depth in Chapter 2, but I will summarise it briefly here. Polish nationalism in this era developed alongside a romanticised myth of Polish History in which Poland was viewed

³¹ The lower house of Polish parliament.

³² Polish currency.

³³ Russian currency.

as an innocent ‘victim’ of oppression. This romantic myth provided the Poles with a reason to endure their suffering by promising a messianic vision of the future; the Poles would eventually be rewarded, the nation would be reborn, and they would once again be free and independent. Propagators of this myth dubbed Poland the ‘Christ of Nations’

The Polish-Soviet War 1920

Another event which has been accorded significance in relation to the History of Polish-Russian relations is the Polish Soviet-War of 1920, which erupted in the aftermath of World War I. The era following WWI was particularly momentous for the Poles in that after more than a century living under imperial rule, the nation regained her independence. According to Norman Davies, the Polish Republic came into being in November 1918, by creating itself “in the void left by the collapse of the three partitioning powers” (Davies, 2005b: 291)³⁴. Davies claims that the collapse of established order in Central and Eastern Europe led to a series of conflicts over the new territory gained by the Poles and between 1918-1921, six wars were fought concurrently over this territory (Davies, 2005b: 292). The Soviet War was the most destructive however, and threatened the Republic’s existence. Davies argues that for the Commander in Chief of the Polish army, Jozef Piłsudski, the war was fought to “maintain the independence of non-Russian areas of the former Tsarist Empire” (Davies, 2005b: 292). For Lenin’s Bolshevik government, it was fought to “re-create that Empire in socialist guise, and to spread the Revolution to the advanced capitalist countries and Western Europe” (Davies, 2005b: 292). In other words, the causes of the war were both territorial³⁵ and ideological. The emphasis on the ideological aspects of this conflict function to (re)affirm the binary opposition of the Polish/Russian relationship that is significant to ‘Katyń’ narratives.

Jozef Piłsudski led the Poles to victory in the Battle of Vistula in August 1920, thus securing the “independence of not only Poland but also the Baltic States (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania) and other Central European states as well” (Cienciala et al, 2007: 10). The war ended with the Treaty of Riga (18 March 1921), which left what is now Western Belarus and western Ukraine in Poland (Cienciala et al, 2007: 10). Davies claims that the Treaty of Riga

³⁴ Timothy Snyder also claims that the declaration of Polish independence in November 1918 “was only possible because all three of the partitioning powers – the German, Habsburg, and Russian Empires – disappeared after war and revolution” (Snyder, 2010: 6).

³⁵ Cienciala et al also point out that the “key area of Russian-Polish conflict in early modern times, and again in the twentieth century, was in the “Borderlands” between the two countries, that is, today’s Ukraine and Belarus (Belorussia)” (Cienciala et al, 2007: 3).

“divided the borders between Poland and the Soviet Republics, established diplomatic relations, and completed Poland’s territorial struggle on a note of satisfaction” (Davies, 2001: 103). Cienciala et al note that it is significant that “many of the Polish officers taken prisoner by the Red Army in September 1939 had fought against it in 1920” (Cienciala et al, 2007: 10). Many historians suggest that the 1920 war aggravated the tensions between the two nations. Natalia Lebedeva and Cienciala et al both claim that the Red Army’s defeat by the Poles in the Polish-Soviet war of 1920 caused the Soviet leaders to view Poland as its most immediate threat, and the Polish Army as its main enemy (Cienciala et al, 2007: 11 and Lebedeva cited in Sanford, 2005: 7)³⁶. Independent Poland posed a greater threat to the Bolsheviks than partitioned Poland in that by regaining their freedom, it was believed that Polish ‘values’ were strengthened and these bourgeois values threatened the Bolshevik ideology. Viewed within the dominant narrative of Polish history, the victory of 1920 had particular significance for the Poles in that they reclaimed some of the territory they had lost in 1792 (the era of the partitions and of Polish romanticism). They also regained their independence; and it seemed to some, that the rebirth of the nation that so many romantic poets had written about had finally come³⁷. This ‘victory’ was short lived, however, with the end of World War II marking the beginning of another period of foreign rule in Poland.

³⁶ Sanford also supports this view, noting that “Independent Poland was regarded by the Bolsheviks as a national and class opponent representing mixed gentry landowning and bourgeois values and interests” (Sanford, 2005: 8).

³⁷ According to Cienciala et al, the Polish victory had the following consequences for the Poles: “The Poles saw the Polish Soviet frontier established by the Treaty of Riga (18 March 1921) as the recovery of old Polish lands, especially the two preponderantly Polish-speaking cities that were the centers of Polish culture, Wilno and Lwów. At the same time, they saw the eastern territories as critical to Polish national security against the Soviet Union, viewed as a “Red” version of the old Russian Empire. Thus, in a mirror image of the Soviet view of Poland, for most of the interwar period the Poles saw the USSR as the greatest threat to their country” (Cienciala et al, 2007: 11).

Outbreak of World War II

Historians³⁸ claim that the roots of the Katyń killings lie, at least in part, in the Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact of August 1939. This led to the German-Soviet partition of Poland, and ultimately to the Second World War. According to these Histories, the pact was signed in Stalin's presence at the Kremlin on 23 August 1939 by the German foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop and the Soviet Commissar for Foreign Affairs Vyacheslav Molotov, and a Secret Supplementary Protocol was negotiated in the Kremlin on the same night. The two powers divided Poland in half along the Vistula and San Rivers (Cienciala et al, 2007: 15)³⁹. Subsequently, asserts Zawodny, the Supreme Council of the U.S.S.R. incorporated the territory gained as a result of the pact into the Soviet Union (Zawodny, 1962: 4). According to Cienciala et al, the "contents of the Secret Protocol were leaked to Washington, Paris, and London, yet the Poles were informed neither by their French and British allies nor by the United States" (Cienciala et al, 2007: 15). The significance of this claim becomes apparent in Cienciala et al's text as it pertains to the development of a narrative in contemporary Katyń Histories that emphasises Western complicity in the cover-up of Katyń, and the ultimate (double) victimisation of the Polish nation, who were absent from this narrative.

Nazi Germany's invasion of Poland on September 1, 1939 marks the official beginning of WWII. Two days later, France and Great Britain declared war on Germany. Approximately two weeks later, the Soviets invaded Poland, never declaring war. According to a number of Katyń historians⁴⁰, Stalin claimed that the Red Army's advance into East Poland was a protective measure, aimed to save the Ukrainians and Byelorussians from the German advance. This was declared in a note⁴¹, issued by the Soviet Government to the Polish Ambassador in the USSR, Waław Grzybowski, on 7 September 1939. The note also stated that:

Warsaw no longer exists as the capital of Poland. The Polish government has collapsed and shows no sign of life. This means that the Polish state and its government have, in fact, ceased to exist.... Left to its own devices and bereft of

³⁸ See for example: Sanford (2005: 20); Cienciala et al (2007: 2); Zaslavsky (2008: 6-7).

³⁹ According to Zawodny, the 'Ribbentrop-Molotov line' resulted in a "gain for Germany of 72,866 square miles and for the Soviet Union of 77,620 square miles of Polish land" (Zawodny, 1962: 4).

⁴⁰ See for example Sanford (2005: 24); Zaslavsky (2008: 11); and Cienciala et al (2007: 17-18).

⁴¹ The note states: "Nor can the Soviet government remain indifferent to the fact that its kindred Ukrainian and Belorussian peoples, living on Polish territory, are abandoned to their fate and left unprotected" (cited Cienciala et al, 2007: 44)

leadership, Poland has become a fertile field for all kinds of accidents and surprises, which could pose a threat to the USSR (cited in Cienciala et al, 2007: 44).

This statement reiterates the tension between the two nations, by highlighting the threat that Poland poses to Russia. It is largely believed that this note was the pretext for the Soviet invasion of Poland on the 17th of September 1939, and the subsequent arrest of Polish army officers, generals, and policeman.

Soviet Invasion of Poland

The Soviet occupation of Poland is often referred to as the Fourth Partition of Poland. According to Sanford, on 28 November 1939, the Supreme Soviet “conferred compulsory Soviet citizenship on all inhabitants of the newly annexed territories”⁴² (Sanford, 2005: 24), thus establishing the “legal and formal basis for the ethnic cleansing of Poles in the Eastern Territories” (Sanford, 2005: 24). Zawodny claims that this process began with an immediate mass deportation of Poles when the Soviets occupied Poland (Zawodny, 1962: 5), and whole families were “put forcibly into trains and dispatched towards northern Soviet territories” (Zawodny, 1962: 5). Sanford maintains that there were three major waves of deportation from the Eastern Territories during 1939-1941 (Sanford, 2005: 26), and among those who were arrested and deported, were the men who would end up at one of the three camp sites. Louis Fitzgibbon states that out of an approximate “20,000 Polish military and police personnel deported into the depths of the Soviet Union, 15,000 officers and intellectual leaders, the cream of Poland, were imprisoned in three special camps at Kozielsk, Starobielsk and Ostashkov” (Fitzgibbon, 1972: 1). Fitzgibbon’s use of the phrase ‘cream of Poland’ points to a common argument, echoed by Sanford, that the main aim of Soviet Policy during 1939-1941 was “to destroy Polish political, social and cultural influence entirely, and to disperse the Polish population throughout the USSR, where it could be controlled effectively” (Sanford, 2005: 24). According to Sanford, those most at risk were:

⁴² Sanford claims that as a result of the Fourth Partition, the USSR gained 52.1% of the territory and 38.1% of the population of inter-war Poland (Sanford, 2005: 23-24).

Army officers who had evaded capture and returned home, individuals who had resisted the Soviet occupation, frontier crossers, 1920 war veterans and military settlers as well as political, social, trade union, religious and cultural figures and members of inter-war Polish organisations. The decapitation of the Polish elite and its organisational core was followed by the arrests of relatives, friends, collaborators and anyone named during interrogation (Sanford, 2005: 25)⁴³.

This claim reiterates the significance attributed to the Polish-Soviet war of 1920 within the Historical narrative of the two nation's conflict. Sanford's use of the word 'decapitation' plays into a dominant narrativisation of the Katyń victims and what their deaths signify. This narrative relies on the construction of a particular version of Polish patriotic national identity. The emphasis on the victims' professions⁴⁴ implies that these men were upstanding citizens who all contributed in some way to the betterment of Polish society⁴⁵. Their deaths are symbolic of a broader narrative of Polish history in which the Poles are constituted as victims. While it is possible to tell a victim narrative even when those killed are not 'leaders', when they are described as 'elite' then something more is happening. The killing of leaders, of the head(s) of a body politic, is a form of decapitation that does insurmountable injury to the social body. It is very different to cutting off the feet, so to speak. If say, the people killed were 'criminals', the effect would not be as devastating to the state, the body politic, as a whole. This is not to dishonour or disrespect these men and what they meant to the Polish Nation. I highlight this as an example of selective History and the ways in which particular events or persons have more significance to a narrative.

There continues to be debate⁴⁶ over whether the actions of the NKVD at the sites that come under the umbrella 'Katyń' contravened international law as outlined by the Hague

⁴³ According to Sanford, arrests continued in this way right up to the German invasion in June 1941 (Sanford, 2005: 25) and an estimated 200,000 are reported to have been conscripted into the Red Army through this process (Sanford, 2005: 26).

⁴⁴ Cienciala et al similarly point out that the Soviet authorities "viewed Polish Army officers, police, administrators, officeholders, judges and other legal personnel, politicians, educators, and clergy as counterrevolutionary; by virtue of their professions, they were automatically classed as opponents of communism" (Cienciala et al, 2007: 123).

⁴⁵ Szonert-Binienda has also argued that "this perception of the perpetrators is further confirmed by Beria's Directive dated March 20, 1940 that ... defines the condemned men as 'former officers of the Polish Army, police, prison guards, gendarmes, intelligence agents, former landowners, manufacturers, and prominent officials of the former Polish state apparatus . . .'" (Cienciala et al 2007: 153; Szonert-Binienda, 2012: 672). Szonert-Binienda asserts that the "list of categories of people demonstrates that the condemned men were people of stature, wealth and patriotism on whom the future of independent Poland depended" (Szonert-Binienda, 2012: 672).

⁴⁶ See for, example, Sterio (2012) who writes: "The question that remains unanswered fully has to do with the classification of Katyń as a crime under international criminal law. Does the Katyń massacre constitute the

Conventions of 1899 and 1907 and the Geneva Convention of 1929⁴⁷. Because the Soviets had not declared war on Poland and neither had the Poles declared war on Russia (see Sanford, 2005: 39 and Cienciala et al, 2007: 19), it was never established whether the Polish prisoners could be treated as prisoners of war (Sanford, 2005: 39). The Geneva Convention extended POW status to “paramilitary and volunteer organisations, the police and civilians taken captive during military operations” (Sanford, 2005: 40). Sanford writes:

As a point of law it is, therefore, of cardinal importance that the 1929 Geneva Convention clearly extended POW status to paramilitary and volunteer organisations, the police and civilians taken captive during military operations. The Polish President’s General Mobilisation Order of 30 August 1939 called up all reserve officers, territorial militia and auxiliaries. In addition the Council of Ministers decreed the inclusion of the police within the Armed Forces on 12 September. These groups, therefore, qualified for POW status in the light of international law (Sanford, 2005: 40).

In failing to extend the rights to civilian combatants encoded in the Hague Conventions and “executing many individuals, of all categories, as ‘bandits’, along with soldiers caught continuing armed struggle in the rear of the Red Army” (Sanford, 2005: 40), the Russians, Sanford proposes, committed what would now be considered war crimes. Furthermore, Sanford argues that by handing control of the soldiers over to the NKVD, the Soviets “openly contravened the Hague and Geneva Convention principles that governments and their armed forces not the security police, should be responsible for POWs” (Sanford, 2005: 41). Thus it can be argued, within the context of international law⁴⁸, that these massacres were a violation of internationally agreed-upon principles, and thus, a war crime. Consequently, many of the

gravest offense of genocide? If not, does it amount to a crime against humanity? Finally, does it constitute a war crime?” (Sterio, 2012: 626).

⁴⁷ According to Sanford, the “latter confirmed and widened the principle of humane treatment of PoWs... It also specified important principles in defining who should be regarded as a PoW and thus benefit from that status” (Sanford, 2005: 40).

⁴⁸ Sanford argues this point, stating that “The Soviet Union’s invasion and occupation of Poland in September 1939 was a clear act of aggression in international law. It contravened its signed obligations under the 1932 Non-Aggression Pact with Poland and the 1933 London Convention on the Definition of the Aggressor” (Sanford, 2005: 39). Similarly Cienciala et al view the Poles as prisoners of war and so they conclude that the “decision to shoot them violated not only generally accepted moral standards, as was also the case with the Soviet citizens, but also international standards, as embodied in the Geneva Conventions on the treatment of prisoners of war” (Cienciala et al, 2007: 147).

texts on Katyń cited here, define ‘Katyń’ as a ‘war crime’⁴⁹, or a ‘crime against humanity’⁵⁰, which requires that justice be done in the form of an international tribunal (an issue which I will discuss in more detail in Chapter 4).

Zawodny, however, proposes that because the Soviet Union “had not subscribed to the Geneva Convention”, the Soviet authorities were “unrestricted legally in the treatment of the Polish officers” (Zawodny, 1962: 130-131). Zawodny asserts that the Soviet treatment of Polish officers was “guided exclusively by Soviet laws, political trends, or expediency” (Zawodny, 1962: 130-131). For Zawodny (whose text has a clear pro-Polish agenda), the massacres serve as an example of the heavy-handed methods of the Soviet system. But this also illustrates one of the difficulties faced by nations attempting to achieve a measure of ‘justice’ after war by retrospectively judging events on the basis of criteria which, at the time of their occurrence, was not universally accepted, and more specifically, not agreed to by the party held to be guilty (I will return to this problem in Chapter 4).

The Prisoners, the Camps and the Executions

Sanford claims that the inmates in Kozelsk and Starobelsk were predominantly military officers, whereas Ostashkov was designated as the main camp for policemen, border and prison guards, gendarmes and state and judicial officials (Sanford, 2005: 48-51)⁵¹. Zawodny notes that “those connected with law enforcement or intelligence were kept together with the officers” (Zawodny, 1962: 132). Zawodny points this out in order to (re)inforce an understanding of ‘Katyń’ as a binary conflict between capitalism and Marxism. He writes that the “logic of this arrangement seems obvious. The law these men represented was capitalist law” (Zawodny, 1962: 132). Insofar as these men represented a particular ideology, one that was incompatible with Stalin’s interpretation of Marxism, their very existence was interpreted as a threat to the Soviet ethos. However, this (re)reading of the event within these terms is not simply an effect of a Western or Polish perspective; it is integral to the Stalinist-Marxist narrative of History which I will be examining more closely in Chapter 4.

⁴⁹ See Sterio (2012: 630), for example.

⁵⁰ See Sterio (2012: 630).

⁵¹ As well as this there were a number of priests, rabbis, doctors and university lecturers amongst those killed. So aside from the single female victim, these were all men who held positions of authority, possessed military experience, or specialised knowledge in their respected fields. As mentioned, the significance of this is reiterated in most Katyń Histories.

Many historians maintain that an indoctrination process took place in all three camps which involved a political education campaign, screening pro-Soviet films in Kozelsk and Starobelsk (Zawodny, 1962: 140), and lengthy interrogations (see Zawodny, 1962: 103, 134, 104, 141). Zawodny argues that the interrogations were an “attempt to manipulate political attitudes by mass indoctrination” (Zawodny, 1962: 134). According to Sanford, holding church services and singing the Polish national anthem was seen as counter-revolutionary and in some instances, speaking Polish was forbidden (Sanford, 2005: 66). Zawodny also claims that religious services “had to be held surreptitiously, as did any kind of discussion having the slightest political implication” (Zawodny, 1962: 103). In *Night Never Ending*, Komorowski recalls that:

The camp was also plastered with Soviet slogans that indicated – to me at least – that the Russians were trying to indoctrinate us into believing that Russia was heaven on earth... The sign said everything. We were capitalists and we were being liberated, not freed... we were highly educated officers and capitalists. We were enemies of Russia (Komorowski & Gilmore, 1975: 62).

The phrasing in this quote emphasises another binary between the educated Polish and uneducated Russians. According to Zawodny however, the indoctrination failed (Zawodny, 1962: 103); he writes that the Poles, “with their values – strong sense of duty toward country, ‘officer’s honor,’ and *esprit de corps* – not only did not take the bait, but their cohesion, when attacked from without, initially strengthened” (Zawodny, 1962: 103). Both Sanford and Lebedeva claim that the officers were exterminated because attempts to re-educate them had failed (Sanford, 2005: 66 & Cienciala et al, 2007: 142), and like Zawodny, Sanford attributes this to the Poles’ sense of patriotism, arguing that they held on to cultural practices such as secret masses in Kozelsk and Starobelsk (Sanford, 2005: 66). It is important to note here that this is a very particular construction of the Polish prisoners – one which is informed by and informs a specific, situated, narrativisation of ‘Katyń’, of Polish identity, and of the ultimate ‘powerlessness’ of the Polish soldiers. Yet the soldiers were seen as heroic even in their alleged ‘powerlessness’ – they refused to give up their beliefs and so they sacrificed their lives for those beliefs⁵².

⁵² Fitzgibbon also articulates this narrative when he writes that the “murdered men were no danger to the Russians: they were all in prison camps. But they just might constitute a threat one day, and they were of course totally defenceless. According to the Marxist ‘laws’ of historical materialism they must, therefore, disappear as

Historians claim that the execution of the prisoners held in the three special camps began in early April and continued until late May 1940, with the Ostashkov prisoners coming last (Cienciala et al, 2007: 122). Sanford argues that the process was broken down into three stages: transportation, execution and burial in order to ensure secrecy (Sanford, 2005: 90). He writes, “the isolation of the final stage was designed to ensure total manipulated control over the prospective victims right up until the final bullet” (Sanford, 2005: 90). The emotive language used here plays into a particular narrativisation of the Polish soldiers as helpless victims, and the Russian ‘perpetrators’ as cruel and calculated – a reminder that History is not an objective discipline, but is always informed by the subjective position of the historian.

The Discovery of the Graves

On June 22 1941, the German army launched Operation Barbarossa, the German invasion of the Soviet Union. This forced Stalin to renegotiate his policies regarding Poland in order to gain support from the Western Allies leading to the official reinstatement of Polish-Soviet relations, and the formation of a Polish army⁵³. During this time, Polish officials conducted a search for the missing officers⁵⁴. However, their investigations yielded no results⁵⁵. Nothing

soon as possible. They did” (Fitzgibbon, Louis, 1975: iii). Fitzgibbon’s claim that they were ‘totally defenceless’ serves to reaffirm the idea that the Russians were totally ‘evil’ rather than simply reiterating the idea that Poles have always been victims.

⁵³ Zawodny claims that on 30 July 1941, General Władysław Sikorski, head of the Polish Government-in-exile signed a formal diplomatic agreement in London with the Soviet Ambassador Ivan Maisky, re-establishing Polish-Soviet relations (Zawodny, 1962: 5-6). According to the agreement, Polish citizens held in the USSR were to be ‘amnestied’ and a Polish army - headed first by General Michał Tokarzewski in 1941, and then General Władysław Anders in 1942 - was to be formed in Russia in order to fight the common enemy (Germany) (Zawodny, 1962: 5-6, Fitzgibbon, 1972: 2 & Cienciala et al, 2007: 209).

⁵⁴ Apparently as soldiers and officers began arriving at Polish army centres, Polish military officers noticed that the 14,500 officers from Kozelsk and Starobelsk camps were missing, as well as the policemen and gendarmes from Ostashkov, thus arousing suspicion as to the officers’ whereabouts. It has been alleged that the officers’ names were known because survivors of the three camps compiled lists of the missing men from memory (Fitzgibbon, 1972: 2 & Cienciala et al, 2007: 209). According to Zawodny, Soviet authorities denied any knowledge of the missing men (Zawodny, 1962: 7). This propelled Władysław Sikorski to challenge Stalin’s amnesties in that no one had returned from the three special Soviet prisoner of war camps. Consequently, General Anders established a “search office” with help of Captain Jan Kaczkowski and Józef Czapski (who was a former prisoner of Starobelsk) (Zawodny, 1962: 7 & Fitzgibbon, 1972: 2). Zawodny claims that suspicion also grew amongst the families of the prisoners once correspondence from those in the camps ceased and as a result, the search office received “thousands of letters from the families of the missing Poles, inquiring as to their whereabouts” (Zawodny, 1962: 7). It was ascertained from these letters that “the men from the three camps stopped writing home in the middle of April 1940” (Zawodny, 1962: 7), leading the Poles to intensify their search on the “diplomatic level” (Zawodny, 1962: 9). On October 15, 1941 General Sikorski issued a note to the Soviet Ambassador in London (Bogomolov) who replied that the Poles had been set free (Zawodny, 1962: 9). Sikorski then decided to talk to Stalin personally and flew from London to Moscow to do so (Zawodny, 1962: 9 & Fitzgibbon, 1972: 29). The two met on December 3 1941 and Stalin claimed that the men had escaped, perhaps to Manchuria (Zawodny, 1962: 10 & Cienciala et al, 2007: 210). In 1942 the Polish Army left Russia for

more was heard about the prisoners until the German discovery of the graves at Katyn in 1943, and the newly re-established Polish-Soviet relationship was threatened once again.

The Germans occupied the Smolensk region in July 1941, and in early 1943, Lieutenant⁵⁶ Friedrich Ahrens⁵⁷ was allegedly informed that human bones had been found in the area. Ahrens began interrogating local Russians and on the basis of information received, ordered the area to be dug up. This led to the discovery of a mass grave. Polish historians and historians of Katyn more generally, tend to agree that the discovery and ensuing exhumation and investigation of the bodies provided a convenient decoy for the Nazi's planned liquidation of the Jewish Ghetto in Warsaw in the second half of April (Sanford, 2005: 128, Thompson, 1993). Their other main concern was, according to these historians, to split the Poles and the Western Allies from the Soviets (see Cienciala et al, 2007: 215 and Sanford, 2005: 128). This indicates that from the outset, narrativisation(s) of Katyn have always been influenced by 'external' political issues, and by the situated knowledges of those involved. There was no revelation of a pure, untarnished 'truth' as such, and the German reports were shaped by the interests of those who produced them.

The first public mention of the Katyn graves was made by the German news agency Trans-Ocean on 11 April 1943⁵⁸. The announcement stated that the Polish officers had been murdered by the Soviets (Zawodny, 1962: 15). But this claim was challenged the following day, in a pro-Soviet Polish language broadcast from Moscow, which asserted that the accusations were German propaganda. The Soviet Information Bureau issued a statement on April 15, 1943, announcing that "Polish prisoners-of-war who in 1941 were engaged in construction work west of Smolensk and who... fell into the hands of the German-Fascist hangmen...' had subsequently been executed" (Zawodny, 1962: 15). But it was the Berlin radio communiqué of 13th of April that was reported in the world media. This communiqué went into much more detail⁵⁹.

Persia (where the 8th division of the new Polish army were to be re-located), without any of the missing officers (Fitzgibbon, 1972: 2).

⁵⁵ The search for the missing officers continued from July 1941 until April 1943 and according to Zawodny "no efforts were spared, no contacts overlooked to obtain from Soviet authorities information about the missing men" (Zawodny, 1962: 11).

⁵⁶ He later became Colonel.

⁵⁷ Commander of the Adjutant General Corps (AGC) 537th Signals Regiment.

⁵⁸ According to Zawodny, the "German radio broadcast a propaganda broadside aimed at cracking the unity of the Allies" (Zawodny, 1962: 15).

⁵⁹ According to Sanford, this report named the area that the bodies were discovered and it estimated the total number of victims as 10,000 which tallied with the estimated number of officers taken prisoner in 1939. However, this number was later proven to be incorrect and was closer to the total number of the missing officers. Sanford argues that the Soviets accepted the false German figure of 11,000 corpses at Katyn in order to confuse the issue and to cover up the three fold locations of the other massacres (Sanford, 2005: 135).

It is commonly argued that the German discovery and investigation of the Katyn graves placed the Polish Government-in-Exile in a difficult situation. While the latter allegedly did not believe the Soviet claim that the Germans were responsible, siding with the Germans would put their relationship with the Soviet government in a precarious position. According to Zawodny, however, public opinion amongst the Allies leant towards pointing an “accusing finger at the Germans” (Zawodny, 1962: 16). Zawodny claims that the fact that the men had been killed with German-made bullets enticed the German Government to invite an independent International Commission, the Polish Red Cross Commission, and the German Special Medical-Judiciary Commission to “make a study on the spot” (Zawodny, 1962: 16). According to the findings of all three commissions:

[T]he men were killed and buried about *three* years before the exhumations, in approximately the spring of 1940, or a little more than one year prior to the outbreak of the German-Soviet war, when the area belonged to the Soviet Union and the forest was under the jurisdiction of the NKVD (Zawodny, 1962: 23-24).

The Polish Red Cross (PRC) and the International Red Cross (IRC) also concluded that the names of the officers who were missing from the Soviet POW camps correlated with the victims identified at Katyn. They noted that newspapers and diaries were found on the corpses dating from spring 1940. This pointed to Soviet guilt because the Soviets occupied the area in 1940 (Cienciala et al, 2007: 222; Zawodny, 1962: 24). Furthermore, Zawodny claims that after the burial of the men, spruce had been planted on the graves that were “considerably younger in appearance than the trees around them” (Zawodny, 1962: 24). According to Zawodny, this was done to “hide the crime” (Zawodny, 1962: 24). This is significant for Zawodny’s narrativisation of Katyn in that it illustrates the calculated methods of the NKVD in covering up the killings.

Zawodny believes it was unfortunate for the Poles that the Polish and German governments filed requests to the International Red Cross (IRC) to conduct investigations at the same time (Zawodny, 1962: 32-33). An article in the Soviet issue of *Pravda* on April 19, 1943 titled “Hitler’s Polish Collaborators”, noted that the Polish delegate appeared at the Katyn site on the same day as German delegates, and accused the Poles of collaborating with Germans (Zawodny, 1962: 34). The Polish decision to ask for the IRC investigation led to the London Poles being slandered by the Soviets and the Western Allies and they were accused of being “fascist collaborators” (Sanford, 2005: 129). This gave Stalin the pretext to break off

relations with the Polish government, “despite the Polish Government recalling the German crimes against the Polish nation and denying the Nazis a moral right to speak on their behalf” (Sanford, 2005: 129). Stalin accused the London Poles of supporting ‘vile Fascist calumny against the USSR’ and for colluding with the ‘farical investigation’ designed to cover up the Nazis’ own ‘monstrous crime’ (Sanford, 2005: 129). Churchill and Roosevelt accepted Stalin’s claim that that he was the aggrieved party and supported Stalin’s opposition to the Red Cross investigation⁶⁰. According to Fitzgibbon, the Allies “chose to ignore the matter, and this was the beginning of the great conspiracy of silence” (Fitzgibbon, 1972: 2). For Fitzgibbon and other Katyń historians, ‘silence’ refers to what they perceive as the silencing of a particular ‘true’ account of Katyń – that is, the Polish one – and this silencing provides another example of Poland’s double victimisation.

The Burdenko Commission

In September 1943, a special Soviet commission was set up to investigate the site, headed by chief surgeon of the Red Army, Nikolai Burdenko. The Special State Commission for Ascertaining and Investigating the Circumstances of the Shooting of the Polish Prisoners of War by the German Fascist Invaders in the Katyń Forest was officially established on 13 January 1944. Since it was chaired by Burdenko, it is now referred to as the Burdenko Commission (Cienciala et al, 2007: 227). Zawodny argues that the aims of the commission were clear in its title (Zawodny, 1962: 49), that is, the commission intended to find proof of German guilt. According to Zawodny, the Burdenko commission focused on rejecting the conclusions and evidence cited in the 1943 report of the IMC (International Medical Commission) and “attempted to discredit the verdicts of the three preceding commissions and the materials submitted by the Polish authorities” (Zawodny, 1962: 49).

The Burdenko Commission argued against the medical evidence and conclusions of the IMC, and claimed instead that the Polish prisoners of war had fallen into German hands and were executed by them between July and September 1941 (Cienciala et al, 2007: 228). Burdenko compared the German method of shooting 200 Soviet citizens at Orel (approximately 370km southeast of Smolensk), with the method used at Katyń (a shot at the base of the skull) (Cienciala et al, 2007: 226). He also accused the Germans of exhuming the

⁶⁰ According to Sanford Churchill Roosevelt agreed with Stalin that the Red Cross investigation was bound to be falsified as it would take place under German control (Sanford, 2005: 129).

bodies in March 1943 and removing documents dated after 1940 (Zawodny, 1962: 51). Moreover, local residents who remained under Soviet control changed their testimony during this period, claiming that their evidence had been “obtained by Gestapo beatings and threats” (Sanford, 2005: 137, see also Zawodny, 1962: 50).

The Soviet version of events endorsed by Burdenko was based on a central argument concerning the time of death, namely, that the Poles had been killed three years earlier (instead of two) (Sanford, 2007: 137, see also Zawodny, 1962: 52). Zawodny criticises the report based on the omission of three things that were present in the statements of the other three commissions: “the trees planted on and around the graves, the four-corner bayonet wounds on the bodies⁶¹, and the origin of the ropes⁶² with which the hands were tied” (Zawodny, 1962: 55). The closing statement of the report states:

The conclusions drawn from the evidence given by witnesses, and from the findings of the medico-legal experts on the shooting of Polish war prisoners by the Germans in the autumn of 1941, are completely confirmed by the material evidence and documents excavated from the Katyn graves (cited in Zawodny, 1962: 54).

An extract of the report was presented as evidence in the Nuremberg war Crime Trials, and Cienciala et al maintain that from that point on, Burdenko’s version of ‘Katyn’ was always “cited in Soviet media, encyclopaedias, history books, and notes to foreign governments until the official admission of Soviet guilt” in 1990 (Cienciala et al, 2007: 229). This report was significant to a particular narrativisation of ‘Katyn’ then, in that it was used to legitimate and maintain the (dominant) Russian narrative throughout the postwar years. The construction and reception of the Burdenko Commission is illustrative of the power of political elites to have control over the dissemination of information – or at least the formation of a particular narrative. The acceptance of the Burdenko report as ‘proof’ of an empirical ‘fact’ also raises some questions regarding the status of primary sources and evidence in the discipline of History. It is now agreed by most historians in the field that the Burdenko report represented a

⁶¹ Zawodny notes that the three previous commissions all noted that there were bayonet holes on the victim’s uniforms and that “this type of bayonet was used by the Soviet army at that time” (Zawodny, 1962: 20).

⁶² According to Zawodny, an on-the-spot examination of the rope used to tie the prisoners’ arms behind their backs showed it to be Soviet-made (Zawodny, 1962: 20). Furthermore, Zawodny claims that “the same kind of knots were found on the bodies of several men and women dressed in the remnants of garments of Soviet origin, who were also found in a separate common grave in Katyn Forest” (Zawodny, 1962: 20).

false version of events. If this is the case, then the Burdenko report emphasises the need to remain critical of any text that claims to be primary or original in nature and content.

The Division of Poland

Prior to the end of the war, the allies had already begun negotiations as to how Europe would be partitioned. The first of these meetings was held at Tehran at the end of November 1943 where it was decided “post-war Europe would be divided into ‘zones of influence’ – Western and Southern Europe for the Anglo-Americans and Eastern Europe for the Russians” (Davies, 2001: 65). This meant that Poland would fall under Soviet control. It was also agreed that the post-war Polish-Soviet frontier should follow the line established in 1920 by the former British Foreign Secretary, Lord Curzon⁶³. Norman Davies argues that in the absence of a Polish representative, “Stalin persuaded the Allied Powers to adopt the Russian imperial view of Poland’s national territory” (Davies, 2001: 65). According to Davies, the Polish Government was not informed of these decisions and this set the precedent for the Allied decisions on the Polish Question at Yalta (in February 1945) and Potsdam (in July 1945) (Davies, 2001: 65).

Following the Red Army’s seizure of Warsaw in 1945, the question of who should form the interim government in Poland was raised at Yalta and then at Potsdam. According to Zamoyski, Stalin put forward his own men while Churchill and Roosevelt urged the inclusion of political leaders from London (Zamoyski, 2006: 369). The resulting compromise was an interim government consisting of twenty-one ministers, sixteen of whom were Stalin’s men. This government was formally recognised by the Allies and they withdrew recognition from the London Polish Government (Zamoyski, 2006: 369). Poland’s status as a ‘victim’ of the war (in that they were not members of the victorious alliance) meant that the Poles did not have a legitimate claim to express what they understood to be a wrong at either of these two conferences, which were held by and for the Allied nations. This meant that fate of postwar Poland was left to the Allies. The Allies heard Stalin justify his claim to Poland at both conferences. At the Yalta conference, Stalin drew on a narrative of Polish and Russian history which implied that Poland had been the victim of Russian oppression in order to convince the Allies that his interest in Poland was not territorial expansion, but rather a recognition that

⁶³ The Curzon line was essentially the same as the Nazi-Soviet Demarcation Line of 1939 and the old boundary between the Tsarist Empire and the Congress Kingdom.

“the Russians had greatly sinned against Poland” and that the Soviet government was “trying to atone for those sins” (Berthon & Potts, 2007: 285). Thus it could be argued, that at both of these conferences, the Poles were the (double) ‘victims’ of a differend in that a Polish narrative was absent from the dominant discourse.

But it is also worth reminding the reader that even though the Allies withdrew recognition from the London Polish government and officially recognised the Polish interim government established by Stalin at Yalta, the majority of the ministers of the Polish government-in-exile refused to accept the authority of Stalin’s government. And according to Zamoyski, the government still exists in London today “in defiance of the high-handed arrangements of the Great Powers” (Zamoyski, 2006: 369). So while on the one hand, we could argue that there was a differend in that the Poles had no say in the establishment of political power in Poland after the war (and this constitutes an injustice for Lyotard in that this narrative was silenced in order to maintain a dominant narrative), on the other hand, the Polish narrative was not completely silenced. The subordination of the Polish government-in-exile and their refusal to accept Stalin’s government produced a counter-narrative, which disputed the legitimacy of the Soviet narrative. While this resistance did not result in any fundamental challenges to Soviet authority (in that it was not able to discredit or dismantle the Soviet government), its mere existence – as an act of defiance and resistance – allowed the proliferation of a minor narrative, which disrupted the cohesiveness of the dominant Soviet line. In Chapter 3, I suggest that the effects of the dominant Russian narrative did not entirely wipe out alternative ways of thinking, acting, remembering and so on.

The Nuremberg Trials

In 1945, the victorious Allies (America, Britain, France and the Soviet Union) set up the International Military Tribunal (IMT) in Nuremberg, with the aim of trying “enemy war criminals” (Cienciala et al, 2007: 229). It has been argued that Nuremberg “was as much about politics as it was about justice” (Hirsh, 2008: 729), and that the type of justice sought was “victors’ justice” (Hirsh, 2008: 702). According to this narrative, every decision favoured the victors. Because the governments of the Allied nations organised the Tribunal, they had control over how the areas of responsibilities for the prosecutions would be divided. The divisions were as follows:

The United States would prosecute for the war of aggression, Great Britain for the crimes committed on high seas and treaty violations, and the Soviet Union would prosecute for ‘crimes against humanity’ – sharing this responsibility on a geographical basis with the Government of France. The Soviet Union was responsible for the indictment for crimes committed by the German armies and authorities in Eastern Europe (Zawodny, 1962: 64).

Zawodny notes that this was problematic in that it meant that Katyn could only be submitted and prosecuted by representatives of the Government of the Soviet Union, who at the time, had not yet been “cleared of suspicion of committing the murder” (Zawodny, 1962: 64). Cienciala et al point out another contentious issue in regards to how Katyn was dealt with at Nuremberg. They note that at the onset of the trials, the tribunal “accepted the American-British proposal not to allow attacks by the defence on the Allied powers” (Cienciala et al, 2007: 230). They argue that this “decision favoured Moscow” (Cienciala et al, 2007: 230) in that it allowed each delegation to prepare a list of matters not to be discussed at the trial. The Soviet “blacklist” included the German-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact of 23 August, the Baltic States, Polish relations and Soviet foreign policy (Cienciala et al, 2007: 230). As I have argued, Katyn historians view the items on this blacklist as instrumental in the implementation of the Soviet invasion of Poland, and the consequent deportations and executions that took place. So from the outset of the trials, it was clear that the narrativisation of ‘Katyn’ that occurred in Nuremberg and that continued to have influence longer after the trials were over was shaped by a very particular perspective, one that served the interests of one party to the detriment of another. This is illustrative of Lyotard’s claim that the language of universal law often excludes those who do not share the system’s basic premise (a claim which I will explore further in Chapter 4).

The Soviet charges against the German Nazi leaders included the murder of the Polish officers at Katyn (Zawodny, 1962: 64-65). Initially, British and American representatives protested against the inclusion of Katyn, however the Chief American Prosecutor allowed it so long as they could “prove the charge” (Zawodny, 1962: 64). The Soviet side interpreted article 21 of the IMT Charter to mean that the report of the Burdenko Commission would suffice as proof (Cienciala et al, 2007: 230)⁶⁴. This is problematic for Zawodny in that the

⁶⁴ Article 21 of the Charter states “The Tribunal shall not require proof of facts of common knowledge but shall take judicial notice thereof. It shall also take judicial notice of official governmental documents and reports of the United Nations, including the acts and documents of the committees set up in the various allied countries for

Burdenko Commission excluded Polish opinion at the time of its conception, so using it as ‘evidence’ only served to reinforce the dominant Soviet version of events. Zawodny also claims that there were several attempts made by the London Poles to present evidence at Nuremberg, and thus have their version of the Katyń case heard. According to Zawodny, the bulk of this evidence was “not admitted when offered” (Zawodny, 1962: 71)⁶⁵. The Tribunal agreed to the admission of three witnesses on each side⁶⁶, none of whom were Poles (Zawodny, 1962: 72). Again, this highlights how the Poles were marginalised at Nuremberg in that they did not have a say in the shaping of the narrative of ‘justice’. This postwar political alliance is another example of a mechanism of power that was influential in shaping a particular Katyń narrative, but it also fits in with the narrative of the double victimisation of the Polish people.

The examination of the German witnesses cleared them of any responsibility for the Katyń massacre, and the Katyń case was not listed in the final IMT verdicts. Although no one was officially cleared of responsibility for the deaths, Herman Goering and other important Nazi leaders were “pronounced guilty of all the crimes which they were charged with under Article 6 (war crimes and crimes against humanity)” (Cienciala et al, 2007: 232). According to Cienciala et al, this pronouncement satisfied the Soviet government, and from then on, “all Soviet governments and official publications claimed that the Soviet Union had won its case on Katyń at Nuremberg” (Cienciala et al, 2007: 232). The conclusions drawn from the Nuremberg trials became embedded in Russian narratives regarding ‘Katyń’, and informed the way the event was spoken about for those living in communist Poland.

the investigation of war crimes, and of records and findings of military or other Tribunals of any of the United Nations” (Frey & Spar, 2008, <http://avalon.law.yale.edu/imt/imtconst.asp#art21>).

⁶⁵ Zawodny claims that amongst this evidence, were diaries and items belonging to some of the officers killed as well as to a (living) witness and former prisoner of Kozelsk, Professor Świaniewicz. Furthermore, argues Zawodny, Captain Czapski and Major Kaczowski, the officers who were involved in locating the missing men after Stalin’s amnesties, had “available a wealth of material collected in the Soviet Union, but they were not called to testify” (Zawodny, 1962: 71).

⁶⁶ The Soviet witnesses included Professor Victor Prosovsky (forensic scientist and member of the Burdenko Commission), Professor Boris Basilevsky (former deputy mayor of Smolensk), and Professor Anton Marko Markov (who had initially testified against the Soviets in 1943). The German witnesses were Colonel Friedrich Ahrens who was later replaced by his predecessor, Colonel Albert Bedenk, Lieutenant von Eichborn (who had transferred to the Smolensk in 1942), and Major General Eugen Oberhäuser (head of AGC Communications) (see Cienciala et al, 2007: 231-232; Sanford, 2005: 140-141; Zawodny, 1962: 67, 69).

Censorship and the Establishment of the Polish ‘People’s Republic’

The end of the World War II marked the beginning of a new political regime in Poland. Stalin retained control over the country, and swiftly instituted a Polish communist government. Norman Davies suggests that there is three distinct phases in the establishment of the Polish People’s Republic (*Polska Rzeczpospolita Ludowa*, PRL) after 1944:

The first, from 1944 to 1948, witnessed the gradual construction of the communist ‘People’s Democracy’; the second, from 1948 to 1956, saw the imposition of Stalinism; the third, since 1956, has seen Poland ruled by a native, ‘national Communist’ regime (Davies, 2005b: 411).

Sanford notes the importance of ‘Katyń’ for “the way in which communist power was established in Poland” (Sanford, 2005: 205). According to Sanford, the “basic dilemma facing the Polish communists which lasted the whole life of the PRL until it faded in 1989” was that “their dependence on the USSR meant that they publicly had to accept the Soviet case for German guilt for Katyń” (Sanford, 2005: 208). Witold Wasilewski claims that for the anti-Communist opposition in Poland, “the official narrative of the Nazi crime was ‘the foundational lie of the Polish People’s Republic’” (Wasilewski cited in Etkind & Finnin et al, 2012: 16). This encouraged a binary between the Soviet version of Katyń as a ‘lie’ and Polish memory as ‘truth’ (a narrative which I critically engage with in Chapter 3). Sanford proposes that following the war, “memories of German occupation atrocities were still fresh” (Sanford, 2005: 208). As time progressed, however, bringing with it the collapse of Polish Stalinism, the “overwhelming societal belief” was that the Soviets were responsible (Sanford, 2005: 208). However, the Polish communists implemented a sophisticated censorship authority⁶⁷ in order to control communication throughout the country. This newly instated censorship agency controlled how Katyń could be spoken about (Sanford, 2005: 195), by avoiding references to Katyń in published texts (Fisher, 2000: 65).

Many writers have made the claim that Katyń became a ‘forbidden topic’ within this political climate and that one risked punishment by simply mentioning the killings (see for example Fisher, 2000: 65; Adamcyk in Kaczorowska, 2006: 4). Sanford cites the example of Zofia Dwornik, a student at the Film School in Łódź who was sentenced to a year in prison in

⁶⁷ For a detailed insight into the mechanisms of censorship in post-war Poland, see Czarnik (2001).

1951 for telling her friends that the NKVD had murdered her father and her brother-in-law (Sanford, 2005: 208). Sanford maintains that control of the issue continued in this vein for the life of the Polish Communist Party but that after the death of Stalin and the dissolution of Stalinist communism in 1957, individuals no longer faced such harsh penalties for private political discussion as they did in the early days of the party (Sanford, 2005: 210). The issue of censorship as a mechanism of power is integral to the narrative of ‘Katyń’ that currently dominates the cultural imaginaries with which this thesis engages, and this is something I will discuss at length in Chapter 3.

‘Katyń’ Narratives in America and Britain: Politics and Media

The shifting narrative of ‘Katyń’ is also understood in terms of external political factors in the years after WWII. Sanford claims that the “period of East-West ideological systemic struggle, in both its Cold War and détente manifestations” (Sanford, 2005: 2-3) was highly influential in the constitutive unfolding of ‘Katyń’. Zaslavsky takes a similar position arguing that:

The Soviet leadership could not have covered up its responsibility for the Katyń Massacre for fifty years if Western governments had not played along and done all they could to withhold information, allowing various investigations to run aground. The American government persisted in this until the early 50’s, whereas the British government continued to do so right up to the collapse of the Soviet regime (Zaslavsky, 2008: 59).

The consensus among Katyń historians nowadays is that in order to maintain allied unity, the British and American governments were complicit in the ‘Katyń cover up’ and that they continued to do so after the war by censoring media coverage of the events known thus (Cienciala et al, 2007: 235 & Sanford, 2005: 158)⁶⁸. However, Sanford argues that the “less involved Americans were more pragmatic and flexible in handling the issue than the British” (Sanford, 2005: 158), in that once the Cold War set in, “some Americans used Katyń functionally as propaganda against Soviet totalitarianism in their ideologically-systemic-security conflict with the communist bloc” (Sanford, 2005: 158).

⁶⁸ For a detailed account of the West’s involvement in Katyń, see Maresch (2010). For a thorough investigation into British censorship of Katyń after World War II see Bell (1989). For more details on American involvement see Gera & Herschaft (2012).

For example, in 1951 (the era of the Cold War and McCarthyism) the Madden Committee was established in response to a series of articles written by journalist Julius Epstein⁶⁹. These articles were published in the *New York Herald Tribune* in July 1949, and called for the investigation of the Katyn killings (Cienciala et al, 2007: 235)⁷⁰. According to Cienciala et al, the Madden Committee was “unique in the annals of Congress but fit well into the contemporary American political scene” (Cienciala et al, 2007: 237). To elaborate, they state that:

The Republicans launched strong attacks on the Democrats for ‘selling out’ Eastern Europe, as well as China, to communists. This atmosphere allowed Senator McCarthy to call for the repudiation of the Yalta agreements of February 1945 and to press his witch-hunt for communists within the US government (Cienciala et al, 2007: 237).

If we accept Cienciala et al’s viewpoint, it seems unlikely that the Madden Committee’s undertaking was motivated by a desire for ‘truth’ for truth’s sake or a commitment to justice for the Poles. Instead, what we see here is that rather than being an empirical fact, an event that occurred in a particular way, in a particular time and place, ‘Katyn’, was (and, I contend, continues to be) a tool deployed by one party to undermine its political opponents. Again, this is a poignant illustration of the argument that the narrativisation of events (and of the individuals and groups associated with the events) occurs from particular situated positions, and that these positions shape what one sees and the way one sees, and are motivated by specific investments, fears, and (dis)positions. While the Madden Committee “determined that the international community should hold the Soviet Union accountable for the atrocity” (Scharf & Szonert-Biniendam, 2012: 5), it failed to achieve this aim⁷¹. Nowadays, its significance to a particular narrativisation of ‘Katyn’ is as a “mine of information on Polish

⁶⁹ According to Cienciala et al, Epstein had worked in the Office of War Information during the war, during which time he developed an interest in Katyn (Cienciala et al, 2007: 235).

⁷⁰ As Cienciala et al tell it, Epstein approached the state department and together with congressman Arthur Bliss Lane (who was the American ambassador to Poland), they established the American Committee for the Investigation of the Katyn Massacre (Cienciala et al, 2007: 236). While the Lane committee was not well supported and unsuccessful it nevertheless paved the way for more US action on Katyn. On September 18, 1951, Congressman Madden called for a Katyn investigation to be carried out by a committee of Seven House members and “the resolution was passed unanimously” (Cienciala et al, 2007: 237).

⁷¹ The Committee’s main aim, according to Cienciala et al was “a trial of the Katyn case by the UN or some other international tribunal” (Cienciala et al, 2007: 239)

prisoners of war in the USSR and on the Katyń massacre” (Cienciala et al, 2007: 239)⁷². The findings of the committee hearings later became the primary source of information for a number of texts published in the West in the 1960s and 1970s⁷³.

In Britain, censorship on Katyń was more heavily enforced (see Bell, 1989), and public interest in Katyń only began to emerge by the 1970s. A similar situation occurred where ‘Katyń’ was used by some British Conservatives “as a weapon in attacking the Labor government of the day as too friendly to the USSR” (Cienciala et al 2007: 242). For these conservatives, ‘Katyń’ was merely a means to promote various political interests. However, Cienciala et al note that there were others who seized the opportunities available within the new political landscape in order to “seek justice for the murdered Poles” (Cienciala et al, 2007: 242). On 21 April 1971, Airey Neave⁷⁴, “proposed a resolution in the House of Commons that the British Government request the United Nations to appoint a committee to examine the Katyń case” (Cienciala et al, 2007: 242). On 17 July 1971 Lord St Oswald (whose wife was Polish), initiated a debate in the House of Lords. This debate did not lead to any court proceedings as it was concluded that lack of evidence prevented “outright condemnation of the USSR” (Cienciala et al, 2007: 243). Cienciala et al however, claim that the dominant concern of the British politicians was “the desire for good relations with Moscow and Warsaw” (Cienciala et al, 2007: 242)⁷⁵. And so in July 1971, when chairman Alojzy Mazewski made a request to the US ambassador to the UN to open a UN investigation, no action followed (Cienciala et al, 2007: 243). Clearly, there was still a dominant political agenda that dictated the types of Katyń narratives that could be told, even outside of Poland and the Soviet bloc.

‘Katyń’ did not appear again in the U.S. media until the publication of Zawodny’s book *Death in the Forest* in the US in 1962. However, neither this text, nor the publication of *The Crime of Katyń* in London 1965 “led to much discussion or action in the West” (Cienciala et al, 2007: 242). This changed with the reprint of Zawodny’s book in England in January

⁷² On 13 April 2003, the 60th anniversary of the TASS statement, the documents collected by the Madden Committee were delivered to the Council for the Protection of Struggle and Martyrdom Sites (*Rada Ochrony Pamięci Walk i Męczeństwa*, ROPWiM) by Allen Paul, the author of *Katyń: Stalin’s Massacre and the Triumph of Truth* (2010) (Cienciala et al, 2007: 239).

⁷³ Allen Paul also credits the records of committee of the United States Congress as providing his main source of information (Paul, 2010: xi-xii).

⁷⁴ A conservative member of parliament and ‘admirer’ of the Polish war efforts against Nazi Germany (Cienciala et al, 2007: 242).

⁷⁵ They also claim that the same was true with the US (Cienciala et al, 2007: 242).

1971⁷⁶, and then the publication of American journalist Louis Fitzgibbon's *Katyń: A Crime Without Parallel*. Following this, it was announced that a film about Katyń would be shown on a BBC television program. According to Cienciala et al, the Soviet government tried to step in to suppress this media coverage and on 15 April 1971, the Politburo sent instructions to the Soviet ambassador in London, advising him to "highlight the final IMT verdicts at Nuremberg" and to "express the Soviet expectation that the British Foreign Office would prevent the spread of 'slandorous materials' on Katyń" (Cienciala et al, 2007: 242). Despite these protests, the film, entitled *The Issue to Be Avoided*, aired on BBC TV Channel 2 on 19 April 1971 (see Cienciala et al, 2007: 242)⁷⁷. These various (re)interpretations of 'Katyń' influenced public opinion both in the West and in Poland, as the next section demonstrates.

'Katyń' in Poland

While much has been made of Western complicity in the (re)production of a particular narrative of 'Katyń' that took precedence from the time of the killings until the mid 1970s, Etkind and Finnin et al emphasise that the work of Polish émigré communities in America⁷⁸ and England played a significant role in the production of shifting accounts of 'Katyń'. As the home of the Polish Government-in-Exile, for instance, London was the "epicentre of émigré activities" (Etkind and Finnin et al, 2012: 22). In 1971, historian Louis Fitzgibbon established the Katyń Memorial Fund in 1971, pledging to erect a memorial to Katyń in London. This was realised in 1976 and at the time, it was only the second memorial to Katyń (the first was erected in Sweden in 1975) (Etkind and Finnin et al, 2012: 23). Furthermore, Etkind and Finnin et al claim that the actions of Polish émigré communities in both America and England were instrumental in "educating and emboldening" Katyń activists in Poland (Etkind and Finnin et al, 2012: 22). One of the significant ways in which they were able to do this was via the distribution of published materials on 'Katyń'. Etkind and Finnin et al write that "several articles from the émigré periodicals and seminal works such as Mackiewicz's *The Katyń Crime in the Light of the Documents* (1948) and Czapski's *Starobil's'k Memoirs* (1944) found their way into the Polish underground press" (Etkind & Finnin et al, 2012: 23-24), helping to

⁷⁶ Sanford suggests that there are two main reasons for the surge of public interest in Katyń in Britain in the early 1970s, namely the "release of Foreign Office documents in the Public Record Office under the Thirty Years Rule" and the publication of an article by Ian Colvin in the Daily Telegraph on 17 August, 1972, entitled "Russian Guilt for Katyń Reaffirmed" (Sanford, 2005: 180).

⁷⁷ For a more detailed analysis of these texts, see Sanford (2005: 146-147)

⁷⁸ Etkind and Finnin et al highlight the significance of the Madden Committee in that it was made possible by the work of Polish émigrés (Etkind and Finnin et al, 2012: 22).

inform the activities of Polish Katyn activists. And in the 1970s, an “emboldened Polish opposition movement” began to “distribute Katyn-related literature of its own” (Etkind & Finnin et al, 2012: 24). According to Etkind and Finnin et al, the increased activity of the Polish opposition led to the development of “embryonic societies and institutions dedicated to the Katyn cause” (Etkind & Finnin et al, 2012: 25). These included the Katyn Institute in Krakow and the Katyn Committee in Warsaw (both established in the late 1970s); the Independent Historical Committee for Research into Katyn Crime which was established in 1989 alongside the Polish Katyn Foundation; and the Federation of Katyn Families who have become a “powerful institution with influence in contemporary Polish politics” (Etkind & Finnin et al, 2012: 27).

In 1988, Mikhail Gorbachev’s *glasnost* (open discussion) policy encouraged media reforms and a wider public debate regarding Stalinist crimes in the USSR (Cienciala et al, 2007: 245). This in turn led to the “relaxation of censorship in Poland”, resulting in growing pressure for the ‘truth’⁷⁹ about Katyn to be told (Cienciala et al, 2007: 245). This was supported by the Polish Premier General Wojciech Jaruzelski and his advisers who believed that a Russian acknowledgement of the ‘truth’ on Katyn, as well as addressing other “blank spots” in Polish-Soviet relations, would lead to “broader public acceptance of close relations with the USSR” (Cienciala et al, 2007: 245). In May 1987, Gorbachev and Jaruzelski established the Joint Commission of Soviet-Polish Party Historians for the purpose of studying “historical blank spots in mutual relations” (Cienciala, 2007: 246). The Polish historians went about investigating the Katyn massacre, the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact, and what they perceived to be significant issues between the two nations (Cienciala, 2007: 246)⁸⁰.

The Polish government experienced drastic changes in the late 1980s, as the Solidarity movement⁸¹ became a more prominent political force. According to Davies, the Solidarity movement had three distinct phases⁸². The Polish Roundtable talks between government leaders and the leaders of the Solidarity movement marked the third phase. These talks led to

⁷⁹ In this context, ‘truth’ refers to the revelation of Soviet guilt.

⁸⁰ According to Cienciala et al, however, the Soviet historians on the commission “could not give up their support for the Burdenko Commission without the permission of the Politburo” and most of the Politburo members “opposed changing the party line” (Cienciala, 2007: 246).

⁸¹ The Solidarity movement was an anti-bureaucratic trade union that emerged on August 31, 1980 under the leadership of Lech Wałęsa.

⁸² Davies writes: “In 1980-1, the independent Solidarity Movement – the only independent organization of its kind in the history of the Soviet Bloc – mounted an unprecedented challenge to the ruling Party’s monopoly. In 1981-3, the military element within the communist system launched a violent counter-attack, introducing martial law, suppressing all overt Solidarity activities and desperately trying to impress its Soviet masters. From 1983-90, the military leaders failed in all their attempts to restore a viable Communist order, eventually choosing to reinstate Solidarity and to aim for stability through partnership. The outcome was the opposite of that intended. The Communist system collapsed” (Davies, 2005b: 482).

the setting of democratic elections for 4 June 1989. The United Polish Workers' Party (*Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza*, PZPR) lost to Solidarity candidates, thus marking the "beginning of the collapse of communism in Poland" (Cienciala et al, 2007: 248). This led to increasing pressure from both the Polish media and the Polish government for Russian cooperation over the Katyń issue (Cienciala et al, 2007: 248-249)⁸³. While opposition from various Russian leaders delayed the Katyń investigation⁸⁴, the opening of state archives under Gorbachev's glasnost policy, led to the discovery of various important documents⁸⁵ by three Russian historians (Yuri Zoria, Valentina Parsadonova and Natalia Lebedeva). These historians played a significant role in what is now widely perceived as the revelation of the Katyń 'cover-up' (Cienciala et al, 2007: 250)⁸⁶. According to Cienciala et al, Gorbachev did not act quickly to reveal the findings of the historians, but two important factors drove the Politburo to admit what they knew about Katyń. First, was Jaruzelski's ultimatum, "that he would not proceed with his planned visit to Moscow in mid-April 1990 unless the Soviet government admitted the truth about Katyń" (Cienciala et al, 2007: 251). Second, was the publication in *Moscow News* on 25 March 1990 of an interview with Lebedeva titled "The Katyń Tragedy", which included some of the documents found⁸⁷. Again this demonstrates the ways in which various narrativisations of 'Katyń' have emerged as an effect of subjective positions and political investments.

Admission of Soviet Involvement

The admission of Soviet involvement in 'Katyń' was announced on 13 April 1990, fifty years after the original German radio communiqué on the Katyń graves. According to reports, Polish President Jaruzelski was in Moscow on a state visit that day. At a reception in the Polish Embassy, Gorbachev handed Jaruzelski the NKVD dispatch lists for the prisoners who

⁸³ Bolesław Kułski, secretary of state in the Polish Foreign Ministry, for example, argued that it was necessary to uncover the "full truth" about Katyń so that the Poles "could seek compensation for victim's families and follow the trial of those responsible for the crime" (Cienciala et al, 2007: 249).

⁸⁴ According to Cienciala et al, this opposition came from the head of the KGB, Vladimir Kriuchkov, and the head of the Main Administration of Soviet Archives, Fyodor Vaganov (Cienciala et al 2007: 249).

⁸⁵ Including archival materials on the Polish POWs held in the three camps which corresponded with the names of the dead officers compiled by the Germans in 1943 (Cienciala et al, 2007: 250).

⁸⁶ For more details of how this revelation unfolded, see Cienciala et al (2007: 250-251).

⁸⁷ Cienciala et al claim that this interview, which was published without government permission, "seems to have given the decisive push to the Politburo to reverse its earlier decision not to allow the publication of articles and documents on Katyń" (Cienciala et al, 2007: 252).

were killed in 1940⁸⁸. On the same day TASS (Telegraph Agency of the Soviet Union) released a statement confirming that the missing Polish prisoners had been handed over to the NKVD in the three camps⁸⁹. Part of the TASS statement of the 13th of April read as follows:

Archive material released in its entirety allows the conclusion to be drawn that Beria, Merkulov and their helpers bore direct responsibility for the crime in the Katyn Forest. The Soviet side, expressing deep regret in connection with the Katyn tragedy, states that it is one of the serious crimes of Stalinism (cited in Komorowski & Rawski, 2006: 8)⁹⁰.

According to Sanford, the 1990 files and TASS announcement were “not a direct disavowal of Burdenko or an explicit admission of Soviet guilt for the 1940 massacre, although they were understood as such by the Poles” (Sanford, 2005: 199-200). Komorowski and Rawski also claim that the TASS statement is “incorrectly treated” by Polish historians as an admission that the Soviet government was responsible for the crime (Komorowski & Rawski, 2006: 8). They write:

It is not an official government announcement confirming that the massacres were carried out on the decision of state and party authorities. On the contrary, in light of the TASS statement, the conclusion can be drawn that its organisers and executors were a few irresponsible degenerates from the NKVD (Komorowski & Rawski, 2006: 8-9).

⁸⁸ According to Aleksandr Yakovlev (a Soviet official), when Gorbachev handed over power to Boris Yeltsin in the Kremlin on the 23rd December 1991, he also handed him two sealed envelopes: one contained the original Russian text of the Secret Protocol of the German-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact of 23 August 1939, and in another envelope they found a document, dated 5 March 1940, which details the Politburo decision to shoot the prisoners (Cienciala et al, 2007: 254, see also Sanford, 2005: 200). Yeltsin decided that one of the many documents to be presented as evidence of the criminal nature of the Communist Party was the Politburo decision and on 14 October 1992, chief Russian archivist, Pikhoia presented it, in Yeltsin’s name, to President Wałęsa in Warsaw, together with other Katyn documents from the archives, that were previously unavailable (Cienciala, 2007: 256).

⁸⁹ According to Cienciala et al, the TASS statement claimed that “all but 394 of the approximately 15,000 prisoners from the Kozelsk, Ostashkov, and Starobelsk camps had been handed over to the NKVD Administrations in Smolensk, Voroshilovgrad (now Luhansk), and Kalinin (now Tver) Oblasts and did not appear again in NKVD records” (Cienciala et al, 2007: 252-253).

⁹⁰ The communiqué also said that copies of the documents had been given to the Polish side and the search for archival materials was continuing (Cienciala et al, 2007: 253).

The claim that the TASS announcement does not constitute an admission of responsibility or of guilt on behalf of the Russian government is an important point. The way that the ‘crime’ is framed in the TASS statement could mean that the killings did not constitute a crime (since they occurred under a regime in which such action was not criminal), or that Stalinism – for which the current government is not responsible – was criminal, or, that a couple of ‘degenerates’ and their helpers were responsible and that this had nothing to do with those in power at the time or with those in power now. Either way, the Russian government gets itself off the hook, so to speak, it does not really admit to anything. But it is also interesting to note here that the word ‘crime’ is used. As mentioned earlier, Western historians define the killings as a crime that contravened international law. Yet it has also been argued that within Soviet law, the killing of class enemies, or enemies of the state, was not perceived as a ‘crime’. This indicates a shift in the Russian narrative of ‘Katyń’ and how it is defined (that is, as a ‘crime’).

The TASS statement, which, it seems, was taken by some Poles as an admission of guilt lead to the perpetuation of another ‘Katyń’ narrative in Russia. The so-called ‘anti-Katyń’ matter was instigated in April 1990 by Mikhail Gorbachev, after his alleged “admission of guilt”. In a directive given by Gorbachev on the 3rd of November, 1990 he recommends that:

[T]he Soviet Union academy of Sciences, the Soviet Union Prosecutor, the Soviet Union Ministry of Defence and the Soviet Union State Security Committee, together with other instructions and organisations carry out until 1 April 1991 research to disclose archive material regarding events and facts from the history of Soviet Polish mutual relations, in which the Soviet side bore losses. This data is to be used – if necessary – in talks with the Polish side about the issue of ‘blank pages’ (Komorowski & Rawski, 2006: 9).

Komorowski and Rawski claim that by encouraging a focus on Soviet ‘losses’, this text incited the Russian media to spread “anti-Katyń propaganda” by “juxtaposing the Katyń crime with the alleged genocide of Soviet prisoners committed by Poles” (Komorowski & Rawski, 2006: 9). And in the 1990s, a number of articles began to appear in the Russian press claiming that it was the Poles who first murdered Soviet prisoners in 1920, and that “only 20 years later did the Russians take their revenge” (Komorowski & Rawski, 2006: 9). Komorowski and Rawski argue that the Anti-Katyń narrative was an attempt to create a new

historical myth⁹¹. The ‘Anti-Katyń’ movement is informed by the history of Polish-Soviet relations, the bitterness of defeat in 1920, and also the narrative of Katyń which dominated the post-war climate – that is, the narrative of German guilt, and the narrativisation of Russians as Europe’s saviours. The revelation of documents did not lead to an immediate acceptance of a single and ‘true’ account of Katyń because ultimately, there can be no single version of events. The individuals and communities, who tell of those events, do so from a particular perspective, and therefore they have embodied investments in particular knowledges, and the practices that maintain them.

Addressing the Legacy of ‘Katyń’

Allen Paul argues that Gorbachev’s admission “raised great hopes in Poland that the Russians would eventually embrace reconciliation and atonement” (Paul, 2010: 349). During the 1990s, the ‘Katyń’ discourse was dominated by issues pertaining to commemoration, compensation and an apology (Sanford, 2005: 220). The Federation of Katyń Families was highly influential in this discussion⁹², which also includes the request to have ‘Katyń’ recognised as genocide (an issue which I will return to in Chapter 4). In 1995, in a letter addressed to Polish President Lech Wałęsa, Boris Yeltsin objected to “unofficial” Polish demands for an official Russian apology for the Katyń massacre, compensation for the victim’s families, and requests for a trial (Cienciala et al, 2007: 257, 261; Paul, 2010: 349), suggesting that raising these claims would be “counterproductive” (Scharf & Szonert-Biniendam, 2012: 21).

Amicable relations between Yeltsin and Wałęsa however, led to the signing of a Polish-Russian agreement in 1994 in which the Poles agreed to maintain Russian war graves in Poland and vice versa, and a Polish-Ukrainian agreement which led to the opening of three cemeteries in 2000 at Kharkov, Katyń and Miednoye (the burial sites of the executed officers) (Cienciala et al, 2007: 258). The memorial at Katyń was a result of a joint collaboration

⁹¹ Here ‘myth’ is used to refer to a story which is ‘untrue’ and at odds with empirical History. But as I will go on to argue in the following chapter, History is always and already mythologised.

⁹² Etkind & Finnin et al suggest that Federation of Katyń Families first “major wave of activity came in 1993, when they persuaded Lech Wałęsa to declare 1995 the official ‘Year of Katyń’, with a major, international programme of events to mark the 55th anniversary of the tragedy. The mission of the Year of Katyń was to raise the international profile of Katyń, cultivate archival and historical work on the massacres, build cemeteries and memorials and improve relations between Russian and Poland through a revelation of the full truth of the crime.... the initiatives of the Year of Katyń fell flat largely because the Polish, Ukrainian and Russian sides failed to communicate and cooperate with one another effectively” (Etkind & Finnin et al, 2012: 26-27).

between Russian and Polish state institutions – the Russian Ministry for Culture and the Polish Council for the Preservation of Struggle and Martyrdom Sites (*Rada Ochrony Pamięci Walk i Męczeństwa*, ROPWiM) (Etkind & Finnin et al, 2012: 115). Regarding the memorial at Katyń, Yeltsin noted that about “9,000 victims of various nationalities were buried alongside Polish officers at Katyń” (Cienciala et al, 2007: 257), and so he agreed that a memorial should be built there to include all ‘victims’ of totalitarianism (Cienciala et al, 2007: 257). At the time, Yeltsin said: “We consider this forest a memorial for the victims of totalitarianism, (a place) where a monument to all the innocent victims should be created” (cited in *Seattle Times*, 5 June 1995). Just as Gorbachev was criticised for not admitting to ‘Soviet’ guilt, Yeltsin demonstrates a similar reluctance to accept full responsibility for the crime as a Stalinist crime. In the end, Yeltsin stayed away from the ceremony because “survivor groups and some news outlets in Poland had chafed Russian sensitivities by demanding an official apology and compensation” (*Seattle Times*, 5 June 1995). The issue of apology and compensation continues to shape narratives on Katyń, and I will explore this further in Chapter 4.

According to Cienciala et al, many Poles were optimistic regarding Yeltsin’s appointment of Vladimir Putin as his successor on 31 December 1999. However, they maintain that this optimism was short lived. They write:

Neither the change in Russian leadership nor the opening of Polish war cemeteries at Katyń, Kharkov and Miednoye in summer 2000 produced any progress toward meeting the demands of the Polish Katyń Families Association for a Russian admission of genocide, an apology, and compensation⁹³... Putin rejected a comparison of Stalinist repressions with Nazi German genocide, but mentioned the possibility of Russian law concerning the rehabilitation of Russian victims of political repression to make it applicable to Polish citizens as well⁹⁴ (Cienciala et al, 2007: 261).

⁹³ The official Association of Katyń Families passed a resolution in 2008 stating that material compensation will not be sought, this was reaffirmed in 2010 when the Families met with Russian President Dimitrii Medvedev (see *News From Poland*, 2011, and Etkind & Finnin et al, 2012: 28).

⁹⁴ On approaching the 70th anniversary of the Katyń massacre, the Memorial Society wrote an appeal to Russian President Dmitry Medvedev claiming that this promise remains unfulfilled in that the Main Military Prosecutor’s Office “refuses to enforce the current Russian law on rehabilitation of victims of political repression” (see *Memorial on Katyń*, 2010).

What this seems to suggest, then, is that what is at stake here is not the ‘truth’ of what happened to those who were killed at the three sites that come under the umbrella of ‘Katyń’, but rather, how the killings – which the Russian government has admitted to having carried out – should be understood and subsequently responded to.

The Russian Katyń Investigations

Meanwhile, the Soviet (later Russian) Katyń investigation, begun by the Main Military Prosecutor’s Office in May 1990 proceeded slowly and “yielded inconclusive results” (Paul, 2010: 349)⁹⁵. On the 11th of March, 2005, the head of the Russian-Katyń investigation (Aleksandr Savenkov) officially closed the investigation, stating that no one would be sentenced because all members of wartime Politburo were dead (Cienciala et al, 2007: 259; Paul, 2010: 349). This prompted a decision to ‘reclassify’ many important materials regarding the case by one of the highest government departments – the Interdepartmental Commission on the Protection of State Secrets – the “activity of which is supervised by the President of the Russian Federation” (Guryanov, 2010). Savenkov also concluded that there was “no evidence that genocide had been committed against the Polish nation” (Cienciala et al, 2007: 259), in that there was nothing to suggest that the prisoners were killed because of their nationality. However, Savenkov contradicted this view when in February 2006, he rejected a request for rehabilitation, submitted by the widow of an officer shot at Katyń, on the grounds that “documentation was lacking to show that the officer had been sentenced to death for political reasons” (Cienciala et al 2007: 259). In the end, the Russian-Katyń investigations did not satisfy the demands of the Polish nation in that there was no official trial, no recognition of genocide, no attempt to rehabilitate the victims, or provide compensation to the families. The investigations failed to produce a particular narrativisation of Katyń, by providing a sufficient answer as to why they were killed, and an agreed definition of the killings. The reaction in Poland was to open a Polish Katyń investigation (Cienciala et al 2007: 259).

There are two institutions – The Institute of National Remembrance (*Instytut Pamięci Narodowej*, IPN) in Poland and the Memorial Society in Russia – that continue to work through judicial issues regarding Katyń. In Poland, the Polish Parliament established the Institute of National Remembrance on December 18, 1998 (*Institute of National*

⁹⁵ Sanford also writes that “the peak period for Polish-Soviet-Russian judicial, archival and academic collaboration was from 1990 until about 1993, after which activity diminished, contacts became more formal and the issue increasingly lost its political salience (Sanford, 2005: 202).

Remembrance, n.d.). The IPN was created in order to “investigate issues which it considers to be essential to legislative power in Poland” and to contribute to the preservation of the memory of the losses suffered by the Poles in WWII (*Institute of National Remembrance*, n.d.). The Polish-Katyn investigation was announced on 30 November 2004 by the IPN “under pressure from the politically influential Katyn Families Association” (Paul, 2010: 349). Cienciala et al argue that these investigations are “unlikely to bring closure since the Russian Main Military Prosecutors office denies the committee access to most of the documents gathered in its own investigation” (Cienciala et al, 2007: 264)⁹⁶. There is something interesting and conceptually important here, and that is, the assumption that the as yet unreleased documents will provide the truth (as single, unambiguous, etc.). Etkind and Finnin use the term ‘archival fetishism’⁹⁷ to refer to a “belief that the truth about the past is hidden in the archives and what is not available there did not happen at all” (Etkind & Finnin et al, 2012: 107). But of course, that is not the case, because even if such documents exist, they will inevitably be written from a particular perspective which shapes their content, and which from a Lyotardian perspective, cannot simply be ignored or overwritten by a contemporary (possibly ‘Polish’) perspective. If ‘truths’ are in fact perspectival and regulatory, or as Foucault would put it, effects of systems of power/knowledge, then how do we decide who or what to believe, how to evaluate competing accounts of an event or the ideas, decisions, actions, and so on that fed into it?

Up until the time Cienciala et al were writing, the Main Military Procuracy and the Interdepartmental Commission on the Protection of State Secrets continued to maintain their decision about reclassification (Guryanov, 2010). This has been challenged by the Memorial Society – an historical and human rights society in Russia whose main task is the “awakening and preservation of the societal memory of the severe political persecution in the recent past of the Soviet Union” (*Memorial*, n.d.), on the basis that:

The reclassification of the ‘Katyn case’ materials flagrantly violates the existing Russian Law on State Secrets, which does not permit one to make a state secret and classify information about facts pertaining to violations of human rights and freedoms and also facts pertaining to violations of the law by state organs and their employees (Guryanov, 2010).

⁹⁶ Similarly, Paul asserts that this investigation holds no “prospect of bringing closure without Russian cooperation” (Paul, 2010: 349).

⁹⁷ A phrase that they borrow from Kotkin (1998).

Between 2008 and 2010, the Memorial Society had been attempting, through “judicial means”, to get the Russian Military Procuracy to reconsider their decision to reclassify documents⁹⁸. These documents remained classified up until only very recently, as I will demonstrate in the final section of this chapter.

‘Katyń’ 2010

The political situation in Poland from 2005 onwards had significant consequences for the (re)interpretation and (re)configuration of a new ‘Katyń’ narrative. Koczanowicz coined the term “post-postcommunism” to refer to the era of Polish politics after 2005 in order to “differentiate between post-communism and the period when the transformation was over” (Koczanowicz, 2012: 813). Between 2005 and 2007, the Polish government was run by the Law and Justice Party (*Prawo i Sprawiedliwość*, PiS). According to Koczanowicz, both this party, and the second biggest party, Civil Platform (*Platforma Obywatelska*, PO), “formed a block which contested the shape of the democratic transformation in Poland after 1989” (Koczanowicz, 2012: 813). Headed by twin brothers – Lech Kaczyński as President and Jarosław Kaczyński in the role of Prime Minister – the Law and Justice Party has been described as a right-wing conservative party, with close links to the Catholic Church. PiS took a strong anti-Russian stance (Besemeres, 2010), on historical issues between Russian and Poland, namely the Katyń massacre and the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact of 1939, and Kaczyński utilised his period in power to create what he called a “‘Fourth Republic,’ purged of the communist influences it claimed were endemic in the post-communist Poland” (Besemeres, 2010). Kaczyński and his brother were also hostile towards the German government’s attempts to reconcile with Poland. This led to many disputes with the European Union, which Poland had only recently joined (Besemeres, 2010)⁹⁹. The brothers introduced the “true values of nation and religion as the main axes of Polish politics” and were popular for a short time, when the “dominant discourse of political life shifted from economic questions to moral and symbolic issues” (Koczanowicz, 2012: 814).

⁹⁸ This is based on the argument that “The reclassification of the ‘Katyń case’ materials flagrantly violates the existing Russian Law on State Secrets, which does not permit one to make a state secret and classify information about facts pertaining to violations of human rights and freedoms and also facts pertaining to violations of the law by state organs and their employees” (Guryanov, 2010).

⁹⁹ Hinsey argues that the “overall result of Law and Justice’s term in power was to polarize the political environment and, in many respects, the country as a whole” (Hinsey, 2011: 149).

In 2007, the Civic Platform party was voted into parliament. Led by Donald Tusk, this party set about reversing Law and Justice policies (Besemeres, 2010). Tusk worked hard to build better relations with Russia and with Putin and established an “expert joint Commission for Difficult Matters, which discreetly worked towards accommodations about historical issues like Katyń” (Besemeres, 2010). According to Etkind and Finnin et al, when the seventieth anniversary of the Katyń massacre approached in 2010, this “deep ideological and memorial bifurcation in Polish politics” manifested itself in Tusk and Kaczyński’s “duelling commemorations” of the anniversary of the event (Etkind & Finnin et al, 2012: 135). Tusk attended the ceremony held at the Katyń Forest in the company of Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin. This was the first joint commemoration of the massacre. In the past, “Polish officials visited Katyń to honor the dead in a private, unofficial capacity” (*Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty*, 7 April 2010). Putin was also the “highest-ranking Russian official to mark the Katyń massacre” and Tusk, the “first Polish leader to receive an official invitation to attend” (*Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty*, 7 April 2010). The joint commemoration was viewed by many as an important step towards Russian-Polish reconciliation as it appeared to “signal a potential thaw in the tense relations between Warsaw and Moscow” (*Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty*, 2010). Others noted that the screening on April 2, 2010, of the 2007 film *Katyń* by Polish director Andrzej Wajda¹⁰⁰ on Russia’s “Kultura” television channel suggested that a “new openness about the issue appears to be taking hold” (*Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty*, 7 April 2010). This move was met with resistance in Russia however, with Russia's Communist Party releasing a statement “slamming ‘the anti-Russian interpretation of the Katyń massacre,’ which ‘showed the Russian authorities’ inability to defend the country's geopolitical interests and historical truth” (*Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty*, 7 April 2010).

President Lech Kaczyński was not invited to the joint commemoration, prompting him to make his own way there a few days later, along with many Law and Justice dignitaries. This was viewed as a “rebuff to Tusk for agreeing to a joint commemoration with Putin that excluded the president” (Besemeres, 2010). On 10 April 2010, the week following Tusk and Putin’s commemoration of the anniversary of Katyń, the plane carrying Polish president Jarosław Kaczyński, his wife; and a group of parliamentarians, social activists, and military leaders crashed near Smolensk, killing Kaczyński and 95 passengers including many members of the Law and Justice party¹⁰¹. For many Poles, this event had a double meaning in

¹⁰⁰ Wajda’s father was a Katyń massacre victim.

¹⁰¹ Also among the victims were the heads of major Katyń groups and institutions such as Andrzej Sariusz-Skapski (the head of the Federation of Katyń Families); Andrzej Przewoźnik (head of the ROPWiM); Janusz

that “the victims were killed on a pilgrimage, en route to a memorial rite of huge significance” (Etkind & Finnin et al, 2012: 138), thus (re)affirming the “double tragic figure of Polish fate” (Koczanowicz, 2012: 815).

The Russian response to the crash was swift: Russian authorities promised an immediate investigation, Medvedev declared 12 April a day of mourning, and Wajda’s film was broadcast again in Russia, this time on a primetime evening slot on 11 April (Etkind & Finnin, 2012: et al: 137). The screening of the Wajda’s film had an obvious effect on Russian opinion on ‘Katyn’. Where previous opinion polls had found that “less than a quarter of Russians had heard of Katyn; by mid-April this figure rose to 74 per cent” (Etkind & Finnin et al, 2012: 137), although the number of Russians who remained unconvinced that the killings were carried out by the NKVD remained high (Etkind & Finnin et al, 2012: 137-138). Nevertheless, for many, the events that followed the crash marked the beginning of a possible Polish-Russian reconciliation over ‘Katyn’. Following the crash, the Russian government initiated a series of significant changes regarding access to the Katyn documents. Weeks after the crash, Russian president Dimitry Medvedev ordered the online publication of documents proving that Stalin ordered the executions, including the 1940 Politburo decision to execute the 22,000 prisoners of war. While the documents had been available to historians for some time, Medvedev’s decision was seen by many as a “symbolic gesture” (*BBC UK*, 28 April 2010)¹⁰².

In the same month, the Russian government made an announcement that it would make previously classified files on Katyn available to the public (*Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty*, 14 July 2010), thus rescinding the decision to reclassify the Katyn documents¹⁰³. On April 7, 2011, during a ceremony held at Russia’s Prosecutor-General’s Office, Russia provided Poland with 11 volumes of declassified documents on the 1940 massacre (*Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty*, 7 April 2011). In July 2011, these documents were handed to the Institute of National Remembrance¹⁰⁴. In November 2010, Russia’s lower house of parliament, the State Duma, issued a statement, which condemned Joseph Stalin “by name for

Kurtyka (head of the Institute for National Remembrance); and Tomasz Merta, (historian and Minister of Culture and National Heritage) (Etkind & Finnin et al, 2012: 138-139).

¹⁰² For example, Polish foreign ministry spokesman Piotr Paszkowski told the BBC in April 2010 that this signified “yet another symbolic step testifying to the fact that we are witnessing an obvious change in the Russian attitude and handling of the Katyn issue” (*BBC UK*, 28 April 2010).

¹⁰³ However, in July, 2010, the Russian government rejected a request made by Memorial for access to classified documents regarding the massacre, claiming that “human rights organizations do not have the right to such information” (*Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty*, 14 July 2010).

¹⁰⁴ This means that the total number of files held by the IPN regarding the Katyn killings now amounts to “148 out of a reported 183, with the remaining files waiting to be declassified by Moscow officials” (*New Poland Express*, 8 July 2011).

the mass execution of Poles at Katyń during World War II” (*BBC UK*, 26 November 2010). The head of the Polish parliament’s Foreign Affairs Committee, Andrzej Halicki, said he considered the Duma’s statement to be a breakthrough: “I am happy that such a process of reconciliation and truth is taking place” (*Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty*, 26 November 2010). In other words, the condemnation of Stalin and the executions meant that the Polish ‘truth’ about ‘Katyń’ was being realised.

Despite what some view to be significant breakthroughs in terms of the ‘Katyń’ narrative and the Katyń 1940 documents, for others, the symbolic meaning associated with the site meant that the “impulse” to read the plane crash in the light of the 1940 killings was a “powerful one” (Etkind & Finnin et al, 2012: 132). References to a ‘Katyń-2’¹⁰⁵ began circulating in the Polish media (Etkind & Finnin et al, 2012: 132) and Lech’s twin brother, Jarosław Kaczyński (who became the new head of the PiS after the crash), encouraged this narrative. Presidential elections were called following the death of Lech Kaczyński. On the 26th of April, Jarosław Kaczyński announced that he would be running for presidency. Besemeres notes that initially, the presidential campaign was “remarkably mild” (Besemeres, 2010). It did not take long however, for media aligned with the Law and Justice party to produce “conspiracy theories alleging official Russian involvement in the crash, even accusing Civic Platform leaders of complicity in a ‘second Katyń’” (Besemeres, 2010). Etkind and Finnin et al argue that these conspiracy theories were fed by hostile relations between Tusk and Kaczyński (Etkind & Finnin et al, 2012: 141). Similarly, Koczanowicz suggests that the circulation of conspiracy theories paralleled the “deterioration of the political climate in Poland” with the catastrophe becoming the “main focus of political divisions” (Koczanowicz, 2012: 824). Kaczyński insisted that the Katyń massacre and the crash at Smolensk be “read as two consecutive chapters in the same story” (Etkind & Finnin et al, 2012: 141). He used the word ‘crime’ to talk about the Smolensk crash therefore implying that it was the result of sabotage¹⁰⁶. His rhetoric built on a “dramatic narrative evoking fixed tropes from Polish history which in turn could be translated into a political program” (Koczanowicz, 2012: 824). The rhetoric of the Polish conspiracy theories propagated by the PiS are located within nineteenth century myths about the Polish nation which I will discuss in more detail in the following chapter.

¹⁰⁵ Lech Wałęsa was among one of the most famous voices who labelled the crash ‘Katyń-2’ (Etkind & Finnin et al, 2012: 132).

¹⁰⁶ Kaczyński’s Law and Justice (PiS) party later referred to the crash as the ‘Smolensk assassination’ (cited in Etkind & Finnin et al, 2012: 141) and began to talk of the crash as the ‘Smolensk Lie’, thus “echoing the ‘Katyń Lie’ of the Communist era” (Etkind & Finnin et al, 2012: 141).

In July 2010, Kaczyński lost the presidential election, defeated by Bronisław Komorowski, of the Civic Platform Party. Komorowski clearly separated his politics from Kaczyński's, declaring that his "history policy would be aimed at uniting, not dividing, Polish society" (cited in Etkind & Finnin et al, 2012: 142-143). Meanwhile, conspiracy theories also emerged in Russian media, "alleging that Katyn documents aired in Yeltsin's time were an elaborate forgery" (Besemeres, 2010). What interests me about these conspiracy theories, is not whether there is any 'truth' in them¹⁰⁷, but rather, how they draw on pre-existing narratives in order to produce particular truth-effects (such as the broader historical narrative of Russian-Polish antagonism). Koczanowicz claims that the publication of official reports from various investigating committees has not altered popular opinion in Poland. Instead, these reports have "aggravated" the situation since they contain "conflicting narratives" (Koczanowicz, 2012: 825). Among these reports were the official report of the Russian Interstate Aviation Committee (IAC), which blamed the pilots of the airplane "with some allusions to the idea that there was pressure from the President to land in Smolensk at all costs"; the Polish government's report in which "the responsibility for the crash was distributed between the Polish pilots and Russian air traffic controllers"; and the Law and Justice report that "held Russian controllers responsible but with the clear implication that the flight was a consciously prepared trap" (Koczanowicz, 2012: 825). These reports illustrate the perspectival nature of empirical 'evidence'. Each report was carried out with a particular agenda in mind, and these agendas shape the conclusions that were presented. But the meaning of the text is not fixed in the present, and so each (re)reading of these reports is influenced by the reader's own subjective positions and investments in particular (inherited) narratives. 'Evidence' is therefore open to interpretation and (re)interpretation. In Chapter 4, I will look more closely at some of the steps made towards reconciliation after the crash, highlighting the role of these inherited narratives in helping or hindering the process of reconciliation.

¹⁰⁷ One of the Polish conspiracy theories was recently challenged within Poland. In October 2012, Polish newspaper *Rzeczpospolita* claimed that traces of explosives were found on found on the presidential plane. The same day, a spokesman for Poland's military prosecutor, Col. Ireneusz Szela, dismissed the article as "sensationalist" and claimed that there was no evidence to support the belief that the crash was an assassination. *Rzeczpospolita* was then forced to partly retract its report online (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 October 2012; Barry & Kozłowska, 2012).

Conclusion

This chapter has shown that while there were two main competing narratives on ‘Katyń’ – one that claimed that the Germans were responsible for the killings, and the other in which the Soviets were held responsible – these competing narratives have also shifted over time. While it would appear that since Russia has now admitted that the Soviets (and not the Germans) were ‘responsible’ for the killings, the issue of who did the killing is resolved. Nevertheless, there continue to be debates regarding the different interpretations of what the killings mean, and what they signify (for example a crime, genocide, a symbol of totalitarian oppression, and so on). This chapter offered a genealogical analysis of dominant (and shifting) accounts of ‘Katyń’, in order to critically comment on them as narratives that ‘conceal and produce’ particular knowledges, forms of social and/or international relations, national identities, and so on. Katyń histories are embedded within deeply ingrained narratives that shape the ways in which the event is written about and (re)membered. The rest of the thesis will focus on elements of narrative that ‘Katyń’ histories tend to focus – myth, memory, justice (and reconciliation).

Chapter Two: Martyrs, Messiahs and the Myth(s) of the Polish History

Introduction

This chapter situates ‘Katyn’ within a broader mythological narrative of Polish History and Nationalism. I locate the various (re)interpretations of Polish myths in order to identify what context(s) these myths are situated in (and therefore shaped by), and when, how and why they (re)emerge to (re)produce particular effects. This chapter begins with a critique of ‘myth’ and the assumption that myth is less ‘authentic’ than ‘history’. I suggest, however, that myth and History function in similar ways, by simplifying and homogenising, so History is always and already mythic. I propose that like History, myth is another form of narrative; therefore they share structural and logical similarities. The linear collation of mythic narratives also involves the dissolution of singular events into a grand narrative of ‘progress’. This chapter provides a critique of mythic narrative via an analysis of various Polish myths. I focus predominantly on the messianic myth that emerged in the period of nineteenth century romantic nationalism since it continues to shape contemporary Polish narratives, including narrativisations of ‘Katyn’. In order to understand the relevance of this myth, I look at two significant ‘myths of origin’ – the Piast and Jagiellonian – which are often presented in opposition to one another. Rather than set up a binary between these two myths, this chapter maps the ways in which they are both shaped by a third mythic narrative – that of Polish Catholicism. I propose a deconstruction of ‘myth’ that interrogates the originary and binary logic that informs the (mythic) narratives that we use to make sense of the world, in order to reveal the assumptions, and historical-political contexts that shape those myths and their meanings. I trace the (re)emergences of the various (re)interpretations of the Piast, Jagiellonian and Catholic myths (and their intersections), in order to demonstrate that the meaning of these myths (and their conceptual framework) is never fixed, or final, and is always open to (re)interpretation. My analysis of these various ‘myths’ asks *how* these myths function to (re)produce narrativisations of ‘Katyn’, and *what* do they (re)produce?

Myth and History

Peter Heehs defines myth as “a set of propositions, often stated in narrative form, that is accepted uncritically by a culture or speech-community and that serves to found or affirm its self-conception” (Heehs, 1994: 3). According to this definition, myth is the arrangement of a series of claims into a coherent narrative structure. What differentiates myth from other narratives is that the passive reception of the myth within a community makes it a particularly powerful method of (re)producing specific idea(l)s and knowledges. Roland Barthes also claims that myths do more than reiterate ideas about the world, and for Barthes, it is the way in which these ideas are (re)presented in mythic narratives that makes them believable. Myth’s function, according to Barthes, is to talk about things “simply”; myth “purifies” things and makes them “innocent”, giving them a “natural and eternal justification” and a “clarity which is not that of an explanation but that of a statement of fact” (Barthes, 2009: 169-170). Myth is an uncomplicated version of events, which is presented as ‘true’ and unmediated. Barthes proposes that myth acts “economically”, eradicating differences in order to arrive at a particular interpretation. He writes that myth:

abolishes the complexity of human acts, it gives them the simplicity of essences, it does away with all dialectics, with any going back beyond what is immediately visible, it organizes a world which is without contradictions because it is without depth, a world wide open and wallowing in the evident, it establishes a blissful clarity: things appear to mean something by themselves (Barthes, 2009: 170)¹⁰⁸.

What Barthes finds problematic about myth, then, is its simplification of heterogeneity. Myth unproblematises things, it neutralises intricacies and details, preferring consistency and (pre)established meaning(s). In this chapter, I will look at this tendency within national myths that function to perpetuate inclusive/exclusive ideologies about national identity.

Davies suggests that national myths are an idealised interpretation of idea(l)s, but one that is required in order to provide a particular understanding of the nation as a cohesive entity. Davies defines myth as a set of “simplified beliefs”, and argues that nations need

¹⁰⁸ See also Rebecca Collins (2003), who draws on the work of historians Michael Stanford, Paul A. Cohen and William McNeill, to argue that myth is a “fluid and provisional designator which colludes to cleanse and bolster the historical discourse through taking up its difficulties and thereby smoothing over and silencing those problems” (Collins, 2003: 341-342). In other words, the role of myth when it comes to historical narratives is to filter history so as to make it more palpable, easier to grasp, and more homogenous.

myths in order to give people a sense of origin, identity, and purpose (Davies, 1997: 141). To put in another way, national myths (re)produce a ‘purified’ and ‘innocent’ version of the nation as the embodiment of an ‘essence’ that is naturally occurring. An effect of a coherent national narrative is that members of a national group can develop strong investments in these national myths, which can often lead to conflicts with other nations. William McNeil, an American historian, coined the term ‘mythistory’ to explain that what “amounts to a history for one group is considered a myth by another group” (Collins, 2003: 358). This concept recognises that there are multiple interpretations of events, and that these various positions are influenced by the fact that people “inherit or embrace different starting assumptions and organizing concepts about the world” (cited in Collins, 2003: 358), which are then (re)produced in mythical narratives. In Foucauldian terms, myths are ‘truth-effects’ of particular situated systems and techniques of power/knowledge.

This critique of myth is similar to the critique of History and narrative I began in the previous chapter. However, myth and History are commonly viewed as opposed in character. History is often perceived as providing “an account of what really happened, while myth is construed as the false version of that same event” (Collins, 2003: 342). Indeed, myth is often critiqued by historians as a “distorted version”¹⁰⁹ of an event whose “particular slant on that event is designed to serve some present purpose” (Isichei cited in Collins, 2003: 343). The implication being, that History, insofar as it is allegedly objective, is not motivated by subjective aims, desires, and purposes. This view of myth is inherently problematic since it relies on (and reproduces) a clear distinction between History and myth, truth and non-truth, or truth and its distortion. The oppositional critique of History and myth is itself a product of a specific politics of truth, and is sustained by a belief that the historian is an objective observer of an absolute ‘truth’ – a position I challenged in the previous chapter. History is perspectival, and ‘truth’ is not a single, identifiable fact, rather, ‘truths’ are an effect of discourses that shift over time and vary between societies. An alternative way to conceive History, myth, and the relation between them, is to see History (in the conventional sense) as always-already mythic in both its nature and its function. As Castelli points out, processes of mythic meaning making involve a “heightened narrativizing of the past and a careful linking of particular stories to larger, cultural master narratives” (Castelli, 2004: 30). Like myth, the construction of a traditional, linear historical narrative involves a selection of some events and a simultaneous

¹⁰⁹ Collins notes that this “distortion of the past by the perspective of the present, whether deliberate or otherwise, is often referred to as presentism” (Collins, 2003: 343).

forgetting of others. These decisions are always informed by the socio-historic contexts within which these narratives are produced.

In this chapter, I explore these claims further by locating the ways in which Polish myths function at various times to include and exclude. But while I focus specifically on Polish national myths in this chapter, it is the logic of these mythic structures that are the focus of my analysis, and therefore this critique can be applied more broadly. After all, there is “no nationality or nationalism that is not religious or mythological, let us say “mystical” in the broad sense” (Derrida, 1994: 113). My critique of myth draws on Derrida’s ongoing critique of the metaphysic privileging of presence. And as Maria Valverde points out, a chief task of deconstruction is to interrogate all “nostalgic myths of origin that give one interpretation the power to regulate all other accounts” (Valverde, 1999: 662). Dominant mythic narratives, which impose a necessarily perspectival or situated view of History, are open to deconstructive readings in order to “highlight their mythical status” (Valverde, 1999: 662). What is important for deconstruction is that nations remain critical of the implications of exclusionary myths about national identity even if “they cannot be given up” (Valverde, 1999: 662).

Defining the Nation: The Jagiellonian and Piast Myths

In the previous chapter, I argued that narratives on ‘Katyń’ are (re)inscribed with meaning by referencing a broader historical narrative which tends to focus on Poland’s ongoing struggle for autonomy and independence. Because of this History of struggle, there are some writers who place particular emphasis on Poland’s need for national myths. Davies, for example, writes that Poland needs its national myths in order to “compete with the mythology of other stronger nations who have often given a pejorative twist to Poland’s image” (Davies, 1997: 143). Myth functioned to sustain a sense of Polish national identity that had for a long time been threatened, or mythologised ‘negatively’ by other nations. Davies adds that in the national mythology of Russia, for example:

[T]he Poles are usually cast in the role of the eternal Western enemy, the traitor to Slavdom, the religious foe of the Orthodox Church, the main resort of scheming foreigners, who constantly conspire to invade Russia and to undermine her traditional values (Davies, 1997: 143).

As demonstrated in the previous chapter, however, this myth works both ways in that Russians are often constructed as the enemy of the Poles within Polish national mythologies. Of the many national mythologies¹¹⁰ that have been used to describe the Polish nation, there are two that tend to have particular significance: Piast and Jagiellonian¹¹¹. In their simplest definitions, the Piast and Jagiellonian myths (re)present opposing versions of the nation and the repetition of these myths are utilised at various times in order to evoke specific idea(l)s. However, while both myths refer to significant periods in Poland's foundational History, the distinction between Piast and Jagiellonian nationalism came later, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The Piast period encapsulates the earliest recorded History of Poland, from the tenth century up until 1385. It is believed that from the sixth or seventh century, several Slavic nations resided in the area that is now currently known as Poland. During the tenth century, the Polan tribe became the strongest group and under the leadership of the peasant, Piast, these Slavic groups were formed into a singular group under the name Polska. In 966, King Miesko I is said to have introduced Christianity to Poland by marrying the Czech princess, Dubravka (Davies, 2005a: 4). This union is recognised as the official birth of the Polish nation, cementing the relationship between Christianity, Polish History and identity. The Piast myth is often associated with encouraging a vision of the Polish nation as a “closed, exclusive, ethnically Polish, and religiously Catholic homogenous society” (Burnell, 2009: xxiii-xxiv). This version of the nation is based on an idea of inherent ‘Polish’ ethnicity – one that is inextricably linked to the religiousness of its peoples. Troebst writes:

According to the mythical figure of the peasant Piast, who is said to be the founder of the medieval dynasty of the Piasts, and to the state-founding myth attributed to them, Poland is a westward-oriented, Catholic, centralist and ethnically homogeneous nation-state, whose opposite number are the Germans and their various empires (Troebst, 2003: 293).

Various (re)incarnations of the Piast narrative have been used throughout Poland's history as a counter to any perceived threats to this homogenous ethnic Polish nation. During the 1500s, for example, the Piast myth was used to “oppose the rule of foreign kings” (Davies, 1997:

¹¹⁰ See Davies (1997), for a succinct summary of these various competing myths.

¹¹¹ See for example: Davies (1986); Porter (2002a); Burnell (2009); Troebst (2003) and Törnqvist-Plewa (1994).

152), while in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, it became custom to label all Polish-born candidates for the throne with the name of 'Piaśt' (Davies, 1997: 152). It was in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century that the Piaśt myth became equated with the myth of the Polish-Catholic (*Polak-Katolik*) (Davies, 1997: 152).

As mentioned, the Piaśt and Jagiellonian Poland myths emerged as competing versions of national politics in Poland at the beginning of the twentieth century, and so this period is often referred to in order to reinforce the binary between the two myths. Davies, for instance, argues that the "internal politics of inter-war Poland can be seen as a prolonged duel" (Davies, 1984: 86) between the National Democrats (*endecja*), led by Roman Dmowski and their opponents, the Polish Socialist Party (*Polska Partia Socjalistyczna*, PPS), who were headed by Józef Piłsudski¹¹². According to Törnqvist-Plewa, the PPS wanted to "combine the struggle for the social liberation of the working class with the fight for national independence" (Törnqvist-Plewa, 1994: 67). The party leader, Józef Piłsudski "dreamed of a return to the multiethnic Poland of the Jagellons" (Törnqvist-Plewa, 1994: 67), and as such he was viewed as an "heir to the idea of Polish Romanticism" (Törnqvist-Plewa, 1994: 67)¹¹³. On the other hand, the right-wing political movement known as "National Democracy" has become one of the most well-known (and widely critiqued) contemporary enactments of the Piaśt and Polak-Katolik myth(s). Led by Roman Dmowski, this party believed in the "creation of a Polish Poland – where to be a Pole was to speak Polish and be devout Roman Catholic" (Davies, 1986: 79-80), thus encouraging a vision of 'Piaśt Poland' as an "ethnically pure, religiously Catholic society" (Burnell, 2009: 13-14)¹¹⁴. Narratives on this era tend to highlight the extreme exclusiveness of Dmowski's politics in order to illustrate (quite convincingly, I might add), how the Piaśt and Jagiellonian myths are diametrically opposed.

It is believed that the Jagiellonian era (1386-1572) began when Władysław Jagiełło, the Grand-Duke of Lithuania, married Queen Jadwiga of Poland in 1386, thus establishing the Polish-Lithuanian union, which was known for its religious diversity. The 'Jagiellonian' myth views the Polish nation as an "open, inclusive, ethnically, and religiously diverse society, such as existed in the Polish Commonwealth, following the union of Poland and Lithuania"

¹¹² Troebst similarly argues that these two leaders "appear as the heirs of the Piaśt and Jagiellonian traditions, as contemporary figureheads of the two rivalling concepts of state" (Troebst, 2003: 294).

¹¹³ Piłsudski was also mythologised within the Catholic myth of History. As demonstrated earlier, when he led Poland to victory against the Bolsheviks in 1920, this event was (re)mythologised as the 'Miracle on the Vistula'. This is another example of how the Piaśt, Jagiellonian and Catholic myths function in multiple ways which are never wholly 'exclusionary' and/or 'inclusive'.

¹¹⁴ According to Porter, this rhetoric provided an entry point for the Catholic Church into Polish politics, as Church officials, and Catholic authors "appropriated the concept of the nation" (Porter, 2002b: 272-273).

(Burnell, 2009: xxiii-xxiv). The Jagiellonian dynasty is viewed as a “multiethnic one oriented towards the East and the Southeast, encompassing besides Poles Lithuanians, Ukrainians and Belarusians and focusing on Russia as the arch-enemy” (Troebst, 2003: 293-294). Davies argues that the vision of Jagiellonian Poland is the most influential in that “four hundred years of Poland's union with Lithuania formed the framework for most of the country's lasting traditions” (Davies, 1986: 83). According to this myth, as long as the *Rzeczpospolita*¹¹⁵ survived, the “multinational, multireligious, multicultural aspects of its affairs were not just curious minority concerns; they were central to the health and character of the Polish community as a whole” (Davies, 1986: 83-84). This idea was central to the development of Polish nationalism in the romantic era.

Given that we are situated in a very particular historico-political context in which the valuing of a multicultural and multiethnic society has become something of an ethical imperative, we can see how the Jagiellonian myth may seem more palatable to us compared to the overtly exclusionary politics associated with the Piast myth. However, I contend that ‘exclusion’ is fundamental to all narrative structures, in that it functions to produce the appearance of a naturally occurring cohesion. The inclusiveness of the Jagiellonian myth means that it also must exclude others (Russians, for example). Even in the Jagiellonian period, the espoused ‘multi-ethnic’ and ‘inclusive’ nation utilised the political ideology of Sarmatianism to construct a myth of a single cohesive nation. Davies claims that a Jagiellonian court historian, Canon Jan Długosz, gave rise to a generation of Polish writers who “held to the theory that the Polish nation could trace its roots to the ancient Sarmatians, a nomadic Indo-Iranian people who had settled the plains of Eastern Europe before the Christian Era” (Davies, 1997: 143). Stanisław Sarnicki, a Calvinist nobleman writing in the thirteenth century, went further than Długosz, claiming that the Sarmatians were “ancestors not of the Poles as a whole, but only of the Polish nobility. Henceforth, it was the *szlachta* alone who claimed Sarmatian descent” (Davies, 1997: 143). Since discussions about the cohesive myth of Jagiellonian Poland only ever extended to a few, namely, the *szlachta*, these overarching narratives did not necessarily represent or depict the everyday lives of the majority of the en-serfed population, who were excluded from the national narrative. As Davies points out, “Non-nobles, burghers, Jews and peasants were not even counted as Poles. The ‘Polish national’ was seen to consist exclusively of nobles” (Davies, 1997: 143). While it is this ‘myth’ of multi ethnicity that is accepted as ‘truth’, less is known about whether this

¹¹⁵ The Commonwealth of Poland-Lithuania.

myth applied more broadly to the populace or whether they had their own national myths too. This is an effect of a particular tradition of History. Local knowledges are much harder to acknowledge given that it is usually the elites who are the authors of the archive(s). The politics and practice of History that remains in the hands of the ruling elites is a regime of power that influences the types of narratives that are told, while others are left to the margins, or forgotten.

While these two myths may (re)present polarised political views, they share a similar logic, and at times they function in the same way (by homogenising). Both myths rely on a carefully constructed narrative that describes an idealised version of Poland that is imagined to have existed in the past; both myths refer to eras when Poland was viewed as “one of the greatest and most powerful states in medieval and early modern Europe” (Velikonja, 2003: 235). According to Mitja Velikonja:

The memory of this magnificent political and military past is one that is fostered by the Poles, and has given rise to the myth of lost empire and a craving for the restoration of its former glory (*Renovatio Imperii*) (Velikonja, 2003: 235).

In a sense, both myths encourage nostalgia for a former utopian period of Polish History by promising a return to the same idea(l)s. This “nostalgic longing for the resurrection of a lost presence” (Richter, 2010: 159) is an effect of particular understanding of time and a dialectical interpretation of history. According to this logic, the past once existed in a pure and present presence. However, the meaning of the past is never fixed and can only be interpreted from a present, which is also never pure, but continually moving towards an unknown future. But those who are invested in these ‘myths’ view them as a (re)presentation of a pure and true past, and this (re)affirms the ideological assumptions within them¹¹⁶. Both myths are also shaped by the narrative of Polish Christianity, however, they intersect at different times with various (re)interpretations of Catholicism, and thus cannot be said to produce a singular narrative. I will now turn briefly to the Catholic myth of Polish history that informs both of these myths.

¹¹⁶ Castelli has argued that ‘myth’ is the “text of a utopian dream, a dream about a complete and seamless story that has the capacity to suture the present (and the future) to the past” (Castelli, 2004: 30), suggesting that it is this ‘seamless’ logic of time that gives myth its legitimating force.

The Catholic Myth of Polish History

Many Polish historians claim that the Catholic Church has always been a powerful institution in Poland's history. Historian Jerzy Kloczowski, for example, traces the establishment of the Polish state and its links to western Christendom to the period between the tenth and twelfth centuries (Kloczowski, 2000: 5). Davies claims that the Roman Catholic Church has always been part of the world of Polish politics (Davies, 2005b: 152), suggesting that the "history of the Roman Catholic Church provides one of the very few threads of continuity in Poland's past" (Davies, 2005b: 152). Davies reflects a common belief that the Catholic narrative of History is a cohesive one. But this idea of a continuous narrative with a singular meaning is part of the narrative itself. In this section, I engage with Brian Porter's critique of the Catholic narrative of Polish History¹¹⁷ in order to interrogate the effects of this narrative, and how it shapes narratives of Polish History and national identity, including narratives on 'Katyń'.

Porter's critique of what he calls the Catholic narrative of Polish history is illustrative of the ways in which myth/and or History (which are inextricably linked) function in order to (re)produce specific idea(l)s. These narratives 'forget' elements that would upset a narrative linear structure. Because of the explicit mythic qualities of the Catholic narrative of Polish history, I refer to the Polish-Catholic narrative as a 'myth'. Porter suggests that the Polish Catholic narrative is much more than recognition of the significance of Roman Catholicism in Poland's History; it is "an ideologically loaded conceptual framework that gives specific meaning to what is remembered and what is forgotten" (Porter, 2001: 291). In the sixteenth century, for instance, Calvinism spread rapidly in Poland, adding to the "heterogeneous blend" (Porter, 2001: 291) of religions¹¹⁸ already living in Poland. Consequently, Poland earned a reputation among her European counterparts "as a land where religious indifference made Catholicism vulnerable, but where official tolerance made it impossible for Protestantism to institutionalize its success" (Porter, 2001: 291; see also Kloczowski, 2000: 93). This threatened the perpetuation of the Polish-Catholic myth, which maintains that the Polish people were always, and only, devout Catholics. The maintenance of the myth that equates Catholicism with Polishness requires a cohesive Catholic version of Polish religious History, and like all histories, this was mythologised. Porter contends that during the Counterreformation, the Church set about (re)constructing a new Catholic narrative of Polish

¹¹⁷ See Porter (2001) for a succinct summary of this critique, or for a more sustained analysis see Porter-Szücs (2011).

¹¹⁸ Among these religions, Porter lists Catholics, Jews, Eastern Orthodox, Armenian Catholics, and Muslims (Porter, 2001: 291)

History with the intent of both eliminating “religious diversity in the present and to write Protestantism out of Polish history” (Porter, 2001: 292). Porter provides a number of examples of the ways in which the Polish Republic attempted to eliminate religious diversity¹¹⁹, reforms which led, to some extent, to the collapse of Protestantism. Porter and Kloczowski, however, maintain that the causes of this collapse are silenced within the Catholic narrative of Polish History, encouraging a reading of this period as the result of “a vital and renewed Catholicism” (Kloczowski cited in Porter, 2001: 293). This challenges the role of objectivity and empirical evidence in History, suggesting that ‘facts’ are always open to (re)interpretation. Porter also suggests that these attempts to exclude non-Catholics via legislative reform are not viewed as deliberate acts because “the story’s coherence depends on a religious identity that is natural, not constructed – or worse – politically enforced” (Porter, 2001: 293). The myth of Polish Catholic History is informed by another myth; that is, of a cohesive and naturally occurring stable identity. The Polish-Catholic myth is another regime of power that functions to produce truth-effects.

The Bulwark of Christendom Myth

The Polish-Catholic myth has led to the proliferation of related myths. When Pope John Paul II visited his homeland in 1979, he proclaimed, “without Christ it is impossible to understand the history of Poland” (cited in Porter, 2001: 290). Porter claims that John Paul II was referring to a common narrative of History that “gives meaning to Poland’s past by making the nation dependent upon the Church (as the receptacle for *true* national identity) and by making the Church dependent upon the nation (as the eastern bastion of the faith)” (Porter, 2001: 290-291). Davies refers to the first of these myths as the ‘Bulwark of Christendom’, and the latter as the Polak-Katolik myth. Davies traces the emergence of both myths to the seventeenth century, specifying the historical contexts which shaped how they have been repeated in order to (re)produce particular idea(l)s.

According to Davies, the ‘the ‘Bulwark of Christendom’ myth was inspired by the wars against the Turks and the Tartars (Davies, 1997: 145). As Davies tells it, Crown Chancellor of Poland, George Ossoliński, tried to convince King James to assist the Poles in fighting the invasion of the Ottoman Turks in 1620 by reminding him that Poland was “the most trusty

¹¹⁹ He claims that in 1658, for instance, non-Catholics were expelled from the Polish Republic, and in 1668, it became a crime for Catholics to convert to other faiths (Porter, 2001: 292).

rampart of the Christian world” (Davies, 1997: 144-145). Davies claims that this myth (re)emerged throughout various periods in Poland’s History in order to imbue certain events with a specific meaning. For example, this myth was used to “justify Poland’s defence of Catholic Europe against the Orthodox Muscovites, and later against Communism and Fascism” (Davies, 1997: 145). In the early twentieth century, the myth was used to inscribe meaning into the Polish-Soviet War. When Pilsudski’s army successfully prevented the advance of Bolshevik troops into central Europe, it was thought that the Poles had “saved Western civilization from the Bolshevik hordes” (Lukowski & Zawadzki, 2006: 229), and the Battle of Vistula became known as the ‘Miracle on the Vistula’. An understanding of Poland’s role as the ‘Bulwark of Christianity’ thus led to a mythic/religious (re)interpretation of events, and this myth found its way into discourse of Polish messianism.

The Solidarity movement also drew on the Catholic myth of Polish History, and in particular, the myth of Poland as the Bulwark of Christianity¹²⁰. This is suggested in the 1981 proclamation of the Solidarity movement:

Because it was Christianity that brought us into our wider motherland, Europe; because for a thousand years Christianity has in a large degree been shaping the content of our culture; since in the most tragic moments of our nation it was the Church that was our main support; since our ethics are predominantly Christian; since, finally, Catholicism is the living faith of the majority of Poles, we deem it necessary that an honest and comprehensive presentation of the role of the Church in the history of Poland and of the world have an adequate place in national education (cited in Porter, 2001: 291).

In this proclamation, Catholicism is credited with sustaining the nation’s culture, supporting the nation in times of trauma, and being the predominant religion in Poland. But for Porter, this ‘honest and comprehensive’ history “silences as much as it reveals” (Porter, 2001: 291). Religious identities of all non-Catholics are silenced within this narrative in order to promote the myth of a cohesive Catholic nation. The myth of Polish Catholic national identity functions to cover over differences, and to engender (the appearance of) cohesion as a naturally occurring state. This quote also implies that the role of the Church in Polish History

¹²⁰ Burnell argues that Solidarity “was as much a political-religious movement as a trade union” (Burnell, 2009: 25-26).

has been static and singular. However, as I will go on to demonstrate, this has not always been the case, particularly in the period of Polish romantic nationalism.

The Polak-Katolik Myth of Identity

Davies identifies a particular moment in Polish History that led to the development of the myth of Polish-Catholic identity, and one which established the role of the Virgin Mary in the Polish-Catholic imaginary. In 1655, the Commonwealth of Poland-Lithuania was under siege and surrounded by both the Russian and Swedish armies. The Pauline monastery of Jasna Góra near Częstochowa was one of the very few positions in the country to resist seizure. According to propagators of this narrative, it was “protected by its holy icon of the ‘Black Madonna’, the *Matka Boska Częstochowa*” (Davies, 1997: 146), and the Swedish King had no choice but to retreat. The response from the Polish King, John Casimir, was to “dedicate his whole kingdom to the Virgin Mary” and at a ceremony held in the cathedral of Lwów in 1656, “the Virgin Mary was solemnly crowned as the ‘Queen of Poland’” (Davies, 1997: 146). From then on, “Catholic Poles were taught not just to revere the Mother of God as their patron, but increasingly to regard Catholicity as the touchstone of their national identity” (Davies, 1997: 146). This particular (re)interpretation of this event was given spiritual meaning within a framework of Catholic discourse, and this helped to perpetuate the myth of Polish Catholic national identity¹²¹.

There are echoes of this legacy in ‘Katyń’ narratives. For instance, the story of Our Lady of Katyń suggests that “the serene and sorrowful face of the *Matka Boska*” continues to be “the source of great solace” for many Poles (Davies, 1997: 146). Kaczorowska describes how the story came about:

The creator of the original Madonna, Henryk Gorzechowski (1892-1940) was a lieutenant. He carved it with a pen-knife on a piece of wood from a prison bed slab. He gave it to his son, also Henryk (1921-1989), in the Kozelsk camp on February 28, 1940. It was a present on the nineteenth birthday of his son and at the same time a *committing of him to the protection of Our Lady*. The lieutenant

¹²¹ Indeed, Davies identifies this as a “key moment in the growth of the myth of the Polak-Katolik, ‘the Catholic Pole’ – the belief that if you weren’t a Roman Catholic, you somehow didn’t qualify to be a true Pole” (Davies, 1997: 146).

died at the hands of the NKVD in April 1940, but his son, also a POW at Kozelsk, was saved as one of only a few. And the sculpture was saved with him. The *holy relic* from his father, carried in his uniform on his chest, safeguarded him a number of times. During his service in the English navy, in the anti-aircraft artillery in England and in the difficult combat under General Maczek. After the war the younger Henryk Gorzechowski returned to Gdynia. He took great care to protect his exceedingly powerful Advocate, a remembrance and heirloom from his father (Kaczorowska, 2003: 30, my emphasis).

This item is more than just an heirloom; it is elevated to the status of a holy relic, imbued with mystical powers of protection. According to the teachings of the Catholic Church, however, a relic is an object that serves as a memorial of a deceased saint, one who has been canonised by the Church. When viewed within a different ideological framework, that is, the Polish Catholic myth, this object is transformed into a religious artefact. This item is a holy relic because it is a (re)presentation of the Holy Mother, whom the Poles claim as their patron saint. The presence of Our Lady in Polish Catholic History is deeply symbolic; Our Lady is not only a figure who represents Poland's Catholic past, her role in Polish Historical narratives suggest that she is intrinsic to the Polish nation as a whole, and to its protection.

Porter is critical of the assumption that "any discussion of identity in Poland must include a consideration of Catholicism" (Porter, 2001: 289) in that "it can be hard to perceive the many aspects of Poland's present and past that are silenced by equating 'Polish' and 'Catholic'" (Porter, 2001: 290). As Davis points out, "given that anything between one third and one half of Poland's population consisted of non-Catholics – Protestants, Orthodox, Uniates, Jews and Muslims – the growing association of Polishness and Catholicity was to prove extremely divisive" (Davies, 1997: 146). The Polak-Katolik myth is a manifestation of McNeill's concept of 'mythistory' in that what amounts to a History for one group, in this case the Polish-Catholics, is considered a myth by another group (or groups), such as Jews and Protestants, for example. The Catholic myth of Polish History is no different from any other perspectival narrative of History – it must 'forget' what disrupts the narrative – and the Piast and Jagiellonian myths function in the same way. There is a tendency in 'Katyń' narratives, to emphasise the myth of Polish-Catholic identity. Take for example, what are taken to be the forms of resistance that took place in the three camps. As noted in the previous chapter, it is alleged that secret masses were held in the camps and feast days were still acknowledged and celebrated despite the fact that these actions were perceived by the NKVD

as counter-revolutionary. Zawodny notes that many officers in the camps continued to pray, despite the consequences. As punishment for this act of resistance, Zawodny writes that “the authorities retaliated by forcible removal of active chaplains of all denominations from the camps” (Zawodny, 1962: 138-139)¹²². Thus the myth of the Polak-Katolik was so widespread that ‘religion’ was seen as an enactment of a Polish national and ethnic identity, as well as of bravery and possible self-sacrifice. Even though the removal of religious men included priests and rabbis (see Zawodny, 1962: 139; Komorowski Gilmore, 1975: 149), because they were removed before Christmas suggests that ‘religion’ is viewed as predominantly ‘Christian’. The Polish Catholic myth was inextricable from Polish national identity, which was consequently viewed as a threat to Soviet identity. Similarly, secret masses are seen as a form of resistance to Communist/Russian ideology thereby constructing Russian ethnicity in direct opposition to free, Catholic Polish national identity – the terms Polish and Catholic becoming virtually interchangeable.

Both Porter and Davies argue that the divisiveness of the Polak-Katolik myth was particularly problematic in the narratives of nationalism that emerged in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Davies, 1997: 146), when the National Democrats adopted the ‘Polak-Katolik’ myth. Dmowski is commonly held responsible “for propagating a ‘Polak-Katolik’ ideal, for spreading the message that the Polish nation is essentially Catholic, cohesive, and conservative” (Porter, 2002b: 262). The following quote from Dmowski supports this argument:

Catholicism is not a supplement to Polishness, giving it a certain color; rather, it penetrates to the essence of [Polishness], and to a considerable extent constitutes that essence. To try to separate Catholicism from Polishness, to tear off the nation from religion and from the Church, is to destroy the very essence of the nation (Dmowski cited in Porter, 2002b: 261).

Porter contends that comments such as these lead to a “widely held impression that the Polish Catholic Church is beholden to a legacy of right-wing politics, anti-Semitism, and intolerant authoritarianism” (Porter, 2002b: 262)¹²³. And while this may not have been the case with all

¹²² Zawodny notes for example that “In Starobelsk, Catholic priest Aleksandrowicz and Rabbi Steinberg, both genuinely loved, were removed several days prior to Christmas, 1939. They never reappeared” (Zawodny, 1962: 139).

¹²³ Porter claims that in Poland in the early years of the twentieth century, “debates between those who defined the nation as essentially and necessarily Catholic and those who refused to do so grew increasingly heated”

members of the Polish Catholic church at all times, Porter maintains that in the 1920s and 1930s “many Catholics embraced this rhetoric, and several prominent Church publications propagated a message of intolerance and exclusion” (Porter, 2001: 297). Davis argues that this movement was met with resistance and Dmowski’s party remained unpopular¹²⁴, however, the rhetoric of this era is illustrative of the damaging effects of the exclusive Polak-Katolik and Piast myth(s). This narrative of Polish national identity excludes non-Catholic Poles who do not fit in with the Polak-Katolik ideal, but it also excludes Polish Catholics who do not necessarily conform to (or support) this extreme (Piast/Catholic) vision of Poland.

Porter suggests that “the legacy of the Church’s alliance with the racist right has never been entirely erased – or even confronted” (Porter, 2001: 297), and as a result, “many Catholics in Poland refuse to come to terms with the significance of their historical alliance with the radical right” (Porter, 2002b: 262)¹²⁵. This is hardly surprising, however, as throughout its long History, the Catholic Church almost always makes alliances with the right, and thus, inevitably, with policies which would be perceived by most of us today as racist. This demonstrates another problem with the Catholic myth of History. Again, it shows what the myth functions to ‘cover-over’ or render invisible. This narrative relies on the myth that the Catholic Church was dedicated to the preservation of Polish culture, yet the exclusionary and anti-Semitic sentiments expressed by the Church in the early twentieth century do not fit into this narrative structure, and so they go unexamined. This moment in history is silenced as it cannot be reinterpreted in order to sustain the myth.

(Porter, 2001: 297). At the center of these debates was the so-called “Jewish Question” and it was during these years that the “slogan of ‘Polak-Katolik’ “was appropriated by the anti-Semites of the radical right in their campaign to deny the Jews a secure place within Poland” (Porter, 2001: 297).

¹²⁴ Davies suggests that it is important to remember that the National Democrats “never gained power, and never, with the possible exception of 1935-9, reached a position where they could begin to put their intolerant ideas into practice. Piłsudski regularly came out on top in the tussle for power with Dmowski. If Nationalism was strong in Poland, the combined opposition to Nationalism was even stronger” (Davies, 1986: 86).

¹²⁵ According to Porter, Adam Michnik (a secular intellectual writing in 1981, “beseeched his Catholic compatriots to firmly repudiate the memory of Dmowski and the dark intolerance he represents” (Porter, 2002b: 262).

Nineteenth Century Jagiellonian Nationalism

Arguably, it is the (re)interpretation of the Jagiellonian myth that emerged in the era of the partitions that continues to shape narratives of History, politics and national identity in contemporary Poland¹²⁶. In the previous chapter, I noted that the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries are significant to a particular narrativisation of Polish history. The move from a unified commonwealth to Poland's various partitions resulted in the third partition of 1795, which essentially wiped Poland-Lithuania from the map of Europe. Koczanowicz contends that the idea of national unity has "always been present in Polish politics as a kind of ideal situation" (Koczanowicz, 2012: 817), and in the vast majority of writing on Polish history, these events are constituted as integral to the nation's past, present, and future. The fact that these events are seen as significant to 'Katyń' is an effect of a particular way of seeing Poland's past. Koczanowicz maintains that "every traumatic event instigated hopes that this unity would become real" thus introducing a "Messianic strand into Polish politics" (Koczanowicz, 2012: 817). The messianic myths of nationalism that flourished in the aftermath of these events continue to be (re)interpreted by Poles in order to make sense of 'present' events. Orla-Bukowska, for example, suggests that the "trauma of World War II and its immediate consequences" necessitated a "reorientation of Polish identity" (Orla-Bukowska, 2006: 177). These narratives of national identity, however, are informed by the "defining trauma" which has "marked Polish collective memory in modernity and postmodernity" (Orla-Bukowska, 2006: 178). She is referring, of course, to the final partition of Poland in 1795.

Many modern historians contend that the nineteenth century "marks the birth of modern nations and nationalism" (Burnell, 2009: 35). The effects of the French Revolution of 1789 were felt throughout Europe and inspired a new era of nationalist politics. Suny claims that as a number of states "consolidated a relatively coherent internal community, on either linguistic, ethnocultural, or religious lines" the idea of a 'nation' was made conceivable within the "coming of the late-eighteenth-century revolutions and the subsequent 'age of nationalism'" (Suny, 2001: 27). While the search for national identity was happening all over Europe throughout the nineteenth century (Burnell, 2009: 36), Burnell suggests that the "conviction that a nation's essence is found in its cultural identity" had a particularly

¹²⁶ Burnell and Porter both argue that in order "to understand the background and roots of contemporary enacted and embodied versions of Polish identity, we must examine the original, messianic myth of enacted, Jagiellonian Poland" (Burnell, 2009: xxvi; see also Porter, 2002: 238).

profound effect on the Poles, in that their “emerging self-consciousness was conducted in an institutional vacuum, and under the yoke of foreign rule” (Burnell, 2009: 36). For the Poles, this national identity project had much more urgency in that having lost the physical boundaries of their nation, their national identity had to be defined in symbolic terms¹²⁷. This is perhaps why the Poles were so heavily invested in nostalgic myths of origin. Porter claims that most intellectuals refused to accept the finality of the third partition (Porter, 2002a: 17-18) and the “Polish question” remained an important political issue. After brief insurrections in 1846, 1848 and 1863, Polish intellectuals and politicians debated the issue of independence, while the “‘national question’ seemed to penetrate all aspects of public life” (Porter, 2003: 215). According to Porter, the version of Polish nationalism that developed in the early nineteenth century was characterised by a preference for enacted, multiethnic, Jagiellonian Poland. He writes:

The most striking aspect of the nationalism of the day was that it did not necessarily entail the description (or creation) of an ethnically and culturally homogenous social collective. The Polish patriot of the early nineteenth century enacted the nation rather than embodying it. As patriotic Polish intellectuals tried to cope with the loss of statehood after the third partition in 1795, they took comfort in the belief that Poland was more than just a place on the map of Europe; they removed their nation from the material world in which tyrants could destroy and oppress, and they relocated it onto a transcendent, spiritual plane. Poland was no longer a mere community for them but a ‘national essence,’ defined by the moral principles it was said to represent. By reconceptualizing the nation as a spirit or an ideal, these Poles could sustain their national identity without depending on the immediate reestablishment of the state (Porter, 2002a: 16).

¹²⁷ Meanwhile, Russian nationalism developed within a slightly different contextual and political situation. In the eighteenth century, at around the same time that Poland was experiencing the loss of their state, Russia was “an empire in the multiple senses of a great state whose ruler exercised full, absolute sovereign power over its diverse territory and subjects” (Suny, 2001: 40). As Europe dealt with the aftermath of 1789, Russia “represented the most imperial of nations, compromising more people than any other” (Suny, 2001: 42). The Russian empire was expanding while the Polish nation essentially disappeared from the map of Europe. As a result, nationalism did not take shape in Russia in the same way that it did in Poland and other European countries. Suny proposes that “Victorious Russia, the conservative bulwark against the principles of the French Revolution, was in many ways, the antithesis of nationalism” (Suny, 2001: 42). Theodore Weeks also points out that the ruling elites of the Russian Empire were never completely comfortable with the idea of Russian nationalism (Weeks, 2004: 476). Weeks argues that nationalism is, “after all, an implicitly democratic movement, claiming as it does that the state should embody the aspirations of the nation” (Weeks, 2004: 476). Nationalism provided citizens of a nation-state with a shared sense of community and solidarity. In Russia, however, notions of citizenship and concepts of nationhood remained the domain of the ruling elites. In Poland, this arena belonged to the Polish nobility.

The nation became “an ideal, a principle that gave meaning to history” (Porter, 2002a: 20), an ‘imagined community’, in which national identity was constructed around the enactment of cultural myths, rather than embodied in the material world. This interpretation of national identity reflects Benedict Anderson’s definition of the nation as an “imagined political community” (Anderson, 1983: 6). Anderson argues that the nation is “*imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion” (Anderson, 1983: 6). For the Poles, the nation was imagined as a set of principles and a shared messianic-historical mission. One “*participated* in the nation” (Porter, 2002a: 16) by working towards these goals.

The Polish Romantic Myth

This nineteenth century enactment of Jagiellonian nationalism inspired the creation of a new mythic narrative, often referred to as Polish romanticism or Polish messianism and the legacy of this myth is integral to understanding contemporary narrativisations of ‘Katyń’. When Polish patriots of the nineteenth century reinterpreted the events of the 1700s and the 1800s, they came to view the partitions of Poland as “international crimes against freedom” (Burnell, 2009: 56). These thinkers predicted that the task of Poland was not only the restoration of order and morality within their own nation, but all of Europe. This idea was expressed in the famous catchword of the Polish November Uprising: “For our freedom and yours” (Törnqvist-Plewa, 1994: 64). Porter contends that philosopher August Cieszkowski’s book, *A Prologue to a Historiosophy* (1838), could “serve as the manifesto of Polish romanticism” (Porter, 2002a: 23). The term “historiosophy” refers to the “interpretation of time in a way that inscribes the past with meaning and offers predictions for the future” (Porter, 2002a: 23), and this was fundamental to the rhetoric of Polish nationalism being mapped out by Polish intellectuals in the 1830s and 1840s (Porter, 2002a: 23). But while the messianic myth appeared to be linked to the Polish Catholic narrative in that messianism is usually associated with religion, Polish messianists drew on the teleological view of history developing at the time in order to give the Polish nation an “exalted mission of salvation for all humanity, making national resurrection both morally and historically inevitable” (Porter, 2002a: 16).

Cieszkowski, for instance, was inspired by Hegel and he viewed history as “moving forward in a dialectical process toward a state of absolute self-awareness” (Porter, 2002a: 23). As I will go on demonstrate in Chapter 4, Marx also drew his inspiration from Hegelian teleology in his messianic narrative of history as class struggle, a narrative that was later (re)appropriated by Stalin. Porter writes:

[N]early every philosopher, poet, journalist, and political activist of the 1830s and 1840s held a similarly diachronic view of the world... It was inconceivable that history might be meaningless or that humanity might be destined only for more of what had already been experienced. History *had* to have a design: progress *had* to be assured; the future *had* to be different (and better) (Porter, 2002a: 24).

Cieszkowski found that there was something lacking in Hegel’s attention to the future development of humanity and proposed that the future would be the “age of ‘the deed’” (Porter, 2002a: 23). The “patriotic *act* or *deed*” (Porter, 2002: 16) became integral to the rhetoric of Polish romanticism – to be a Pole, one had to take an active part in this grand historical mission in which Polish patriots were positioned “along a continuum of progress” (Porter, 2002a: 24)¹²⁸. This rhetoric places Polish messianism within the discourse of the ‘grand narratives’ of the modern era.

Romantic literature encouraged the interpretation of Polish History as a series of sacrificial uprisings on the path to progress and freedom, one that also resonated with the (re)emergence of the Bulwark of Christianity myth. This can be seen for example in the writings and teachings of the Polish Catholic priest and poet, Jan Paweł Woronicz (1757-1829). Burnell credits Woronicz with first suggesting the “idea of a covenant between God and the Polish nation” (Burnell, 2009: 52), thus inspiring the messianic imagery that would permeate Polish romantic literature. Woronicz understood Poland’s suffering and loss as an effect of a decline in Christian morals. He believed that the Poles were being punished for

¹²⁸ Törnqvist-Plewa also notes that the emphasis on freedom, heroism and sacrifice, informed another important Polish Romantic myth – the “insurrection myth” (Törnqvist-Plewa, 1994: 65). This myth frames Polish history along a relentless “march towards freedom through the consecutive insurrections of 1768, 1794, 1830, 1846, 1848, and 1863” (Törnqvist-Plewa, 1994: 65). The Insurrections which she refers to are: The Bar Confederation of 1768 which consisted of a number of Polish nobles resisting Russian influence over the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth; the Kościuszko Uprising of 1794 which was a failed attempt to liberate Poland-Lithuania from the Second-Partition of Poland; the November Uprising of 1830 (or the Polish-Russian War of 1830-1) which was an armed uprising against the Russian Empire; the Greater Poland Uprising of 1846 – a planned military insurrection against Prussian forces; The Greater Poland Uprising of 1848 which was also a planned military insurrection against Prussian forces; and finally the January Uprising of 1863 – an uprising in the former Polish-Lithuania against the Russian Empire.

straying from Christianity and that once they were set back on the spiritual path, political freedom would come¹²⁹. But while Woronicz believed that the Polish nation needed to atone for her sins, he viewed the partitions as “international crimes against freedom” (Burnell, 2009: 56) and he was convinced that Poland would play an important role in the “history of the nations” (Burnell, 2009: 54). Woronicz did not view Poland as wholly innocent, but he did constitute Poland’s suffering as a universal injustice.

Porter credits Kazimierz Brodziński¹³⁰ as one of the first to put the messianic metaphor into play. In a speech given in May 1831 to honour the anniversary of the Polish Constitution of 1791, Brodziński reiterated the idea that the “national struggle was part of a wider cause” (Porter, 2002a: 27)¹³¹. Porter contends, however, that while Brodziński may have “introduced the messianic metaphor”, it was “propagated and elaborated primarily by the poet Adam Mickiewicz (1798 – 1855)” (Porter, 2002a: 27). Mickiewicz’s poems and writings had a significant impact on the development of Polish messianism in that he provided the nation with a ‘mythistory’ in which Poland’s suffering was made to matter, that is, Polish suffering was materialised as a real, shared, identifiable, and singular phenomenon, and, at the same time, it was made meaningful. In Mickiewicz’s poem ‘Forefather’s Eve, Part III’, for instance, Poland is represented as an innocent victim of oppression and violence committed by other nations. As Burnell points out, this interpretation of Poland’s suffering represents a “significant modification of Woronicz’s vision” (Burnell, 2009: 84) in that the Poles’ suffering is “not caused by their own guilt, but the guilt of the nations who sinned against them” (Burnell, 2009: 84) – thereby propagating a myth of Polish victimhood.

Mickiewicz was one of thousands of Poles who were forced to emigrate to the West after the failure of the 1830 uprising and was among those who found refuge in France, “where a thriving émigré community of political activists survived for decades” (Porter, 2002a: 27). It was in this environment, that Mickiewicz published anonymously *The Books of the Polish Nation and the Polish Pilgrimage*¹³². Porter notes that this text “rapidly became

¹²⁹ In his poem, *Hymn to God*, Woronicz tied the “hope of national renewal to the New Testament account of Christ” (Burnell, 2009: 56), and according to Burnell, the Polish romantics “developed this principle into a full-blown messianism that proclaimed Poland to the “Christ of the Nations” (Burnell, 2009: 61).

¹³⁰ A “prominent literary critic and poet” (Porter, 2002a: 27).

¹³¹ According to Brodziński, this message of ‘international brotherhood’ was not just a myth, it was a “divine truth”, and Poland was “blessed as the first nation to become aware of God’s plan” (Porter, 2002a: 27).

¹³² It is interesting to note that this text first took hold among a diasporic community. Törnqvist-Plewa also credits political groupings among Polish emigrants (such as the Polish Democratic Society (*TDP*), the liberal right concentrated around Prince Adam Czartoryski (*Hotel Lambert*) and Christian socialists, so-called “Communities of the Polish People” (*Gromady Ludu Polskiego*) (Törnqvist-Plewa, 1994: 63-64), in Paris with the “creation of the Romantic ideology” and in particular, of Polish Romantic nationalism (Törnqvist-Plewa, 1994: 63-64). Perhaps this is a testament to the Romantic concept of nationalism that no longer required a

required reading for Polish patriots, and Mickiewicz's language shaped the way an entire generation talked about the nation" (Porter, 2003: 218-219). The style of Mickiewicz's text had biblical overtones (Porter, 2002a: 27), which Mickiewicz used in order to rewrite the History of pre-partition Poland into a "morality tale of brotherhood and harmony" (Porter, 2002a: 28). He declared that in much the same way that Christ was killed for what he represented, and sacrificed for the good of humanity, Poland's enemies "feared the freedom it embodied" (Porter, 2002a: 28). Like Christ, Poland would suffer and sacrifice itself in order to restore Europe to its former glory. The struggle for Poland became synonymous with "the welfare of all humanity" and this was further justified "through use of a heterodox religious terminology: the quest for independence became a divine imperative and Poland became the 'Christ of Nations'" (Porter, 2002a: 27). Poland became synonymous, then, not only with Christ, but also with universal freedom. This narrative of Poland's history created a simplistic view of Poland's History. It took Christ as the overarching symbol of freedom, thus imposing Christian morality as political doctrine. As Porter explains:

The messianic metaphor thus placed Poland within the divine plan of salvation, imbuing nationalist rhetoric with a teleological dynamic that promised both the establishment of universal justice and the reestablishment of the Polish state (Porter, 2003: 220).

The messianic myth functioned not only to legitimate a particular narrative of Polish History, but by drawing on enlightenment ideals about progress and universality, this narrative of History was viewed as a model for all of Europe. Poland is seen as the epicentre of progress and the future narrative of European History. Poland's freedom is also Europe's freedom. The messianic rhetoric propagated by Mickiewicz and other romantic writers echoed the sentiments of the grand narratives that Lyotard critiques in *The Postmodern Condition*. Grand narratives employ metadiscourses to legitimate a particular position and claim this knowledge as 'truth'. In order to maintain this authority, grand narratives must exclude other forms of knowledges. While the romantic myth shares elements with the more "inclusive" Jagiellonian

nation-state in order to maintain a shared (imagined) sense of community. Yet it is also about the sort of nostalgia for the 'old country' that those who have emigrated often feel. Nostalgia (re)constructs the past in idealised terms. It has also been suggested that immigrants often feel a stronger sense of national identity once they have left than they ever did when they lived in the country from whence they came (Arrowsmith, 1999). However, as Porter notes "even though the nation resided in the hearts of those who lived as Poles, neither they nor their nation were complete as long as they remained in the emigration" (Porter, 2002a: 18).

myth, the maintenance of this myth (like all myths/narratives) inevitably involved exclusion¹³³.

Messianic Martyrdom and Catholicism

In a speech given in Rome in 1848, Mickiewicz conflated martyrdom with a spiritual and national dimension: “Our country, though distant, claims from you this sympathy by its long martyrdom. The glory of Poland, its only true glory, truly Christian, is to have suffered more than all the nations...” (Mickiewicz cited Porter, 2003: 221). Mickiewicz’s imagery clearly draws on a Catholic *discourse*, however, it more explicitly draws on nineteenth century narratives about nationalism and messianism than on Catholic *doctrine*¹³⁴. And since Mickiewicz was attempting to make sense of a broader national issue, his rhetoric was popular with many Poles. The Christ narrative provided a mythical framework within which the Poles could (re)mythologise their past in anticipation of a better (knowable) future. Yet while Poland’s messianic mission appeared to be “intrinsically linked to the religiousness of its people” (Burnell, 2009: 24), Porter claims that “over the course of the nineteenth century, the Church distanced itself from the ‘patriotic’ cause” (Porter, 2001: 294). This tension between Catholic and national messianism points to another rupture in the cohesion of the Polish-Catholic myth. Porter contends that the focal point of the Catholic narrative of Polish history is the era of the partitions (1773 onwards) (Porter, 2001: 293-294). Porter identifies a tendency within this narrative that asserts that the Church, as an institution, played a key role in the “preservation of national identity and the struggle for independence” (Porter, 2001: 294). But when Polish messianism began to assume religious as well as political overtones,

¹³³ In the aftermath of the defeat of the January Uprising of 1863, an opposing school of thought emerged in Poland known as Positivism (or political realism). Mainly represented by two groups of intellectuals - the Warsaw Positivists, and the Cracow School of Historians in Galizia – the ‘political realists’ “rejected the Romantic idea of the brotherhood of nations” (Törnqvist-Plewa, 1994: 66), and “condemned Polish Messianism and Romantic insurrections” (Törnqvist-Plewa, 1994: 66). The Positivist movement was similarly a product of Enlightenment narratives of progress. They still maintained that Poland should be working towards the progress of humanity, however they believed that “science was to be the new national agenda” (Porter, 2002a: 46). The Polish Positivists did not agree with the methods of the romantics, or the focus on Poland’s independent identity. They “considered armed uprisings against the occupying powers unrealistic, irresponsible, and destructive” (Burnell, 2009: 12) and they “discouraged the romantic ‘deed’” (Burnell, 2009: 12). Around 1880, another group known as the “indomitable” [*niepokorni*] emerged who “rejected positivism’s faith in progress” (Burnell, 2009: 13). The indomitable “reasserted the goal of independence” and encouraged the use of the “voluntary deed” in order to achieve that goal. This group later split into several parties which included the Polish Socialist Party (PPS) and the National Democrats (*endecja*) (Burnell, 2009: 13; see also Porter, 2002: 188).

¹³⁴ Porter points out that while the Polish messianic myth was inspired by a Catholic interpretation of Poland’s History, Mickiewicz was also influenced by socialism and Judaism (Porter, 2003: 221).

“its propagators soon earned ecclesiastical condemnation” (Davies, 2005: 158), and the “official institutions of the Church vociferously denounced national messianism” (Porter, 2003: 221-222).

The rhetoric of messianism was deemed heretical by some clergymen in that it was viewed as a misinterpretation of the Church’s teachings. One explanation for Catholic opposition to Polish messianism is that they were divided by competing historiosophies (Porter, 2003: 229), and different interpretations of messianism. As Porter illustrates, one relatively stable point of Catholic doctrine is a “rejection of the idea that history moves progressively toward the establishment of the kingdom of God on earth” (Porter, 2003: 230). The Polish romantics sought to give meaning to their nation’s suffering by arguing that order would eventually be restored and Poland would be reborn. This messianic vision of the future held by the Polish romantics refutes Catholic doctrine in that “one of the key doctrinal claims of official Catholicism is the idea that the mundane kingdom of God already exists, in the form of the Church itself” (Porter, 2003: 230). According to Catholic logic, “no nation – no mere social body – could act as a collective savior” (Porter, 2003: 235). The Polish messianists had in a sense, rejected traditional Catholic doctrine by “subordinating the role of the Church within a teleological vision of national salvation”, substituting Poland “in the place rightfully held by the Church and by God Himself” (Porter, 2003: 235). Polish messianism is therefore seen as heretical in that it attempts to (re)appropriate Catholic doctrine in order to satisfy ‘earthly’ desires.

As I have pointed out, while the narrative of Polish martyrdom drew on the discourse of Catholicism, it was imbued with another layer of meaning – that of Polish nationalism. This demonstrates that there is a complex relationship between the romantic (Jagiellonian) myth and the myth of Polish Catholic History. These myths are not simply discrete and opposed. Instead, they share elements, but in ways that are complex and contradictory. The messianic narrative was a national discourse and since the nineteenth century vision of the Polish nation did not equate Polishness with Catholicism, this rhetoric was not limited to Polish Catholics. We could say then, that the effects of Catholicism are multifarious – they produce an array of effects, some of which appear to us to be more ‘positive’ than others. Indeed, the existence of two seemingly opposed myths – the Jagiellonian and the Piast – suggest that the myth of Polish identity is necessarily overly simplified, that, in fact, there

were always competing idea(l)s of Polish identity, even if one of those took precedence over another (or over others) at particular times and in specific contexts¹³⁵.

The Inclusive Myth of Martyrdom

There is a tendency among Polish historians to critique the Piast national myth on the one hand, and in a sense ‘mythologise’ the utopianism of the romantic messianic myth (as the heir to the Jagiellonian myth) and the ‘inclusive’ nationalism it allegedly encouraged. Burnell suggests that the Polish Romantic myth “did not define the Polish nation in ethnic terms but instead conceived Polishness as a principle” (Burnell, 2009: 11). This meant that Polishness was an imagined idea(l), which was accessible to anyone who identified themselves as “Polish”, whether or not they were ‘ethnically’ Polish. Porter also claims that the development of Polish national identity and nationalism in this particular period (from around 1830 to 1863) was unique in that it did not discriminate according to ‘ethnicity’. He argues that by the 1850s, the “idea of the transcendent Polish nation had pushed ethnicity so far into the background that it became possible to imagine cultural diversity within the community” (Porter, 2002a: 39) and Polish nationalism became more inclusive than it had ever been before. Porter writes:

Poland, which was said to exist in the hearts of all Poles, embodied an ethical principle and acted as a motive force in history. Conceptually, the nation was

¹³⁵ Another such era is the Solidarity era. The late 1960s and early 1970s in Poland was marked by an increasing dissidence towards the communist government and Törnqvist-Plewa argues that from the 1970s onwards, the ‘shapers of culture’ were searching for “elements of tradition which could unite Polish society in a shared protest against the ruling Communist regime” (Törnqvist-Plewa, 1994: 70). The political situation during this era mimicked the messianic myth of Polish History as one of struggle and resistance and as a result, the Romantic tradition became “one such integrating and mobilizing force” (Törnqvist-Plewa, 1994: 70). Törnqvist-Plewa notes that the revival of the Romantic legacy was apparent in the Solidarity movement’s use of “Romantic symbols, myths and models” (Törnqvist-Plewa, 1994: 71). But this era is also used to trace the effects of the Polish-Catholic myth. Burnell has argued that John Paul II’s pilgrimages to his native Poland in the late 1970s “elevated patriotic-religious attitudes to the stature of a spiritual-political manifestation” (Burnell, 2009: 25). In 1983, the Pope alluding to the outlawed Solidarity movement declared: “There is no freedom without solidarity” (Burnell, 2009: 25-26). In much the same way as propagators of the romantic myth, Pope John Paul II equates ‘freedom’ with a national and political freedom that is also spiritual. Thus Solidarity is understood as part of the romantic (and ‘inclusive’ Jagiellonian) myth of freedom, one which also (re)inscribed with the (‘exclusive’) Polish-Catholic myth of History and national identity. Burnell has argued that John Paul II’s pilgrimages to his native Poland in the late 1970s “elevated patriotic-religious attitudes to the stature of a spiritual-political manifestation” (Burnell, 2009: 25). In 1983, the Pope alluding to the outlawed Solidarity movement declared: “There is no freedom without solidarity” (Burnell, 2009: 25-26). In much the same way as propagators of the romantic myth, Pope John Paul II equates ‘freedom’ with a national and political freedom that is also spiritual. Thus Solidarity is understood as part of the romantic (and ‘inclusive’ Jagiellonian) myth of freedom, one which also (re)inscribed with the (‘exclusive’) Polish-Catholic myth of History and national identity.

placed within a realm in which ethnic identity was of secondary importance and even, for some, irrelevant. . . . It did not push anyone outside of its ranks solely on the basis of language, cultural practices, religion, or ethnicity (Porter, 2002a: 20).

Porter contends that the openness that Polish nationalists showed towards Jews around the middle of the nineteenth century is reflective of this inclusiveness. While that this did not mean that hostility towards Jews disappeared completely, Porter suggests that “to speak about hatred or exclusion forced one to step to the very edge of nationalist discourse. One could still be a judeophobe, but it was becoming increasingly difficult to be a judeophobic nationalist” (Porter, 2002a: 37). There is clearly a significant difference between this nationalism and the one which was later (re)appropriated within a Piast myth by the National Democrats. This is not undermined by my suggestion that a dichotomous reading of the two myths is informed by a logocentric assumption that privileges one myth over. A deconstructive reading resists a passive acceptance of inherited meanings, in order to critique this oppositional logic and the effects it (re)produces.

On 8 April 1861, a demonstration ended in violence, and several Jews were discovered among the dead. Polish leaders, across the political spectrum, responded by making public declarations of national unity (Porter, 2002: 39-40), but it was a manifesto released by the (left-leaning) revolutionary underground that “inserted the Jews into the familiar Polish teleology” (Porter, 2002: 40). It read as follows:

Another visible grace of Providence for Poland, which is only now being redeemed from the sins of captivity, is the union, sealed by the joint martyrdom of Poland’s Christian and Israelite sons: these arks of a funeral covenant were borne on the shoulder of both Levites and Christians to the fraternal cemetery and thus to a joint resurrection. Since this day there have no longer been two population groups on the common soil of oppression, but one nation (cited in Porter, 2002a: 40).

These events led to the “introduction of a new expression: ‘Poles of the Faith of Moses’” (Porter, 2002a: 38). This sacrifice unified the Polish Christians and the Polish Jews in that it was made in the name of the nation. As Porter states, “It no longer mattered what the Jews were *like* – it was what they had *done* that counted” (Porter, 2002a: 40). If Poland was seen as

the Christ of Nations, then any sacrifice made in Poland's name, the romantic 'deed', was also in Christ the nation's name (whether or not you believed in Christ was irrelevant). Since the narrative of martyrdom was no longer a religious Catholic discourse but a national one, then anyone who sacrificed themselves for the greater good (the nation) was considered a martyr. Yet while this appears to be an inclusive myth of nation, it also works to cover over differences. Porter points out that "Jews had to relegate their distinctive identity to the private realm... Jews could be accepted as Poles, but only if they appeared to be Polish" (Porter, 2002a: 38). The effects of an inclusive enacted national identity are two-fold: while on the one hand, ethnicity becomes irrelevant and Polishness becomes an identity which can be embraced by anyone who shares the principles of Polishness, this becomes a homogenous identity in which differences such as ethnicity are erased. In this case, 'Jewishness' is invisibilised and 'Polishness' becomes more visible as an identity that simultaneously includes and erases these differences. The singularity of the other is effaced via a grand narrative of Polishness. The romantic (Jagiellonian) view of national identity is no less mythic, no less ideal, and, ironically, no less exclusory than the Piast myth, or the Catholic myth(s). The romantic myth must, necessarily, exclude those who don't embrace heterogeneity. It must – and it does – cover over disputes and difficulties in its idealised view of universal brotherhood. Similar to the grand narratives of the modern era, it also works to cover over differences such as ethnicity (as I argued was the case with Polish Jews). These myths – Jagiellonian, Piast, romantic/messianic – are equally problematic because they leave out what they do not want to acknowledge, they both create the world in terms of the way they want it to be. And in doing so, they both propose very particular political agendas. And these agendas (and the views of national identity that support them) shape contemporary accounts of WWII and 'Katyń'.

Porter also acknowledges some of the more 'exclusive' aspects of the myth. He suggests that while "*conceptually* the idea of the nation had been opened up as never before and linked to ambitious, even utopian visions of social equity and spiritual salvation", in "*practice* the discourse of the nation remained limited to a narrow intelligentsia" (Porter, 2002a: 29). Much like its Jagiellonian heir, the dialogue about national politics was restricted to the privileged, and it involved the exclusion of minorities. Burnell proposes that the myth of Poland as "God's faithful vassal", instigated by Woronicz, led to Poland "whitewashing its own political sins, especially towards the national, ethnic, and religious minorities that lived within its borders" (Burnell, 2009: 242). The story of Poland's (mis)treatment of minorities in the past does not fit in with the Jagiellonian myth of inclusive Poland, therefore these histories

are left out of the grand narrative of Polish History. Furthermore, Burnell argues that “by idealizing Poland’s more distant past and sanitizing its history” Woronicz was responsible for Mickiewicz and other romantics undertaking “a full-scale use of history to justify ‘innocent’ Poland” (Burnell, 2009: 242). Burnell identifies one of the key problems with messianism: if History is viewed as a series of sacrificial uprisings in which the Poles are always the victims, then this makes it difficult for a nation to confront its own wrongdoings. Padraic Kenney similarly suggests that:

A national narrative that depends on victimhood or heroic martyrdom makes acceptance of difficult episodes in the past unlikely. A nation that understands itself to be a victim would see the national narrative as threatened by any suggestion that it had also been a victimizer (Kenney, 2007: 153).

In order to sustain this narrative of Polish History and nation, the romantic myth of martyrdom overly (re)members some events at the expense of others. Historical narratives that refer to Poland’s loss and suffering take precedence over historical narratives that describe moments when Poland was the aggressor. Burnell suggests that Poland needs to “examine its own sins and demythologize its own recent history, such as Poland’s involvement in the ‘partition’ of Czechoslovakia” (Burnell, 2009: 160). Poland’s mythological/martyrological History depends on the repetition of victim narratives; therefore, such an event would disrupt the cohesion of this narrative. In the final sections of this chapter, I look at the ways in which the messianic myth has (re)emerged in narratives on ‘Katyń’ in an attempt to locate which narratives are heightened, and which narratives may be excluded or forgotten in this process.

The ‘Katyń’ Martyrs

The persistence of the messianic myth in ‘Katyń’ and WWII narratives suggests the extent to which romantic imagery and the narratives of martyrdom it encourages continue to be an influential force. Katherine R. Jolluck highlights the extent to which nineteenth century nationalist discourses were utilised in (re)interpreting the events of WWII. She writes:

When disaster struck the Polish nation in September 1939, its members had a historical narrative and national mythology to provide meaning to the new calamity. The Nazi and Soviet occupations seemed to parallel the partitions of the late eighteenth century, after which the Polish nation endured 123 years of foreign domination. Linking their loss of statehood to their Christian beliefs, Poles came to see themselves as a martyred nation, required to make sacrifices to the “altar of the Fatherland” to ensure Poland’s resurrection... The reestablishment of a sovereign Polish state in 1918 seemingly fulfilled the promise of the romantic nationalists’ characterisation of Poland as the “Christ of Nations”. That it came crashing down in 1939 in no way diminished Poles’ attachment to their national myths (Jolluck, 2006: 193)¹³⁶.

This suggests that the suffering and losses experienced by the Poles during WWII did not highlight the unpredictability and unknowability of the future, but merely functioned to (re)confirm the teleological narrative. ‘Katyn’ has become a particularly powerful metaphor within this History of victimisation.

Koczanowicz suggests that ‘Katyn’ is a “unique place in Polish mythology”, and the focus of “intersecting lines in the martyrology of the nation” (Koczanowicz, 2012: 815). Since the end of WWII and after the collapse of Soviet Communism, there are numerous examples¹³⁷ of the ways in which those who died at ‘Katyn’ are portrayed as martyrs. For example, on the homepage for the National Katyn Memorial Foundation of Baltimore, it reads:

When duty called – they answered

When they refused to embrace Stalin, they died.

Now we commend them to the ages, to be included amongst history’s martyrs

(National Katyn Memorial Foundation, 2005-2010).

¹³⁶ Zamoyski (1987: 372) also refers to the “continuing martyrdom” of the Poles during and after WWII.

¹³⁷ It is interesting to note that the dissemination of the martyrological discourse is not limited to Polish texts. For example, a Katyn memorial was erected in Budapest in 2009 which was named the ‘Memorial for the Katyn Martyrs’. Interestingly, the Russian language Katyn memorial’s official website refers to the martyrological narrative. The website opens with an epigraph: “The Katyn forest became a symbol of martyrdom and the power of fate which each person faced under genocide” (cited in Melentyeva, 2009: 197-198). It is important to point out here that ‘Katyn’ is described as a *symbol* of martyrdom, the ‘victims’ are not constituted as martyrs. Yet this demonstrates that the martyrological narrative of ‘Katyn’ holds some sway beyond Poland and that perhaps it is the repetition of the myth which helps sustain it.

Those who lost their lives were not simply ‘victims’ of a war crime, they were heroic, patriotic Poles who refused to give up their patriotism and/or their spirituality. This makes them martyrs in the romantic sense of the word in that they now belong to a historic-mythical narrative which reinforces Poland’s long history of loss and suffering.

Schudson proposes that martyrs are “tangible cultural resources, drawn upon when ‘people may need a symbolic object to define, explain, or galvanize a course of action’” (Schudson, 1989: 156, cited in DeSoucey et al, 2008: 114). In the Polish context, the word martyr is an ideologically loaded term that resonates with (both) the Catholic myth of History as well as the romantic-nationalist myth in which suffering and sacrifice are central to national identity. The terms ‘victim’ and ‘martyr’ both have historical significance for the Poles. Inspired by universal Christian morality, propagators of the romantic narrative of Polish History viewed the Polish nation as the victim of oppressive and immoral regimes. But it was the messianic call to action that glorified the concept of martyrdom. By (re)membering those who died at ‘Katyń’ as martyrs, they are constituted as something more than simply victims of a singular massacre, or victims of a war in which millions of others also died: they symbolise everything that Russia is defined as lacking; that is; patriotism, freedom, Christianity, and of course, Polishness. Just as Poland will not die, nor will these martyrs who are the embodiment of the nation. What are the effects of using the word ‘martyr’ to describe the ‘Katyń’ dead? And whose bodies are (re)membered within this narrative?

The Body Politics of Martyrdom

Narratives of the body are crucial to the (re)construction of the martyr myth. DeSoucey et al argue that “framing the story of execution is an important moment to invoke the body for powerful visual and rhetorical effect” (DeSoucey et al, 2008: 105-106). This is evident in narratives that investigate the reasons why the Polish prisoners were executed. Cienciala et al claim that due to a lack of documents regarding Stalin’s decision to shoot the prisoners, there is much debate as to what Stalin’s motives were. The most common view, held by Polish and Russian historians of the Katyń massacres is that Stalin wanted to destroy the prisoners because they constituted an elite, the potential leaders of a future independent Poland (Cienciala et al, 2007: 141-142). Certainly this view is supported by a number of sources (see for example (Zawodny, 1962: 103-104). As established in the previous chapter, there are

countless references to the status of the men in Polish society. In *Night Never Ending*, Komorowski mentions the status of the men on more than one occasion (Komorowski & Gilmore, 1975: 58, 59, 62, 75, 248). Komorowski writes that:

A vague pattern of Russian intentions was forming in my mind. I thought of the Stalin purges and knew that he had no hesitation about eliminating every man who might be of harm to him. Every dictator fears the person who is intelligent, highly educated, imaginative. Every man in our group fitted in to this composite category – and they wanted to be free (Komorowski & Gilmore, 1975: 58-59).

The ‘Katyn’ ‘victims’ are clearly defined as representatives of a free and independent Poland, and their intelligence is seen as a threat to Stalinist Russia. By claiming that “every dictator fears the person who is intelligent, highly educated, imaginative” Komorowski implies that the Poles were everything that the Russians were not – again (re)iterating their binary oppositionality. Komorowski argues that officers “representing the cream of the Polish intelligentsia, were a threat to [Stalin’s] designs...” (Komorowski & Gilmore, 1975: 248). This is interesting in that it draws on a narrative about what constitutes Poland’s national identity, which is highly masculinised. These narratives are tied in with discourses about freedom, independence and ‘brotherhood’. These men were “the potential leaders of a future independent Poland”, and they were enemies to Russia. ‘Katyn’ is framed as an attempt to destroy a very specific version of Polish national identity, and a nation represented by a male-oriented body politic.

Ewa Gruner whose father, Julian Gruner, was buried in Kharkov,¹³⁸ supports this claim. She argues that both countries neighbouring the Polish Republic (Germany and Russian) had the same goal:

[T]o deprive the Polish nation of its leaders, of its educated and learned people. These neighbours wanted to ‘decapitate’ and ‘debrain’ the country so that Poland would never be reborn. They had been dedicated to the same goals in the 18th century when they partitioned Poland and subsequently laid claim to her as their own for more than 120 years (Kaczorowska, 2006: 33).

¹³⁸ She was also a participant in the exhumation of the graves there.

Gruner's choice of the words 'decapitate' and 'debrain' here is interesting in that it draws on the idea that the masculine is associated with the mind and with rationality. The elimination of Polish men is then read as an attempt to dis(re)member¹³⁹ the nation by removing the 'brains'. The elimination of Polish women would not be read in this same way as women do not represent the nation, nor are they associated with rationality, with the public world of politics, with leadership, and so on. Gruner views Katyn within the context of Polish historiography. She traces the attempt to obliterate Polish national identity back to the partition era. In this way, she views the treatment of Poland during WWII as mimicking the events of the partition era, thereby absorbing 'Katyn' into the dominant narrative of Polish history. Drawing on the rhetoric of messianic discourse, Gruner argues that "this yet unadjudicated and inadequately researched crime has made it difficult for us as a nation to undergo rebirth" (Kaczorowska, 2006: 49), alluding to nineteenth century nationalist discourses about the rebirth of Poland as the 'Christ of Nations'.

The Body as a Site of Resistance

The forms of resistance that took place in the camps are significant to the Polish-Catholic myth of identity. Because all of the victims allegedly resisted the indoctrination process and continued to retain their Polishness, they are now viewed as martyrs. They are not martyrs in the strictly Catholic sense because they were not all religious, and they were not all Catholic. But they refused to give up their Polish nationalism, thus the nineteenth century romantic discourse about martyrdom still works. DeSoucey et al claim that:

The martyr's death must attract public attention, and the martyr must choose to die (or at least be perceived as making the choice) for a belief structure, adding legitimacy to his or her cause (DeSoucey et al, 2008: 101).

¹³⁹ I borrow this term from C. Jacob Hale's article on the ways in which the dead body of murdered transgendered teenager Brandon Teena/Teena Brandon were (re)appropriated by the media and gay and lesbian groups in order to push their own agendas. Hale writes "it sometimes looks as if lesbian and gay organizations and media collude with the mainstream press to consume the flesh of (transsexual or otherwise) transgendered men's corpses" (Hale, 1998: 319).

By highlighting the resistance of a belief system, this event is widely read as another example of the endurance of the Polish spirit, the spirit of struggle, sacrifice, martyrdom, and ultimately redemption. This also explains why the portrait of Our Lady of Katyn could be (re)interpreted as a “holy relic”. This narrativisation derives some of its meaning from the Polish romantic myth. While the man who fashioned the Our Lady of Katyn carving died afterwards, this would not be enough to justify the rhetoric of relic within a purely Catholic narrative. But because this man died while enacting his patriotic duty as a member of the Polish nation, he died a martyr. Not in the Roman Catholic sense of the word, but within the Polish-(*quasi*)Catholic-Nationalist-Romantic narratives of martyrdom.

Resistance to Soviet interrogation techniques can also be explained by Mary Douglas’ argument that the body “is a model which can stand for any bounded system. Its boundaries can represent any boundaries which are threatened or precarious” (Douglas, 1984: 116). In this logic, the bodies of citizens of a particular nation are representative of that nation-state. Therefore it is these bodies that are tortured in times of war. But it is also the body that was punished in the history of Christian persecution. As Castelli points out:

Punishments, meanwhile, were simultaneously bodily, material, and social. Corporal punishments, loss of property, and loss of status emphasized the social and public character of both crime and punishment. The human body was the explicit site of punishment as the full weight of the state’s authority came to be inscribed on the flesh of the criminal. Meanwhile, a second important aspect of Roman penalties is that they not only reflected social status but also transformed status both practically and symbolically (Castelli, 2004: 40-41).

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Zawodny argues that these men represented an ideology that was incompatible with Soviet ideology. According to Zawodny, the NKVD “hoped that a prisoner would lose his own identity” (Zawodny, 1962: 137); that is, the Polish identity. He writes that the prisoners “were told on every occasion that Poland no longer existed. Polish culture was contemptuously ridiculed” (Zawodny, 1962: 137)¹⁴⁰. The individual bodies of these Poles were representative of the broader body politic.

¹⁴⁰ He goes one to say that “The men were attacked as a group and as individuals at the same time. The target was to split the group into separate particles and to destroy identity and identification symbols of each of them, one by one. Subsequently, the men would be ‘rebuilt’ on the NKVD model. All efforts of the NKVD were bent toward these goals” (Zawodny, 1962: 138).

This logic explains how the body can be used as a site of resistance. In *Night Never Ending*, the author describes how during one particular midnight interrogation, his interrogator said to him “Captain Komorowski, are you aware that no matter what you say, we can shoot you as a spy?” To which he replied “I am aware that you can do anything you wish to my body. As for my mind, that is another matter” (Komorowski & Gilmore, 1975: 106). Here, the body is constituted as merely a symbolic vessel for the ideologies of a nation-state, whereas the actual nation exists in the ‘mind’ or the realm of the transcendental. Arguably, this is reminiscent of nineteenth century versions of enacted nationalism. As Porter suggests, “the Polish patriot of the early nineteenth century... removed their nation from the material world in which tyrants could destroy and oppress, and they relocated it onto a transcendent, spiritual plane” (Porter, 2002a: 16). This narrative (re)iterates the association of the Nation-State with the masculine. Without a physical country to call ‘Poland’, these patriots (re)imagined the Polish nation as an ideal that transcended the materiality of everyday life. In a similar way, the prisoners, we are told, enacted their nationhood by resisting attempts to brainwash their minds. The (male) body is merely the material embodiment of nationhood, whereas the (rational, male) mind (which represents the nation), transcends the physical boundaries of the Nation-State. In death, these bodies become a permanent embodiment of these national idea(l)s. In the next section, I will look at the ways in which the (re)membering of these bodies and what they symbolise, takes place within the realm of the feminine, suggesting that the actions of the male body politic would be forgotten if it were not for the (passive) suffering feminine.

Messianism and Gender

The messianic/romantic myth provided the Poles with an established narrative in which they could give meaning to their suffering. If individual struggles are seen as part of the broader historical-mythical tradition of Polish history, then their suffering is not meaningless, rather it serves to situate their stories within the great canon of Polish historiography. The Polish nationalist rhetoric can, then, be seen to provide her citizens with a coping mechanism in response to trauma. By allowing this trauma to be a part of the broader national (and spiritual) discourse, individual suffering transcends more personal experiences such as loss and mourning. Jolluck (2006), however, demonstrates how this discourse can be limiting and exclusive in that only particular sections of Polish society fit into this narrative (that is, the

men). This discourse functions to perpetuate the myth of suffering as redemptive and for the greater good of the nation, whilst ignoring the very real material effects of trauma on individuals (particularly women). So while the myth functions to include women in the national narrative, it functions simultaneously to exclude women from this narrative. In the masculine myth of martyrdom and sacrifice, whose bodies matter?

Jolluck's article focuses on the experiences of Polish women forced to exile in the USSR after the Red Army invasion in 1939. She argues that while women and men played distinctive roles in the war effort:

Individuals of both sexes drew upon a shared national history, suffused with religious meaning, to shape a sustaining identity and a collective hope for the future. Within this context individual suffering acquired national and religious significance, compounding the story of the Polish national tragedy (Jolluck, 2006: 193-194).

For women, the predominantly masculine discourse of national identity had not always been accessible to them as a tool for understanding their own identities. The messianic myth, which incited a national call to action, was directed towards Polish men. Men were encouraged to fight (and if necessary, die) for their nation. In return for their (enacted) sacrifice(s), these men would be immortalised as martyrs and their deaths would be imbued with meaning – a symbolic embodiment of the nation's ideals. Meanwhile, the Polish woman's role was to support the men as they fought for Poland's freedom¹⁴¹. However, during World War II, women found a place within the narrative of national identity. Jolluck argues that:

National identity provided a clear and poignant framework for women to understand and express some of the agony they experienced at the hands of their nation's enemy. Connecting with the struggles of compatriots, past and present, and with Catholic and Polish notions of sacrifice, women could take solace in suffering in the name of the fatherland. They used the nation as a neutral space in which they could find meaning to articulate their hardships, which seemed a

¹⁴¹ Similarly, the position of women in biblical stories of Christ's suffering at the Cross was to support Jesus as he suffered.

fundamental aspect of being Polish. Shared tragedy rendered the women Poles on par with both their ancestors and with men (Jolluck, 2006: 194).

These deeply embedded national myths about Catholicism, martyrdom, sacrifice, and nationhood, provided Polish women with a theoretical framework within which they could (re)interpret their suffering. Up until WWII, women had very little direct contact with their enemies. During WWII, however, women were removed from their homeland and placed into enemy camps. While they were not part of the military action, they could read their situations within the narrative of Poland's fight for freedom. Jolluck notes that like many other Poles, these women "downplay bodily pain" thus "expressing a view of suffering as ennobling and even necessary for a higher goal – an independent and sovereign Polish nation", and in so doing, they appropriated the partition-era ideal of sacrificing oneself on the "altar of the Fatherland" (Jolluck, 2006: 197-198). These narratives allowed these women to see themselves as active participants in the national struggle for freedom. By claiming their suffering within this masculine national narrative the women "effectively de-gender the notion of sacrifice and patriotic devotion... The women consider themselves simply Poles, martyrs for the fatherland" (Jolluck, 2006: 197-198). By de-gendering the notion of sacrifice and patriotism, 'Polish' becomes synonymous with suffering. Individual suffering becomes the nation's suffering. And because sacrifice is the ultimate marker of Polish nationhood, it transcends gender.

However, the problem with this masculine discourse meant that "transgressions of social norms regarding the female body... seemed impermissible in the traditional story of the martyred nation, and therefore were largely silenced" (Jolluck, 2006: 193). Jolluck is referring here to gender-specific offenses such as the shame felt by some Polish women having to share spaces with men¹⁴², invasive body searches, sexual exploitation and rape. In the same way that Porter argues that the Catholic narrative of history is told at the expense of other narratives, the messianic myth of enacted Polish identity focuses on the experience of the nation as a man, while silencing the experiences of women. While the nationalist myth provided women with a language for expressing 'generic' physical suffering, "none of this pain called attention to their female bodies" (Jolluck, 2006: 213). Women could justify being starved or beaten as a result of being Polish, thus intensifying their sense of national identity, and locating themselves within the broader national discourse, as Polish victims of universal

¹⁴² Jolluck refers to this as 'mixing' (Jolluck, 2006: 199-202).

injustice. However, “other forms of indignity and violence... contradicted their identities as Poles” (Jolluck, 2006: 213) and in the end, the concept of the nation “proved so masculinised that it had no room for women to talk about specifically female suffering” (Jolluck, 2006: 214).

This reflects what Moira Gatens writes in her essay ‘Corporeal representation in/and of the body politic’, in which she critiques the use of the term ‘representation’ as it is used in political theory. Gatens proposes that the issue of ‘representation’ in the modern body politic involves an understanding of ‘representation’ where “one body or agent is taken to stand for a group of diverse bodies” (Gatens, 1996: 21). Gatens argues that the metaphor of the unified body politic has achieved two important effects:

First, the artificial man incorporates and so controls and regulates women’s bodies in a manner which does not undermine his claim to autonomy, since her contributions are neither visible nor acknowledged. Second, in so far as he can maintain apparent unity through incorporation, he is not required to acknowledge difference. The metaphor functions to restrict our political vocabulary to one voice only: a voice that can speak of only one body, one reason, and one ethic (Gatens, 1996: 23).

In other words, the masculine body is the privileged body in and of the body politic. It is the masculine body that controls the political narrative and women are invisibilised and silenced within this political discourse.

An example of this in ‘Katyń’ narratives is the treatment of the sole female ‘victim’ of ‘Katyń’ – Second Lieutenant Janina Lewandowska, who was a Lieutenant of the Polish Air Force. Lewandowska is rarely mentioned in historical texts on Katyń and hardly ever named. In Mackiewicz’s book *The Katyń Wood Murders* (1951), he notes that there was one female victim found in the exhumations at Katyń, however he names her only in a footnote (Mackiewicz, 1951: 128). Similarly, Zawodny mentions her in his book, but does not name her. He does however name some of the male victims and provide brief biographical sketches on them (Zawodny, 1962: 22-23), thus cementing the importance of these men in the body politic. This is an example of how History privileges particular bodies, and always leaves others to the margins. This is not to suggest that one narrative is more important than the other because that would merely serve to reverse the oppositional logic that privileges masculine

over feminine, and the universal over the singular. Grand narratives of History are made up of 'grand' events, and the death of one woman may not be significant to the grand narrativisation of 'Katyń'. Furthermore, it is structurally impossible to respond to each singularity within totalising narratives. This is why Lyotard encourages us to bear witness to that which (always) remains unexpressed.

An analysis of the gender politics of martyrdom and mourning reveals that the woman (particularly the mother) plays a significant part in preserving national identity and myths of nationalism. In Mickiewicz's 'Poem to a Polish Mother' (1830), for example, the Polish mother must "prepare her sons for a life of treachery, pain, suffering, and death, for only by refusing to surrender to defeat can the nation keep alive its hope for freedom" (Burnell, 2009: 81). The destiny of the Polish mother is linked to fate of Poland's mother – the Mother Mary. The figure of Our Lady is the penultimate suffering mother who sacrificed her only son to save the sins of the world. The Matka Boska, as patron saint of Poland, is the example which other Polish mothers should follow. The role of the Polish mother/Matka Boska in Mickiewicz's poem is referred to 'Katyń' narratives – for example, the Katyń memorial in Wrocław and the portrait of Our Lady of Katyń. The woman depicted in the Katyń memorial in Wrocław is shown cradling one of the Katyń 'martyrs' as she looks up towards the looming figure of the Angel of Death. Like Mickiewicz's Polish mother, she has prepared her son for this fate. Her subservient position suggests that she is succumbing to her own role in the narrative, and that is to accept that her sacrifice is contributing to a broader narrative that gives meaning to her suffering. The similarities between this image and that of Our Lady of Katyń, where Our Lady is depicted holding the head of a shot soldier, reinforces the shared fate of the Polish mother and the Matka Boska – both women hold the fate of Poland in their hands. In a certain way, they hold its future too – in order for Poland to survive, the memory of these men must be preserved by the women. At the same that that these texts highlight the significance of the role of women in preserving Polish national identity, this role is still a very traditional one in which they play the subservient sufferer to the gallant fighter. As mothers they are (re)producers of the narrative and not the producers of action.

'Katyń 2': Myth and Meaning Making

The narratives I have discussed in this chapter are founded in a mythic, distant past (for example, the story of the Piast peasant that informs the Piast myth and the Polish-Lithuanian

History that informs the Jagiellonian myth). At the heart of these mythic narratives lies a particular interpretation of a past, which is used to (re)generate specific meaning(s) in the present. This process involves the careful selection of events that can be made to fit the narrative, and a rejection of those events that would disrupt the intended effect. The proliferation of narratives in the aftermath of the presidential plane crash in 2010 suggests that these same myths continue to shape ways of (re)interpreting current events in Poland. Drawing on a well-established mythic lexicon resulted in a (re)orientation of the ‘Katyń’ myth, a (re)appropriation of the past onto the present.

When the presidential plane crashed en route to a commemoration of ‘Katyń’ and at a site located at the “very centre of Poland’s historical mythology of sacrifice and martyrdom” (Etkind & Finnin et al, 2012: 132-133), the initial reaction was a “feeling of unity and grief” (Koczanowicz, 2012: 817). It appeared as though the past was repeating itself, and in Polish romantic historiography, history does repeat itself. The grand narrative of Polish History is a repetition of Poland’s suffering at the hands of the enemy. According to Koczanowicz, the crash “seemed to be so perfectly inscribed in Polish fate that it became a confirmation of the necessity of the Messianic harmony of the nation” (Koczanowicz, 2012: 817). For Niżyńska (who believes that the Smolensk crash was an accident and not the result of sabotage), the symbolic signification of the ‘original’ event (‘Katyń’):

activated a deeply rooted, almost knee-jerk emotional response that redirected the crash from the empirical plane of the ‘here and now’ to the realm of symbolic imagination, which culturally linked Polish national identity to the experience of pain, suffering, and loss. I could sense the overwhelming emotional power of this imagination as it moved the crash beyond the dimension of a singular tragic event into an ‘absurd’ realm of repeating the ‘Polish complex’ (Niżyńska, 2010: 470).

Polish historian Andrzej Nowak (2011) notes that it is also the mythology¹⁴³ of sacrifice and suffering which was the motivating factor behind the political rivalry between President Kaczyński and Prime Minister Donald Tusk over the years 2007-10 (Etkind & Finnin et al,

¹⁴³ According to Etkind and Finnin et al, alongside his twin brother Jarosław, Lech Kaczyński was “one of the most politically active proponents of this historical mythology of sacrifice and martyrdom, which imagines Poland as the ‘Christ of nations’ and its suffering at the hands of Russia and Germany as a national ‘Golgotha’” (Etkind & Finnin et al, 2012: 133). Donald Tusk, however, is a “trained historian who in 1987 ridiculed the Polish ‘Romantic-imperial-messianic’ tradition as a ‘pathetic-grim-grotesque theatre of unfulfilled dreams and ungrounded longings’” (Etkind & Finnin et al, 2012: 134).

2012: 132-133). As I mentioned in Chapter 1, PiS was also strongly Catholic, and some of their policies evoked exclusionary sentiments characteristic of the Piast/Polak-Katolik myth, thus demonstrating that these myths do not always exist in clearly defined opposition of one another. However it was the romantic mythology which shaped the way in which the president was (re)membered after the crash, especially via the pro-Law and Justice media which emphasised Kaczyński's "romantic notions of Polish patriotism and Polish national identity" (Niżyńska, 2010: 473). Considered by some to be a leading figure in the "struggle for the memory of Katyń" (Etkind & Finnin et al, 2012: 139), Lech Kaczyński became a "sacrificial figure on a mission to preserve the 'traditional values' of faithfulness to memory" (Niżyńska, 2010: 474) – he had become a martyr. Jarosław Kaczyński encouraged this narrative, using his brother's death to legitimate his post-crash politics, and according to Koczanowicz, the crash became the "central element in the political discussion", and to the proponents of the Law and Justice Party, the relation to the crash became a "kind of litmus test of true patriotism" (Koczanowicz, 2012: 822). The crash became Law and Justice's "foundational myth" (Niżyńska, 2010: 478), inspiring a new 'Katyń' myth. The myth of the 'Smolensk Lie' was propagated by Kaczyński's Law and Justice (PiS) party and turned into a "new political catchphrase" (Etkind & Finnin et al, 2012: 141). By echoing the anti-communist rhetoric of the 'Katyń Lie' phrase, this new myth encouraged a link between the crimes of past Russian governments with this new event, and served to remind patriotic Poles that Russia was the enemy. While this drew on a romantic myth of suffering, it was also reflective of Law and Justice's foreign policy which emphasised a mistrust of Poland's "enemies", in particular, Germany and Russia (Hinsey, 2011: 148).

Not everyone proscribed to the myth of the president's martyrdom and this became clear when it was announced that Lech Kaczyński and his wife would be buried at Wawel Castle in Warsaw. As the "traditional resting place for Polish kings and national heroes" (Hinsey, 2011: 143), this burial would in effect, install Kaczyński "in a pantheon of great Polish leaders and martyrs" (Etkind & Finnin et al, 2012: 139). Many Polish leaders and members of the public opposed the decision (Niżyńska, 2010: 474) and several protestors took the streets wearing fake crowns and bearing banners with slogans such as 'Bury me in Wawel too!' (Etkind & Finnin et al, 2012: 139). It appears that what drives this opposition is a perceived threat to this sacred space – an incorporation of a new myth into a romanticised myth of Polish history. Hinsey suggests that many opponents of the Wawel decision rejected the attempt to "deify a controversial figure" and "hijack Poland's history" (Hinsey, 2011: 150). While Polish history is still romanticised, it seems there is a reluctance to continue to

create martyrs through an uncritical repetition of the messianic/romantic myth. The response to the Wawel decision suggests that in recent years, the romantic myth is losing its popularity. And according to Nowak, it was partly the “continuing associations with narratives of martyrdom and victimhood that cost Kaczyński’s party the election” (Drozdewski, 2012: 316). Kaczyński, however, has not departed from his post-crash politics, endorsing a recent publication reiterating the ‘Katyń 2’ myth and reconfirming his stance on Smolensk at a rally held on the anniversary of the crash (Etkind & Finnin et al, 2012: 150-151). So while the romantic myth may be showing signs of fading, its long lasting legacy continues to inspire new generations of Polish myth makers.

Conclusion

Two centuries have passed since the birth of Polish messianism and yet the figure of the martyr is still called upon in contemporary narratives on Katyń and other events. How is it that a myth that dates back almost two centuries, still informs the way in which Poles try to make sense of post WWII and post-communist narratives? What is it about this narrative that makes it so difficult to shift? A number of current studies suggest that narratives of martyrdom are demonstrative of collective memory¹⁴⁴, and that these narratives are deeply embedded in the collective consciousness of particular groups¹⁴⁵. In the next chapter, I draw on the concept of ‘collective’ memory in order to investigate how myths of suffering are sustained in Polish WWII and Katyń narratives. More importantly, however, I examine why these narratives of suffering persist and how they function to (re)produce specific ways of (re)membering. Niżyńska suggests that it is the “exaltation of victimhood, not victory, that imbues this paradigm with such irresistible power” (Niżyńska, 2010: 479). In the following chapter I will explore this notion further by looking at the emergence of collective victimhood narratives following WWII (something which is not unique to Polish or ‘Katyń’ narratives). I propose that as a nation, Poland needs to reflect on what it gets out of its narrativisation of itself as victim. I agree with Castelli’s suggestion that “the overprivileging of the self-sacrificial dimensions of the “martyr” results in a flattening out, the dangerous eclipsing of

¹⁴⁴ See for example Castelli (2004) and DeSoucey et al (2008).

¹⁴⁵ Elizabeth Castelli, for example, argues that the memory of martyrdom “lies at the heart of a certain practice of culture making” (Castelli, 2004: 196). Poland is by no means the only nation to draw on the figure of the martyr for different political purposes. Castelli study provides examples of contemporary American manifestations of martyrological narratives such as the Columbine massacres, and the murders of Matthew Shepard and Brandon Teena (see Castelli, 2004: 174-193).

the possibility of recognizing the suffering of others” (Castelli, 2004: 203). Ultimately, it seems to me at least, that the problem is not that some groups in Poland will not acknowledge that Poland ever did ‘wrong’ but rather, that a psychic investment in the figure of the victim, the martyr, blinds them to other ways of seeing and remembering other pasts and other futures.

Chapter 3: Memory and Memorialisation

Introduction

In this chapter, I look at the ways in which the discourse of memory is used in ‘Katyń’ narratives, and to what effect. The study of ‘memory’ in post-totalitarian societies is often conceived of as a battle between state-sponsored representations of the past and the (re)production of local, cultural memories. There is a tendency in such studies to view memory as more ‘authentic’ than history in that the use of censorship is perceived as a manipulation of ‘truth’ (a tendency which ‘Katyń’ memory narratives display). Drawing on a Foucauldian model of power as productive, I propose that while censorship can be seen to work against local (or minor) memories, the nature of ‘power’ means that there will always be resistance to dominant narratives. In this chapter, I trace some of the ways in which the archiving of ‘Katyń’ memories took place in Poland via commemoration and rituals of remembrance. I contend, however, that like History, memory is a site of discursive struggle, which is reflective of particular subjective investments and situated knowledges. I propose that what is often referred to as ‘memory’ is another element of narration, an attempt to define some ‘thing’ (that existed in a pure past), within a fixed concept (in a pure present), thus I will often refer to ‘memories’ as memory-narratives.

Defining ‘Memory’

Memory, defined as the act of recollecting the past, has often been thought of as an individual process. However, it has become increasingly commonplace to view memory as a social phenomenon¹⁴⁶. The terms ‘social memory’ or ‘collective memory’ have been used to describe the ways in which communities (re)interpret the ‘past’ via a shared recollection of events. According to Jeffrey K. Olick and Joyce Robbins, since about 1980, “both the public and academia have become saturated with references to social or collective memory” (Olick & Robbins, 1998: 107)¹⁴⁷. Olick and Robbins suggest that while Hugo von Hofmannsthal first

¹⁴⁶ See for example Halbwachs (1992); Bauman (1982); Hobsbawm & Ranger (eds) (1983); Nora (1989); Boyers (1987); Smith (1986); Wright (1985); and Lowenthal (1985).

¹⁴⁷ The study of memory as a social phenomenon in academia encompasses a broad range of disciplines including philosophy, psychology, sociology and history. There is an extensive bibliography of texts which map the field of memory studies. For a succinct overview of memory studies and its many forms and uses, see Olick and Robbins (1998), and also Zelizer (1995).

used the phrase “collective memory” in 1902 (Olick & Robbins, 1998), contemporary uses of the term are usually traced back to Maurice Halbwachs (Olick & Robbins, 1998: 106)¹⁴⁸.

Halbwachs believed that memory is always socially constructed and that individual memories are shaped by the dominant memories of the particular group to which they belong. For Halbwachs, it is in society that people “recall, recognize, and localize their memories” (Halbwachs 1992: 38). Halbwachs developed this idea of collective memory “against Freudian psychoanalysis and its emphasis on the individual unconscious and on the psychic processes of repression and forgetfulness” (Castelli, 2004: 11; see also Olick & Robbins, 1998: 109). For Freud, “the individual’s unconscious acts as a repository for all past experiences” (Olick & Robbins, 1998: 109). Memory, or the act of recollection, is, on the Freudian model, then, an individualised phenomenon. Halbwachs rejected Freudian and other psychological accounts which perceived memory as self-contained and interiorising, by arguing that it is not possible for individuals to remember outside of their social group. Halbwachs writes:

There is no point in seeking where they are preserved in my brain or in some nook of my mind to which I alone have access: for they are recalled by me externally, and the groups of which I am a part at any time gives me the means to reconstruct them (Halbwachs 1992: 38).

Halbwach’s understanding of memory has been highly influential in current uses of ‘memory’ and his insights have led to a popular belief that the idea of an individual memory¹⁴⁹ that is separate to social memory is an “abstraction almost devoid of meaning” (Connerton, 1989: 37). In other words, the ways in which individuals remember is always situated within the context of their social group(s), and memories only acquire *meaning* via reference to broader collective narratives and ways of knowing.

Astrid Erll asserts that the interest in collective memory initiated by Halbwachs subsided after the Second World War (Erll, 2010: 9), and (re)emerged in the (postmodern) “memory boom”¹⁵⁰ of the 1980s. ‘Collective memory’, she writes, “developed into a buzzword not only in the academic world, but also in the political arena, the mass media, and

¹⁴⁸ Barbara Misztal similarly claims that “Halbwach’s assertion that that every group develops a memory of its own past that highlights its unique identity is still the starting point for all research in the field” (Misztal, 2003: 51).

¹⁴⁹ See for example Schudson (1995: 346).

¹⁵⁰ The memory boom is a term that refers to the proliferation of discourses on memory in academia (Olick et al, 2011: 3-4; Rossington & Whitehead, 2010: 5).

the arts” (Erll, 2010: 9). This boom in memory studies¹⁵¹ has led to a “proliferation of more specific terms”¹⁵² (Olick & Robbins, 1998: 112) to define memory¹⁵³. I will predominantly use the terms collective memory and cultural memory as they tend to feature more prominently in ‘Katyń’ narratives on memory. In ‘Katyń’ narratives, collective memory is used to refer to the ways in which narratives about the past operate within groups or communities who share an (imagined) sense of belonging to that group. Such groups may be identified on the basis of narratives of nationhood, race, religion, ethnicity, and so on. In this chapter, I am referring specifically to groups that share a particular version of nationhood (or national identity).

Cultural memory is often used to describe the (re)production of collective memories through texts or cultural artefacts (from written texts to commemorative practices, monuments, memorials, and so on). It is this definition I will be using in order to look at some of the ways in which Polish collective memories are (re)interpreted and sustained in particular objects or practices, particularly in order to “recall fateful events in the history of the collective” (Kannsteiner, 2002: 182)¹⁵⁴. Törnqvist-Plewa, for instance, has discussed how the Solidarity movement revived the romantic legacy through the use of “romantic symbols, myths and models” (Törnqvist-Plewa, 1994: 71-72). The ‘memory’ of the Romantic era was invoked within a culture that did not ‘witness’ the events of the era, but who nonetheless shared a collective interpretation this ‘history’, and therefore recognised the meanings associated and embedded within particular cultural signs and symbols. Of course there are problems with this approach in that the logic of the sign is not always fixed in the present, and meaning is always open to future (re)interpretations.

¹⁵¹ Rossington and Whitehead (2010) provide a succinct summary of the contributing historical and social factors to this renewed interest in memory. They write that: “Postmodernism focused on the perception that it was no longer possible for the historical past to be retrieved, that the acceleration and commodification of history had resulted in amnesia or, at best, an ideologically motivated recuperation of the past. Developments in technology had led to a sophisticated engagement with and theorisation of virtual memory; simultaneous to this, many written and visual archives were opening up and revealing memories previously unavailable while nations newly independent of the Soviet Union sought self-definition by negotiating often complex, conflicted and troubled pasts. As the century drew to a close, there was an increasing concern with how best to remember the traumatic instances that had punctuated its history – including, but not limited to, wars and genocides – and the vicissitudes of remembering and forgetting were painfully played out in the Truth and Reconciliation Commissions of South Africa, Guatemala and Chile” (2010: 5).

¹⁵² For example: official memory, vernacular memory, public memory, popular memory, local memory, family memory, historical memory, cultural memory, and so on (Olick & Robbins, 1998: 112).

¹⁵³ Rossington and Whitehead point suggests that these multiple definitions suggest that “memory has proved itself too overwhelming a topic to be encompassed by a single definition” (2010: 3).

¹⁵⁴ This draws on Kannsteiner and Jan Assmann’s definition of cultural memory as a “body of reusable texts, images, and rituals specific to each society in each epoch, whose ‘cultivation’ serves to stabilize and convey that society’s self-image” (Assmann, 1995, cited in Kansteiner, 2002: 182).

My interest in studying the processes through which the ‘past’ is transformed into memory (either individual or collective), is shaped by a genealogical method that Steve Anderson describes as an “archaeology”. The aim of this approach is “not simply to uncover something that has been buried, but to discover how and why additional layers have been built on top of it” (Anderson, 2001: 23). As a component of what Anderson calls ‘cultural’ memory, the past is “less a sequence of events than a discursive surface, readable only through layers of subsequent meanings and contexts” (Anderson, 2001: 23). Thus the “formation and function” of memories are “historically and contextually” situated (Anderson, 2001: 23). I am not looking at Polish and Russian narratives of memory in this chapter in order to uncover ‘lost’ or ‘authentic’ memories. I contend that like ‘History’, memory is “best understood as a site of discursive struggle” (Anderson, 2001: 22), and so I view these accounts as reflective of particular subjective investments and subjugated/situated knowledges. I am also critical of the conflation between memory and narrative in which memory is seen as the key to a full (re)presentation of the past, out of which we create our narratives¹⁵⁵. I maintain that (re)interpretations of the “past” take place within the constraints of the present (Sepúlveda Santos, 2002: 173), and so memory is never detached from the act of narrativisation, it is part of the narrative. I propose an understanding of ‘memory’ as another form of narrative, and like all inherited concepts, it is fraught with assumptions and contradictions.

History and Memory

Barbara A. Misztal claims that since the 1980s, Memory Studies has been “challenging history’s monopoly over the past” (Misztal, 2003: 103)¹⁵⁶. Klein suggests that the reason for this may have something to do with “an increasing discontent with historical discourse” (Klein, 2000: 145). Misztal asserts that prior to the nineteenth century, History was traditionally conceived of as the telling of stories, which relied on memories. It was assumed that “memory reflects what actually happened, and history reflects memory” (Burke cited in Misztal, 2003: 100). Memory and History were seen to inform and complement each other. It

¹⁵⁵ Derrida suggests that “the past does not exist. It will never have existed in the present, never been present” (Derrida, 1986: 58-59), encouraging an interrogation of the use of ‘memory’ “as a unit of meaning, as that which links memory to narrative or to all the uses of the word “histoire” (story, history, *Historie*, *Gesichichte*, etc.)” (Derrida, 1986: 11).

¹⁵⁶ Similarly, Alon Confino and Allan Megill have noted that ‘memory’ has become the “leading term in our new cultural history” (cited in Klein, 2000: 128). Again there exists a large volume of literature in this field, but some notable texts include Ricoeur (2004), Winter (1995); White (1973); Le Goff (1992).

was not until the nineteenth century that “historians attempted to advance history as an autonomous discipline by promoting the application of scientific methods and rejecting any connection with memory” (Miształ, 2003: 100). History became an authoritative discourse, claiming to be an objective representation of ‘truth’. But as Foucault has argued, in order to “invoke truth, laws of essences, and eternal necessity”, the historian must also “invoke objectivity, the accuracy of facts, and the permanence of the past” (Foucault, 1977a: 158). ‘Objectivity’ and ‘truth’ were merely discursive (re)productions necessary in order to maintain the legitimacy of historical narratives¹⁵⁷.

For many scholars of memory, memory can act as a theoretical tool to understand why some narratives of history dominate over others¹⁵⁸. Writers such as Hayden White (1978) and Foucault (1977a) provided significant insights into this criticism of History in that both authors “pointed to the hidden ideological biases built into any model of representation” (Miształ, 2003: 102). Both theorists argued that the historian writing the History and the various subject positions he or she inhabits informs History. In other words, historians are part of the discourses within which they write and their knowledge is informed by dominant discourses, ‘memories’, dispositions, and so on. Connerton claims that despite their insistence that History is a representation of facts, nineteenth century historians were themselves “giving shape to the memory of a particular culture” (Connerton 1989: 16). According to Miształ, the ‘selective’ History produced by traditional historians in the nineteenth century was influenced by the rise of nationalism, and this History found its way into society through “textbooks, speeches and lectures”, thus facilitating the “construction of national memory” (Miształ, 2003: 101). This can be seen in my previous critique of Polish History and (national) identity in which advocates of Polish messianism developed a mythical version of Polish History which reflected the concerns of the day, and contributed to a collective narrative of nationhood.

The presentist approach to memory (also referred to as the ‘invention of tradition perspective’ or ‘theory of the politics of memory’) is characterised by a belief that “the past is moulded to suit present dominant interests” (Miształ, 2003: 56), and Hobsbawm and Ranger’s *Invention of Tradition* (1983) is often viewed as the starting point for this perspective. In this text, Hobsbawm and Ranger focus on Enlightenment narratives on democracy and

¹⁵⁷ For a deeper insight into the mechanisms and uses of ‘objectivity’, see Peter Novick’s (1988) sustained critique of the role of ‘objectivity’ within the American historical tradition.

¹⁵⁸ Olick and Robbins mention a number of texts that debate the content and meaning of history in several nations including Germany (Maier, 1988); France (Kaplan, 1995); and Israel (Ram, 1995) (see Olick & Robbins, 1998: 133).

nationalism that emerged in late nineteenth-century Europe in order to analyse the role of “dominant narratives or official ideologies in establishing national cohesion” (Misztal, 2003: 56-57). This theory takes a ‘top-down’ approach to memory, emphasising the “role of the state in shaping collective memory” (Misztal, 2003: 56-57) as a method of control. Hobsbawm and Ranger assert that the response to the decline of traditional political structures led to the invention of traditions that could “symbolize societal cohesion, legitimize new institutions, statuses and relations of authority, and inculcate new beliefs and values” (Misztal, 2003: 57). According to this model, the State creates ‘memories’ which are inscribed and disseminated via the invention of traditions. The “strength of nationalism”, observed Guibernau, lies in this ability to “create a sense of identity” (Guibernau, 1996: 142, cited in Bell, 2003:66). While I agree, to some extent, with the assertion that the nation-state plays a significant role in shaping collective memory-narratives, this approach still maintains that there is a pure or true past that exists, and that this political manipulation of the ‘past’ conceals this past as though it were a fixed ‘thing’. But there is something else going on here that is equally as important and that is, that it is not simply case of ‘us’ and ‘them’, the State, and the people. Rather, the State is comprised of ‘the people’: we are all implicated in systems of power/knowledge, and we all contribute – whether consciously or not – to the narrativisation(s) of national identity.

Moreover, this understanding of memory as a state-controlled apparatus does not take into account the minor narratives which take place within communities and which may not necessarily subscribe to the dominant version of the nation proposed by the State. Foucault provides an alternative model of power (and power relations), which addresses this problem. Hobsbawm and Ranger’s account of memory suggests that power is a repressive force. While Foucault acknowledges that dominant narratives exist which produce certain regimes of truth, power, in his schema, is not simply repressive, it also productive¹⁵⁹, power “traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse” (Foucault, 1980: 119). Where there is power, there is resistance (Foucault, 1978: 95), and the possibility for the (re)production of counter-narratives.

In some recent scholarship, memory seems to have taken on some of the characteristics traditionally associated with History (as a counter to the vicissitudes and subjective status of memory). In *History and Memory* (1992), Jacques Le Goff writes:

¹⁵⁹ Foucault proposes that power should be “considered as a productive network which runs through the whole social body, much more than as a negative instance whose function is repression” (Foucault, 1980: 119).

Recent, naive trends seem virtually to identify history with memory, and even to give preference in some sense to memory, on the ground that it is more authentic, 'truer' than history, which is presumed to be artificial and, above all, manipulative of memory (Le Goff, 1992: xi).

In this view, memory is seen as a more reliable source of 'truth' and in this sense is unlike History, which is regarded as tainted by bias. This view is shared by Halbwachs who distinguishes between "collective memory (as social construction) and objective history (as a positivist narrative)" (Castelli, 2004: 21). History is conceived as "abstract, totalizing, and 'dead', and memory as particular, meaningful, and 'lived'" (Erl, 2010: 6). In the essay "Historical Memory and Collective Memory" (1950), Halbwachs discusses the difference between the two terms thus:

History can be represented as the universal memory of the human species. But there is no universal memory. Every collective memory requires the support of a group delimited in space and time. The totality of past events can be put together in a single record only by separating them from the memory of the groups who preserved them and by severing the bonds that held them close to the psychological life of the social milieus where they occurred, while retaining only the group's chronological and spatial outline of them (Halbwachs, cited in Castelli, 2004: 18-19).

For Halbwachs, then, the transformation of collective memories into historical memories, or into History, is a process of abstraction and in-authentication. However, it must be noted that 'memory' does not necessarily act as a counter to the "untruths" of empirical history since memory itself is never unmediated, but rather, it is also a product of particular regimes of truth.

There are a number of historians who claim that there is a fundamental difference between history and memory. Pierre Nora, like Halbwachs, sees memory and history as "in many respects opposed" and describes memory as "life, always embodied in living societies and as such in permanent evolution" (Nora, 1996b: 3), whereas history is "the reconstruction, always problematic and incomplete, of what is no longer" (Nora, 1996b: 3). Like Hobsbawm

and Ranger, Nora also maintains that the nation “played a central role in the operation and organisation of collective memory” (Rossington & Whitehead, 2010: 8). However, at the end of the nineteenth century, the “acceleration of history” – through “globalization, democratisation and the advent of mass culture” (Nora, 1996b: 3) – has “undermined society’s anchoring in the past and has brought about an age of historical forms of representation” (Misztal, 2003: 104). As a result we have countless sites or realms of memory (or *lieux de mémoire*). For Nora, these *lieux de mémoire* begin with the sense that there is “no spontaneous memory” and therefore we must “deliberately create archives, maintain anniversaries, organize celebrations, pronounce eulogies, and notarize bills because such activities no longer occur naturally” (Nora, 1989: 12; Nora, 1996b: 7). Nora’s framework suggests a nostalgic longing for the state-sponsored narratives of the past that Hobsbawm and Ranger claim were ‘invented’. Nora laments the decline of the nation-state and the grand narratives of history (where the three main producers of archives were the family, the church, and the state (Nora, 1989: 14; Nora, 1996a: 2), arguing that ritual culture provided a more ‘authentic’ ‘lived’ experience. The absence of these solid structures in our current contemporary climate has led to a democratisation of history and decentralisation of memory. Nora claims that this “passage from memory to history” means that the demand for history has “largely overflowed the circle of professional historians” (Nora, 1989: 15; Nora, 1996b: 10) and everyone from the “most minor historical actor” to “his witnesses, his spouse, and his doctor” (Nora, 1989: 14; Nora, 1996b: 10) feel compelled to record their histories. For Foucault, this de-privileging of ‘authentic’, state-sponsored histories, is significant to the (re)production of local knowledges and narratives of history, and (re)distributions of power.

Foucault argues that “it is the appearance of what people know at a local level” that made the critique of traditional History possible (Foucault, 2003: 8). In *Society Must Be Defended* (2003), Foucault uses the term “subjugated knowledges” to refer to:

a whole series of knowledges that have been disqualified as nonconceptual knowledges, as insufficiently elaborated knowledges: naive knowledges, hierarchically inferior knowledges, knowledges that are below the required level of erudition or scientificity (Foucault, 2003: 7).

Subjugated knowledges are those that have been left to the margins of the ‘grand narratives’ of History, which privilege particular bodies and historical events. Foucault refers to these

subjugated knowledges as ‘memories’, and suggests that we give the name ‘genealogy’ to this “coupling together of scholarly erudition and local memories” (Foucault, 2003: 8). It is important to note that Foucault does not set up memory as opposed to – rather than being in line with and supporting – History. By using the word ‘memory’ (which implies fluidity), as opposed to History (which implies finality), these ‘subjugated knowledges’ are more akin to ‘genealogies’ in that they move away from the perspective of History as a singular narrative, towards a retelling of *histories* as multiple memories. This relationship between History and memory, or History and genealogy, is not a dichotomous one in which one is more authentic or more innocent than the other. Foucault is suggesting that we consider the local knowledges that may run counter to and/or exist alongside grand narratives of History that attempt to explain everything via a single universalising narrative. These counter-memories, or subjugated knowledges do not simply co-exist with dominant memory in a binary fashion, they resist, (re)interpret, and (re)member. There are not two different types of knowledges, but rather, the ‘dominant’ and the ‘marginalised’ are mutually constitutive, inextricable, and so on, whilst at the same time, irreducible to one another. I demonstrated this in the previous chapter in reference to the Jagiellonian and Piast myths that inform narratives of Polish nationalism.

Historical Memory and the Myth of Pure Unmediated Memory

As the discussion thus far has shown, for some, memory holds the promise of challenging conventional Historical narratives, and for some, even rectifying them such that the ‘truth’ eventually emerges. This tendency can be seen in Polish WWII and Katyn literature where the terms history, memory, and identity are often evoked in order to argue that Poland’s History is a forgotten one. The assumption is that because so much Polish ‘cultural history’ was ‘lost’ under foreign rule, there is a need to (re)cover and (re)member this History in order to (re)establish a sense of Polish identity. The ‘thing’ that is being restored is often referred to as ‘historical memory’, which is viewed as an untarnished ‘truth’.

The term ‘historical memory’ has emerged as a response to the crises of historicism, which acknowledges that History is biased, and this term is often used to challenge ‘dominant’ written histories. Post-communist narratives of History draw on the definition of ‘historical memory’ offered by Halbwachs. Memory is seen as authentic and History (at least as it was narrated under communism) is incorrect, and at odds with local, historical memory.

Consequently, historical memory is often conflated with the revelation of ‘truth’ after the collapse of communism. Tina Rosenberg exemplifies this tendency in the following quote:

In the five years since the fall of the Berlin wall, the past has once again metamorphosed. On the grand scale this has largely meant a restoration of truth and historical memory as governments expose communist crimes (Rosenberg, 1995: xv-xvi).

Rosenberg uses the term ‘historical memory’ to refer to what Halbwachs calls ‘collective memory’ (a shared interpretation of the past). However, the focus is on the restoration of lost ‘histories’ within the collective memory. Historical memory serves the same function as it does in Halbwachs’ definition, that is, it collates memories into a structured narrative, but it does not have the same negative connotations as it does for Halbwachs. For Halbwachs, historical memory is more akin to History as a totalising discourse – separate to, but still informed by memory. This construction of historical memory as synonymous with “truth” is linked to the perceived effects of censorship, in that in Soviet-occupied territories, ‘histories’ were rewritten to reflect the preferred Soviet narrative. Rosenberg argues that while “distorting history to serve political ends” (Rosenberg, 1995: xv) is not a new phenomena, “no one did this more thoroughly than the Communists” (Rosenberg, 1995: xv). Thus the “struggle to define the past is one of the most important ways eastern Europeans compete for control of the present” (Rosenberg, 1995: xiv). As I will go on to demonstrate, the imperative to define the past informs Polish ‘Katyń’ discourses. Historical memory is used to describe a particular version of Polish History – which is seen as more ‘authentic’ and ‘true’ – and which functions in keeping with and in order to produce a very specific narrative of event(s).

Collective Victimhood Identities

The relationship between memory and identity is also the topic of much discussion within the field of Memory Studies¹⁶⁰. Gillis (1994), for example, argues that the “core meaning of any individual or group identity... is sustained by remembering; and what is remembered is defined by the assumed identity” (Gillis, 1994: 3). According to this claim, participation in shared memories provides the individual with access to a sense of collective identity. Gillis

¹⁶⁰ See for example Zerubavel (1996) and Schwartz (1996).

gives the name ‘national memory’ to the collection of memories, which, he suggests, are “shared by people who have never seen or heard of one another, yet who regard themselves as having a common history” (Gillis, 1994: 7). Dianne Enns (2007), however, maintains that the increase in ethnopolitical conflicts towards the end of the twentieth century suggests that identity is a dangerous category. Enns proposes that a close analysis of the discourses that operate in order to produce particular narratives of identity is vital in order to better understand the causes of interethnic conflicts and to offer a “way out of the cycles of violence which identity struggles can perpetuate” (Enns, 2007: 2). She writes:

Much of the literature seems to take for granted that human attachment to an ethnic identity category is natural and therefore stops short of sufficiently interrogating the difference between an identity that is experienced as cultural, and one that becomes politicized, pitted in stark relief against another or several other identity categories (Enns, 2007: 2).

The assumption that ethnic identities are innate, and that our attachment to these identities is naturally occurring, means that these narratives of identity remain unchallenged. It is more productive to understand the ways in which these identities are shaped by and within particular situated knowledges, in order to critically interrogate the effects of various (re)enactments of identity. Polish and Russian narratives of History for instance, have a tendency to reinforce the oppositional differences between the two nations, as a reminder of their History of conflict.

An example of this linking of history, memory and identity can be seen on the front page of the guide to the IPN’s website where there is a quote that reads: “Our History Creates Our Identity” (*Institute of National Remembrance*, 2009). This (re)iterates the idea that Polish national identity (as a singular, identifiable phenomenon) is informed by a very specific version of the past, one that we find in the kinds of narratives I engaged with in the previous chapter. Rosenberg summarises this idea arguing that throughout History, Poland’s borders have “fluctuated so wildly that for decades at a time the country disappeared from the map and existed solely in the minds of the Poles” (Rosenberg, 1995: xvi). As a result, the Poles have developed a “keen sense that having no geography, history must take its place” (Rosenberg, 1995: xvi). WWII has particular significance for the Poles and Polish narratives of memory. Orla-Bukowska argues that it is WWII which “weighs heaviest on and delineates

Polish national memory” (Orla-Bukowska, 2006: 177) since it was during this period that “a social and spiritual community fell apart catastrophically” (Orla-Bukowska, 2006: 200). The entire “symbolic universe” (Orla-Bukowska, 2006: 200) of Poland was destroyed (including the Polish army, the government, the landscape, and many families who were torn apart due to deportation, death or migration. This is illustrative of Kansteiner’s claim that “our crises of memory are concomitant with crises of identity” (Kansteiner, 2003: 184).

Drawing on Assmann’s definition of cultural memory as a body of useable texts, it appears that what underpins these (re)interpretations of WWII in Polish narratives is that Polish *cultural* memory was threatened by the dissolution of so many cultural ‘objects’ which embodied a particular idealised version of Polish identity. Komorowski echoes this idea. He writes:

The Germans and the Russians had virtually destroyed the Polish ego. Free Poles were homeless and they were in danger of losing touch with Polish culture. The Communists were rewriting Polish history, destroying Polish thought, Polish nationalism, and Polish individualism. All signs of the old Poland were being erased (Komorowski & Gilmore, 1975: 248).

Such losses feed into the constitution of a narrative of national identity of Polish victimhood, one in which Polish people tend to have huge psychic investments, and which, as a result, is particularly difficult to shift. In the previous chapter, I suggested that for the last two centuries at least, there has been a tendency in dominant narrativisations of Polish identity to favour those narratives that emphasise a collective myth of victimhood. The destruction of Polish culture that took place during and after the WWII conjured up the ‘memory’ of the destruction of Polish culture in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, enabling a (re)appropriation of the messianic myth and the projection of a Polish national identity as always and already victimised. Let us say for a moment that this ‘past’ really existed, its (re)emergence throughout the twentieth century has involved people who could not have actually witnessed that ‘past’. What this illustrates is that ‘memory’ is not an unmediated retrieval of the past but another element of narrative. The Polish investment in the messianic myth enabled a (re)interpretation of the ‘present’ via a (re)construction of the ‘past’. The victim narrative has (re)emerged in WWII and ‘Katyn’ narratives, emphasising the double victimisation of the Polish nation and its people.

The narrative of collective victimhood, is not, however, uniquely Polish. Drawing on a definition of memory as a “set of representations of the past that are constructed by a given social group” (Confino, 2005: 48), Alon Confino identifies a trend in post-WWII narratives that focus on a remembrance of collective victimhood (Confino, 2005: 48). Confino argues that prior to the Second World War it was not uncommon for wars to be remembered heroically. The memory of the Second World War however, was one that “emphasized victimhood as a pillar of national identity” (Confino, 2005: 48). He writes:

Simplistic heroism could not quite capture the war experience, characterized by the humiliating occupation of proud nations, anguished or willing collaboration, forced labor, economic austerity, carpet bombing, persecution, deportations, extermination, and the transformation of combat heroes of previous wars into ordinary executioners (Confino, 2005: 48).

The heroic war figure was no longer the most appropriate framework within which to remember the war due to the nature and scale of atrocities committed during WWII. Zhurzhenko notes that this is particularly evident in post-Soviet societies. She identifies a shift from “‘triumph to trauma’; in other words, a shift from the dominant narrative of heroic mass sacrifice and courage to multiple narratives of victimhood and suffering” (Zhurzhenko, 2012). Furthermore, Zhurzhenko claims that not only are “‘victims’ voices welcomed and encouraged” within this climate, “‘victims’ perspectives of historical events are often presented as the only moral and therefore legitimate ones” (Zhurzhenko, 2012). It appears that it is the experience of suffering which gives the victim narrative its moral legitimization. To be established as a victim is to be on the side of passivity/morality/right and truth, and so these narratives often remain unchallenged.

Freedom to Remember

Censorship is an important contextually specific element in the narrating of History and one that may not pertain to the histories of countries in which censorship was not as pronounced. As established in Chapter 1, many historians maintain that in order to control literary communication throughout the Poland, the Polish Communists implemented a sophisticated system of censorship, and ‘Katyn’ became a forbidden topic within this political climate.

Narratives that contradicted the official Russian version of ‘Katyn’ were silenced and as a result, a Polish ‘Katyn’ narrative was ‘erased’. Louis Fitzgibbon for example, writes:

Years passed and the horror of Katyn receded in men’s minds... Few people knew anything about the case and fewer cared. The dogma of silence was winning, and Katyn was slowly sinking into oblivion, buried almost as deeply as the victims (Fitzgibbon, 1972: 4).

However, as I go on to demonstrate, there are some narratives that suggest that the more Katyn narratives were repressed, the more the memory of it flourished. Ewa Thompson’s article “Ways of Remembering: the Case of Poland” (2005) is illustrative of the tendency within these narratives on censorship to view ‘memory’ as pure and authentic. Reiterating Paul Ricoeur’s thesis that History overly ‘remembers’ some events at the expense of others¹⁶¹, Thompson argues that Poland’s history remains “unacknowledged” in the canon of European history (Thompson, 2005: 1). This is problematic for Thompson who believes that if an ethnic or cultural group is excluded from dominant historical narratives, it can make the group appear “dumb and unable to articulate itself” thus leaving “it open to being defined by others” (Thompson, 2005: 1). Thompson claims:

The freedom to remember and to preserve the memory of the past is a condition necessary for a civilized society to exist. Without the freedom to remember we lose our ability to put events in perspective and to understand the present state of the world (Thompson, 2005: 1).

Thompson’s understanding of remembering is located within a definition of memory as the ability to retrieve the ‘past’ as an absolute, self-contained ‘truth’ in the present, and an assumption that this retrieval is accompanied by “knowledge and the promise of freedom” (Sepúlveda Santos, 2002: 172). What becomes clear throughout Thompson’s paper is that the ‘freedom to remember’ pertains to a very specific ‘narrative’ of Polish History and identity – one that emphasises the (double) victimisation of the Polish nation.

¹⁶¹ See Ricoeur (2004).

Thompson defines three levels of memory: communal, collective and cultural. Communal memory is defined as the authentic, lived memory of those who actually witness or experienced certain events first-hand (Thompson, 2005: 1), whereas collective memory is used to refer to the way in which particular groups collectively interpret the past. For Thompson, collective memory differs from communal memory in that it is acquired indirectly and functions to rework and ideologise communal memories by incorporating these narratives into pre-existing “national mythologies” (Thompson, 2005: 1). Collective memory, as she understands it, is closely related to cultural memory, which she describes as a “civilized memory” that “rearranges events of the past into categories that become part of one's cultural identity” (Thompson, 2005: 2). This process, Thompson argues, is particularly important for communities who feel “slighted or not properly recognized” (Thompson, 2005: 2). Thompson makes these distinctions in order to argue that “Poles have faced difficulties in partaking of the process of transformation of memories” (Thompson, 2005: 2) – from collective memory to cultural memory. For Thompson (and others), this process was “thwarted by the colonial occupation of Poland after the Second World War and earlier, in the period of the so-called partitions of Poland” (Thompson, 2005: 2). As Thompson sees it, Polish cultural memory has been ‘repressed’ by foreign invaders with no investment in maintaining Polish culture. Thompson believes that the process of memory transformation is necessary for Poles to (re)gain their identity, (re)write their History, and thus restore a palatable narrative of memory.

From a poststructuralist perspective, there is a fundamental problem with the ontology she deploys and with the assumption that the truth exists but has not, as yet been told, and that once it is, everything will (presumably) be restored to order. However, it should be noted that censorship was a practice that was integral to her embodied History. It is perhaps then understandable that she has an investment in a politics of ‘truth’. For ‘outsiders’ on the other hand – for those of us who have not grown up in a context where censorship was overt and quotidian – the politics of truth may well appear much less attractive and much more problematic. In other words, context inevitably impacts on and shapes what looks like viable political praxis. Given this, her hierarchy of remembering/memories makes much more sense than it does out of context, or in a context such as ours. Even if we remain critical of the notion of truth or of unmediated experience, it is possible to see that the depoliticisation of events in and through the construction of politically sanctioned narratives and silences probably did occur in post-Soviet countries in a way that it did not occur in other places. As such, we could read Thompson’s “freedom to remember” as not necessarily some naïve belief

in the accessibility of “pure past,” but the sovereignty to institutionalise the past with all the “manipulations” that such institutionalisation entails. The ‘freedom to remember’ could be interpreted as Foucauldian resistance to subjugation of knowledges – a resistance to the colonising effects of state censorship – and another example of the various mechanisms of power that function to produce a variety of ‘Katyn’ knowledges and truth-effects.

At the same time that it is crucial that we acknowledge that state censorship did occur and that it had real material effects, an overly simplistic focus on censorship can end up emphasising what was prohibited and tends to ignore the many and varied ways in which resistance to formal prohibitions took place. In telling what is essentially one side of the story, by reducing the complexities of memory to the narrative of censorship, such narratives function to (re)produce a particular model of power, subjectivity, and sociality and so on. While speaking openly in public may well have been a dangerous thing to do, this does not necessarily mean that nobody ever found ways to ‘speak’ of their losses with others. Thompson herself acknowledges that there were many ways in which Poland remembered “by various means that bypassed the orderly archiving of memories taking place in free countries” (Thompson, 2005: 3). And in the following sections, I will look at some of the ways in which the ‘archiving of memories’ took place, demonstrating that power is not always ‘repressive’ and that people negotiate prohibition in interesting, innovative, and often subversive ways.

Pain and Erasure

If we look at the personal accounts of some of the people most directly affected by the killings, one finds that the censorship narrative influences individual memory-narratives of ‘Katyn’. For example, Ewa Gruner, writing about her father Julian Gruner, says that ever since she was a child she had “amputated” him from her memory, he was “like an annoying painful memory. All the time he was someone we were forbidden to talk about as if he had been a criminal of sorts” (Kaczorowska, 2006: 37). Furthermore, she states, “after the war his name was withdrawn from all the sporting annals. He ceased officially to exist because he had died as the victim of a crime wrapped in the conspiracy of silence” (Kaczorowska, 2006: 38). This autobiographical excerpt could be used to illustrate the ways in which individual memories are shaped by collective memories. Gruner’s anecdote could be read as a manifestation of Halbwach’s theory that “it is through their membership of a social group...

that individuals are able to acquire, to localise and recall their memories” (Connerton, 1989: 36). For Gruner, the dominant narrativisation of ‘Katyń’ meant that her father had ‘ceased to exist’ as a member of the postwar Polish community, and as a result, she claims, he ceased to exist within her own memories. It is interesting that Gruner uses the word “amputation” to describe the way in which her father’s name had been removed from her memory, and dis(re)membered from collective memory. When a limb is removed, often the person from whom it has been removed experiences a ‘phantom limb’. Oliver Sacks, a neurologist, describes a ‘phantom’ as “a persistent image or memory of part of the body, usually a limb, for months or years after its loss” (Sacks, 1970: 37). What this suggests is that even the most intense attempts at the annihilation¹⁶² of people, events, difference, alterity, and so on, will necessarily ‘fail’. Gruner suggests that by enforcing silence, by silencing the names of these men, these men were erased from the collective memory of Poland, and they were forgotten. But her own account of her relationship to her father seems to challenge this claim. The names of those who died may have disappeared from official records and official histories, but if Polish national identity is, as I have argued, primarily messianic, then loss (and the figures of that loss) are, in fact, integral to cultural memory rather than erased from it.

While Gruner’s father may have been absent from ‘official’ records, he was clearly never absent from her ‘memory’. The fact that she writes about him is evidence that she did not actually forget him: he was “like an annoying painful memory”, a sort of phantom limb which whilst no longer present as such, continues to assert its (non)presence. What we witness here, then, is a complex relationship between official narratives and individual memories, which troubles a dichotomous view of remembering and forgetting. On the one hand, the former shapes ‘individual’ memories. But on the other hand, and at the same time, ‘individual’ memories work against the former, resisting subjugation to the dominant narrative. This is an example of Foucauldian resistance as never ‘pure’, but nevertheless, effective and significant. While censorship can be seen to work against collective memory, the nature of ‘power’ means that there will always be resistance to the dominant memory and the (re)production of subjugated knowledges. As Wendy Brown explains it, a genealogical account of subjectivity acknowledges that we are “more capable of intervening in our own histories, than is conceivable through historiographies that preserve some elements of humans and of time as fixed in nature” (Brown, 1998: 36). In saying that there will always be resistance to dominant regimes of truth via multiple (re)productions of meaning and memory,

¹⁶² It has been argued by many Katyń historians that every trace of the victims was to be eliminated. See for example: Fitzgibbon (1975, ii) and Allen (2010, xi).

one must also acknowledge that there can be no single, true, unmediated version of Polish History (or historical memory).

More than that however, it is almost as if the not being allowed to speak of her father, the not being allowed to openly remember him, in fact contributes in the most profound ways to the creation of a memory of him. The amputated limb is illustrative of Nietzsche's claim that memories of loss and pain are more persistent than other memories. This is an effect of what Nietzsche called a "mnemotechnics of pain". This refers to the idea that memories are forged when events are most painful, and it is only "that which *hurts* incessantly is remembered" (Nietzsche, 1996: 42). For Gruner, it is almost as though the pain of losing her father heightened the memory of him, rather than erasing it. This can also be applied to romantic Polish narratives of Katyń and World War II in which the pain of losing their nation and statehood; drives the proliferation of narratives on memory, rather than obliterating them. This tendency towards a heightened (re)membering of pain is also suggested in narratives that refer to the suffering caused by 'Katyń' as a wound in the collective memory. Paul, for instance, argues that the Polish government "never recovered from the wound [Stalin] inflicted and the pain of it has been etched deeply in the collective memory of the Polish people" (Paul, 2010: xi). This metaphor is also used in personal narratives. Grabowski writes, "I have had to live with a wound in my memory" (cited in Kaczorowska, 2006: 126). On the one hand, the emphasis on suffering and injury (re)calls Christian imagery (the stigmata, in particular), thus linking the 'Katyń' narrative to the messianic myth of martyrdom, and the Polish-Catholic myth of History. But this language also calls to mind Nietzsche's theory of memory, which proposes that painful memories are the ones that we are most likely to (re)member. By using the word 'wound', these writers are drawing on a discourse of physical pain to describe the suffering they felt as a result of the killings. Wounds refer to injuries that tear or puncture the skin and as such, wounds are likely to leave a scar – or, if you will, a trace. The initial wound ceases to cause pain once it becomes a scar, but the scar remains with us as a trace of the (painful) event. The implications of the word 'wound' to describe the effects of 'Katyń' suggest that this attempted erasure has failed insofar as the pain of the erasure has left a permanent mark of the event, thus the memory of 'Katyń' and those killed there can never really be forgotten. And as members of the body politic, the Polish nation-state, the 'Katyń' 'martyrs' are permanently memorialised within the broader mythological narrative of Poland.

It appears that for the individuals most directly affected by this loss, their memories were never erased. For example, Wesley Adamcyk, the son of Jan Adamcyk (who died at

Katyń), writes in his autobiography, “After the last pistol shot, the Katyń Forest is silent, its buried secret remaining untold for decades. But for me there has never been silence” (Adamcyk, 2004: 227). This is an example of the Derridean ‘trace’, which suggests that there can never be a total forgetting of events. As Steeves explains it, while “To forget is typically thought to mean ‘to have had something’ and then ‘not to have it,’ mentally..... I knew something, now I don't know it ... forgetting is not a lack of experience. It is an active erasure” (Steeves, 2007: 191-192), and an erasure, according to Derrida “always leaves a trace” (Steeves, 2007: 192). The trace is significant to Derrida’s deconstructive ethics as it reveals the complex relationship between absence and presence. It is impossible to erase the trace of the past in that there is no such thing as total presence or absence, as such. ‘Memories’ (or traces of the past, the other) can never be totally erased and so we feel the absence of the dead as presence. For Derrida, this is a crucial and painful element of Derridean mourning. Peter Steeves articulates this idea when he writes:

When the Other dies, she is not gone. How easy it would be if it were otherwise. How easy it would be if we simply stopped experiencing her. No need for mourning, no need for tears. But her absence is always with us. The dead loved-one is the phantom limb, throbbing in pain and untouchable. The dead loved-one is the pulled tooth. The tongue can't help but search it out, even as it makes the pain increase. And so we use the tongue; we search and must speak. The dead loved-one is experienced--as never to be presently-present again. And it hurts. (Steeves, 2007: 191).

A Polish female poet whose father, Kazimierz Roman Grabowski died at Katyń, claims that whenever she would write a biographical note, she would attempt to include the (name of) the place of her father’s death. But she would always hear “Cross it out! Arbitrarily cross it out!” (Kaczorowska, 2006: 119-120). Yet the elimination of the word from public discourse did little to erase the memory of ‘Katyń’, a trace always remains. In a way, the active erasure only served to reinforce the presence of ‘Katyń’ within the collective memory narratives of the Polish nation and to constitute it as something that must not be forgotten. These particular ways of (re)membering become an integral part of the narrative itself.

Drozdewski, for example, has demonstrated that the discourse of ‘Katyń’ has “derived much of its potency from the construction and maintenance of an absent narrative”

(Drozdewski, 2012: 308). She proposes that an “enforced absence of public narratives of Katyń has strengthened and sustained these narratives in private spheres” (Drozdewski, 2012: 308). Drozdewski focuses on how these narratives were circulated within the home and via the family, but they also appear in ‘silent’ public rituals. Similarly, Niżyńska suggests that the ‘silencing’ of narratives on Katyń defined the event’s significance because of the ways in which ‘Katyń’ was then remembered. She writes:

I remember from my childhood the story of the Katyń crime and its silencing as a point of entry into the suppressed Polish history when after martial law¹⁶³, with the samizdat¹⁶⁴ flourishing, my father gave me an offset-printed publication with hardly legible type, saying, “You have to read it tonight. Tomorrow I have to pass it on” (Niżyńska, 2010: 471).

Instead of publicly mourning the victims, silent narratives of mourning were (re)produced via the secretive distribution of material on the event. For Niżyńska, this silent memory provided the Poles with a “point of entry into the suppressed Polish history”¹⁶⁵. In other words, this silencing produced another narrative of Polish identity as an imagined community bound by a shared, secret history. And it functioned in keeping with, and to reproduce, the myth of the Polish nation/peoples as martyr(s). Thompson claims that celebrations of defeats in Poland have “been absorbed into the nation’s memory as the means of strengthening rather than weakening its sense of identity” (Thompson, 2005: 5). In a similar vein, we could argue that the censorship narrative of Polish History has strengthened the sense of Polish identity as victimised, and this includes ways of (re)membering ‘Katyń’ The fact that Poles were still able to do these things while being dominated by a foreign power increased their value as productions of Polish memory. The (re)production of ‘Katyń’ narratives is illustrative of

¹⁶³ Martial law refers to the period of time from December 13, 1981 to July 22, 1983, when the People's Republic of Poland introduced martial law in an attempt to crush political opposition to the authoritarian government.

¹⁶⁴ Samizdat refers to the reproduction of censored publications which were passed on from reader to reader as a form of dissident activity across the Soviet bloc.

¹⁶⁵ Similarly, Thompson argues that while Polish places of memory may not have been included in books or via official celebrations in Soviet-occupied Poland, these memories were “preserved by individual visits to them, by word of mouth, by teaching them to children at home, by adult discussions in private spaces, by commemoration in theaters, cemeteries, and churches. The illegal samizdat literature also played a role” (Thompson, 2005: 3). What Thompson suggests is that the ‘silencing’ of Polish narratives of memory produced different kinds of rituals that were instrumental in the transference of memories. Local or private histories were (re)produced within families and passed on to the next generation.

Foucault's model of power in that power not only represses, it has the capacity to resist and (re)produce. However it is important to emphasise that these counter-memories are no more or less authentic than the dominant narrative maintained via censorship, but are constituted within a specific understanding of Polish History and identity.

(Re)membering and Forgetting: The Politics of Place and Space

The role and function of memorials, monuments, museums and other sites of memory has become an important focus of Memory Studies. This is particularly central to Nora's work. Nora's main corpus on memory, *Realms of Memory* (1996a) (or *Les lieux de la memoire* in French), analyses the various sites of memory that have a role in shaping national identity in France. For Nora, the study of these various places, these *lieux de mémoire*¹⁶⁶, suggests that vast funds of our memories have been 'depleted', only to "be replaced by a constructed history" (Nora, 1996b: 6). Nora claims that memory "attaches itself to sites, whereas history attaches itself to events" (Nora, 1989: 22). These realms, then, are the "last remaining places where we can still read our past and history" (Misztal, 2003:105). In other words, memorials, monuments, museums and so on, provide a physical space within which the abstract notions of collective memory can be realised. According to Nora, these material sites become symbolic places of memory only when a collective group imbues these sites with meaning (Nora, 1989: 19). The conflation of the presidential plane crash in 2010 with the 1940 killings, for instance, suggested that this site of memory (the Katyń Forest) could not escape its symbolic rhetoric (Niżyńska, 2010: 471). Jay Winter proposes that:

Sites of memory are places where groups of people engage in public activity through which they express 'a collective shared knowledge [...] of the past, on which a group's sense of unity and individuality is based'¹⁶⁷ (Winter, 2010: 61).

However, while memorials may play a significant role in the (re)creation of cultural memories and the (re)narrativisation(s) of the past, an understanding of memorials as an 'expression' of

¹⁶⁶ Nora distinguishes four different types of realms of memory: "symbolic sites (commemorations, pilgrimages, anniversaries, emblems); functional (manuals, autobiographies, associations); monumental (cemeteries, buildings); and topographic (archives, libraries, museums)" (Misztal, 2003:105).

¹⁶⁷ Winter cites Assmann (1995: 125-33).

shared knowledge assumes that these knowledges are fixed, and that their interpretation is therefore somehow knowable. This idea seems to permeate much of the scholarly work on sites of memory that focus on a top-down approach to studying sites of memory (Winter, 2010: 62-53; Misztal, 2003: 127). Inspired by Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983), such studies are concerned with the extent to which sites of memory are used as “instruments of the dominant political elements in a society” (Winter, 2010: 62). Misztal claims that this approach is still seen as the most relevant theoretical framework for exploring commemorations and rituals imposed by authoritarian regimes in that it “shows how this type of state enforces a monolithic mode of war commemoration” (Misztal, 2003: 127). We can see traces of this approach in some of the ‘Katyń’ literature, which emphasises the role of the Soviet State in contributing to a particular memorialisation of ‘Katyń’. In the following sections, I approach the narrative function(s) of various ‘Katyń’ memorials through a top-down approach. I then propose an alternative way to analyse sites of memory, and that is to focus on the heterogeneous and/or polysemic effects of such.

Soviet Katyń Memorials

It is a common argument in contemporary accounts of ‘Katyń’, that in order to maintain state-sanctioned narratives and prevent the production and dissemination of counter-cultural narratives or subjugated knowledges, communist governments implemented a number of severe censorship regulations. According to these accounts, in the postwar years, the Soviet narrative of ‘Katyń’ became “enshrined not only in Soviet history books and encyclopaedias, but also in monuments” (see Cienciala et al, 2007: 241). Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, a number of studies have emerged which have labelled this process ‘organised forgetting’ and it is seen to be “characteristic of state-sponsored representations of the past”¹⁶⁸ (Misztal, 2003: 132). This argument implies that the function of Soviet monuments was to ‘forget’ events that would upset the Soviet narrative of History, and coerce people into forgetting the ‘truth’. But this characteristic of memorials is not unique to Soviet memorials. I propose that as a form of narrative, memorials are illustrative of what Lyotard calls a ‘politics of forgetting’ (1990:3).

In Lyotard’s *Heidegger and “the jews”* (1990), he critiques the tendency of narrative to ‘forget’, or to “leave out events that do not fit into or would upset narrative structure”

¹⁶⁸ See for example Wanner (1998) and Wingfield (2000).

(Loving, 2008: 97). Lyotard outlines two types of forgetting. The first is unintentional and what we would normally mean by forgetting – we knew something but now we do not, and we may be reminded of it (Lyotard, 1990: 9-10). The other type of forgetting is best explained as an intentional choice to ignore something, to actively not remember it. It is this second type of forgetting that Lyotard claims is inherent in narrative structure. In order to conform to “diachronic time” (Lyotard, 1990: 16), the organisation of narrative involves an element of decision – a decision about what to include and what to leave out (or what to forget and what to remember). Thus it could be argued that Soviet memorials functioned in the same way that all forms of narrative do, and that is to promote a particular perspective – one that served their own purposes, and painted them as benevolent. As Koselleck notes, the “political cult of the dead, to the extent that it depends on the building of war memorials, remains under the victor’s control” (Koselleck, 2011: 368), and consequently, while monuments that commemorated the struggle against the Nazis were allowed, “Soviet crimes in Poland remained a taboo subject” (Thompson, 2005: 4). Soviet monuments memorialised events which reinforced the narrative of Nazi atrocities, simultaneously reminding their citizens that the Soviets were instrumental in defeating the Nazis. For example, a Soviet monument to the Polish victims was constructed at the burial site at Katyń around 1945 which bore the inscription ‘Here are buried the prisoner officers of the Polish Army murdered in terrible torments by the German-Fascist occupiers in the fall of 1941’ (Cienciala et al, 2007: 241). This was replaced in the 1960s, and the inscription on the second monument read, ‘Here rest the remains of Polish officers, prisoners of war bestially martyred by the German-Fascist occupiers of in the fall of 1941’ (Cienciala et al, 2007: 241). These memorials narrativise ‘Katyń’ in a very particular way and from a very specific position.

Koselleck argues that in societies under oligarchic rule, memorials are dismantled when “they are felt to be a threat or when a tradition that is still living is intended to be suppressed” (Koselleck, 2011: 370). In communist Poland, memorials that were seen to challenge the ‘official’ narrative of Katyń in any way were censored. For example, a memorial created by members of the Solidarity movement in 1981, and inscribed with the words “Katyń, 1940”, was removed by the police even though there was no mention of the NKVD, or of Soviet involvement in the deaths of those honoured by the memorial. Later, the Polish Government, on cue from Moscow, replaced the Solidarity monument with another memorial that said: “To the Polish soldiers – victims of Hitlerite fascism – reposing in the soil of Katyń” (Fisher, 2000: 65). While the replacement of the Solidarity monument could be read as an attempt to reinforce a particular memorialisation of ‘Katyń’, it is also possible that

they produced effects beyond the intent of those who erected them. As argued in Chapter 1, by the 1980s, public opinion was increasingly resisting the Soviet narrative of Katyń, and the removal of the Solidarity memorial shows an awareness (and a fear) of this on behalf of the Polish government. Moreover, the removal of a memorial that made no reference to the guilty party, and the replacement of it with one that reaffirmed the Soviet version, confirmed public suspicion that the Soviets were trying to cover up their part in the Katyń killings. In short, the erasure of the word 'Katyń' left a trace, a reminder of the absence of (public) subjugated knowledges/narratives of 'Katyń'.

There is an assumption within the now dominant narrative of 'Katyń' that the use of censorship by communist governments means that the function of Soviet narratives was to forget Polish memory-narratives (which are correct). I maintain that the persistence of Polish memory-narratives to (re)member Polish History as part of a sacrificial uprising, deeply embedded in romantic notions of sacrifice and patriotism, is also illustrative of a politics of forgetting. The study of both Polish and Soviet sites of memory suggests that memorialisation is another form of narrativisation.

The London Katyń Memorial

As mentioned earlier in the thesis, in the mid-1960s and early 1970s, a public dialogue on 'Katyń' emerged following the publication of a number of texts that explored the issue. On October 1971, the Katyń Memorial Fund came in to being and those involved in its establishment pledged to erect a memorial in London to honour the men who died "because they were the faithful sons of the gallant Polish nation" (Fitzgibbon, 1976: 12). This memorial is presented as an alternative 'official' memorial. After a long, drawn out political process, the memorial at Gunnersbury Cemetery in West London was unveiled on 18 September 1976. Louis Fitzgibbon, the secretary of the memorial fund, explains the importance of the monument thus:

It is necessary to honour the dead and to perpetuate their memory, to bring some solace to the widows of these victims, their surviving relatives, brother officers and men; to constitute a lasting tribute to the sufferings of Poland in the case of Freedom; to proclaim the truth and symbolise the struggle for justice not yet

achieved, to mark an event in history which so many have for so long conspired to erase (Fitzgibbon, 1976: 13).

For Fitzgibbon, this memorial is more than just a place that the London Poles can come to commemorate and mourn. This memorial symbolises Poland's struggle for freedom, and is a necessary requirement for reinscribing the memory of this event within the context of a very particular (that is, messianic) Polish Historical narrative. Therefore, it seems to me that the intention of those who erected the memorial is for it to be read in one way, and one way only.

Winter describes commemoration at sites of memory as an "act arising out of a conviction, shared by a broad community, that the moment recalled is both significant and informed by a moral message" (Winter, 2010: 62). Fitzgibbon draws on this conviction by recalling discourses about suffering, freedom and justice, and in doing so, situates the Katyn' 'victims' within a pre-established Historical narrative. In a speech given at the unveiling of the memorial¹⁶⁹, it was said: "we are here not only to mourn those Poles who died, defenceless and still defiant. We are here to celebrate the invincibility of that spirit of Poland for whom they died" (cited in Fitzgibbon, 1976: 40). 'Katyn'' is memorialised here in a very normative and normalising way. The 'victims' become symbolic of the 'spirit of Poland': these are not just individual men, they symbolise the nation. Their deaths serve as yet another example of Poland's mythical history of victimhood and martyrdom. Their act of martyrdom immortalises them within the History of "the sufferings of Poland in the case of Freedom" (Fitzgibbon, 1976: 13).

The memorial has particular significance for how the figure of the martyr is used for political ends. DeSoucey Et Al (2008) draw on Gary Alan Fine's definition of 'reputational entrepreneurs' to refer to those who attempt to "control the memory of historical figures through motivation, narrative facility and institutional placement" (Fine, 1996: 1159). DeSoucey et al highlight "the uses of the martyr's body by reputational entrepreneurs for political, religious, or cultural purposes" (DeSoucey et al, 2008: 100). They claim:

To elicit desired behaviors, generate collective identities, and persuade a potentially indifferent audience, the leveraging of the martyr's story makes tangible the values and beliefs reputational entrepreneurs seek to promote.

¹⁶⁹ The speech was delivered by Lord St Oswald, a British soldier and conservative politician.

Through memorial and commemoration, these actors consistently realize and reprocess the body's cultural power well beyond the moment of death, making martyrs physically present and cognitively memorable¹⁷⁰ (DeSoucey et al, 2008: 100).

So while the memorial is representative of a group of (dead) bodies, it appears that what is being memorialised here is a particular Body. These bodies are (re)membered in order to fit the narrative of martyrdom. This story of the martyred body confirms the group's shared beliefs, and that of the body politic, the nation, of Poland, as wounded. The men who are memorialised are constituted as microcosms of the nation. Moira Gatens' essay "Corporeal Representation in/and the Body Politic", which I mentioned in the previous chapter is useful in fleshing out this metonymic relation between individual (male) bodies and the body politic. Gatens proposes that the issue of 'representation' in the modern body politic involves an understanding of 'representation' where "one body or agent is taken to stand for a group of diverse bodies" (Gatens, 1996: 21). In this case, the male body as representative of the body politic is memorialised in this monument. And these men can be portrayed as martyrs because the 'memory' of martyrdom in Polish narratives is always and already masculinised.

The Council for the Protection of Struggle and Martyrdom Sites

The collapse of communist regimes has encouraged a public dialogue amongst members of post-communist states that emphasises the need for these nations to reclaim their national narratives, and within this discourse, "memory and commemorative activities become more important as sources of individual and collective identity" (Misztal, 2003: 132). The collapse of communism in Poland meant that the 'freedom to remember' was allegedly restored – that is, the freedom to remember a particular mythologised narrative about Polish history and national identity, and the freedom to remember this narrative in public, ritualised ways. Thompson argues that in Poland, the erection of monuments has been central to Polish ways of remembering (Thompson, 2005: 4), and there is a sense in which these ways of (re)membering continue to be configured around narratives of suffering and the figure of the martyr.

¹⁷⁰ See Schudson (1989).

The Council for the Protection of Struggle and Martyrdom Sites illustrates the ways in which sites of memory are reinscribed with a dominant narrative of suffering. On the council's website, it states that it is:

the only state agency initiating and coordinating activities related to the commemoration of historical events and places and characters in the history of struggle and martyrdom of the Polish people at home and abroad, as well as fighting and martyrdom of other nations on Polish territory" (*Council OPWiM*, 2009).

The Council makes it clear that its focus is not on the commemoration of historical events *per se*, but of very specific historical events that tell of Poland's (alleged) martyrdom. Drozdewski similarly argues that the "use of the terms 'suffering and struggle' in OPWiM's objectives is part of that process of maintaining a national significance and historically embedded Messianic narrative" (Drozdewski, 2008: 175). By (re)membering the suffering of martyrs, it is inevitable that other narratives of struggle will be forgotten or reinscribed in order to fit into this one. This is often the case with the ways in which 'Katyn' is (re)membered in museums.

(Re)membering 'Katyn' in Museums

The Katyn Museum in Warsaw was established with the backing of the Federation of Katyn Families; however, the museum conforms to the martyrological narrative of History and is aligned with the mission statement of ROPWiM. In an English-language brochure for the Museum, it states that the original plans for the museum "called for establishing a center for scientific study of martyrdom" (Katyn Museum, 2004). The directive emphasised that as well as housing a "collection of *relics*", the museum "should have its own archives and a library accessible to anyone researching the most recent history of the *fatherland*" (Katyn Museum, 2004, my emphasis). Clearly, the role of the museum is to catalogue a very particular 'history', one that reiterates the (masculine) myth of martyrdom. The repetition of this narrative cements the role of the "thousands of young strong, healthy" men, the "elite of the Polish soldiers" (Katyn Museum, 2004), in the 'Katyn' mythology.

Despite there being an entire museum dedicated to Katyń, it is interesting to note that ‘Katyń’ is also mentioned in a many museums throughout Poland – for instance, the Warsaw Uprising Museum, Pawiak Prison in Warsaw and even Auschwitz. This is illustrative of how the Romantic paradigm is reinforced by censorship. Now that the Poles are no longer prohibited from speaking publicly about ‘Katyń’, then the narrative must be repeated, and retold, so that it is (re)membered within the framework of Poland’s struggle for freedom. But while these references to ‘Katyń’ may appear to be nothing more than an attempt to (re)claim the memory of the event, these references are also illustrative of Lyotard’s “politics of forgetting” (Lyotard, 1990). By (re)presenting the event within the context of other events that need to be ‘remembered’, these references serve to efface the singularity of these events in that they are (re)membered as part of the same event – the grand narrative of Polish History. There are traces of this politics of forgetting in Polish Holocaust memorials¹⁷¹, including the museum at Auschwitz.

Jonathan Huener (2004) has argued that since 1945, when discussions around memorialising the camps at Auschwitz first took place, there have been attempts to preserve the memory of Auschwitz within a broader narrative of Polish national martyrdom (Huener, 2003: 61, 78). It appears that this tradition has continued in recent years. The museum at Auschwitz has housed an exhibition of photos and information on ‘Katyń’ since 1986 (it was later updated in 1994). The exhibition is titled “Martyrdom and struggle of the Polish nation during WWII”. This exhibition is an attempt to consolidate the suffering of all Poles – an ‘inclusive’ move that excludes and/or ‘forgets’ the narrative of Polish-Jewish history. These references to ‘Katyń’ at the Holocaust museum conflate the memories of Katyń and of the concentration camps, by dissolving the event(s) into an ideal continuation of Polish history (Foucault, 1977a: 154). The horror of the (singular) event of the Holocaust is homogenised and absorbed into pre-existing narratives about the Polish nation.

¹⁷¹ For a more detailed analysis of the Holocaust memorials see James E. Young (1993). Young proposes that a “mix of meanings and narratives” inform different Holocaust memorials (Young, 1993: 2). He points out that in Poland, “countless memorials in former death camps and across the countryside commemorate the whole of Polish destruction through the figure of its murdered Jewish part” (Young, 1993: 2).

Polysemic Memorial Narratives

I propose an alternative way of thinking about the role and function of memorials, and that is to view sites of memory as multi-vocal or polysemic. The memorials I have referred to so far (Polish and Soviet) do not appear to explicitly acknowledge that there are a variety of ways to remember an event. In fact, they all seem to reinforce a singular account of the event and the people they aim to memorialise. The study of these memorials sits comfortably within a top-down critique of sites of memory. However, the meaning of a text or sign is not fixed in the present. Therefore, those who produce a text (such as a memorial) do not, and indeed cannot, entirely control its meaning. The replacement of the solidarity memorial with an overtly Soviet one was read by some as an indication that the Soviets were attempting to cover up their involvement in the deaths at ‘Katyń’, suggesting that counter-readings of the memorial were possible. Winter proposes an alternative to top-down analyses of sites of memory, one that emphasises the “multi-vocal character of remembrance and the potential for new groups with new causes to appropriate older sites of memory” (Winter, 2010: 64). As with any form of narrativisation, it is always possible to engage with them in ways that go against traditional (or dominant) readings.

One particular site of memory that became (re)appropriated by Poles following WWII was an empty space situated next to a monument to the wartime forces of the Polish Home Army (*Armia Krajowa*, AK) (or Polish underground) which was located in Warsaw’s Powązkowski Military Cemetery (Etkind & Finnin et al, 2012: 18). Sawicki claims that this site became a “place of pilgrimage and a focal point for the commemoration of both the Warsaw Uprising and the Katyń massacres, which are intimately connected to one another in the Polish imaginary” (Sawicki cited in Etkind & Finnin et al, 2012: 19). On All Souls Day in 1959, a wooden cross was placed at the site with the inscription: “Symbolic grave of the 12,000 Polish officers murdered in Katyń” (Etkind & Finnin et al, 2012: 19). Members of the Polish Security Service (SB) removed the cross and undertook an investigation as to who put it there¹⁷². Despite this, in the 1960s and 1970s, other Polish people continued to mark this ‘Katyń place’ (*miejsce katyńskie*), with crosses, flowers, and wreaths (all of which were removed and destroyed by the SB), and eventually the site became known as the *Dolinka*

¹⁷² According to Etkind Et Al, Ludwika Dymecka, the wife of a former Kozelsk prisoner had admitted to erecting the cross (she had allegedly been seen distributing leaflets and prayer cards around the site) (Etkind & Finnin et al, 2012: 19). Sawicki claims that the Polish authorities attributed her actions to “mental illness” (Sawicki cited in Etkind & Finnin et al, 2012: 19).

Katyńska or ‘Katyń Hollow’ (Etkind & Finnin et al, 2012: 19)¹⁷³. In a way, the removal or the *absence* of the crosses and wreaths did not erase the *meaning* of this site of memory; rather, the active erasure functioned to reinforce the *presence* of a particular memory-narrative. The SB’s efforts to maintain the dominant narrative on ‘Katyń’ by removing each attempt to (re)inscribe the site with the memory of ‘Katyń’ functioned to perpetuate a particular (re)interpretation of this (non)memorial. This suggests that some sites can be “converted into sites of memory unofficially... Official certification is not necessary when groups of people act on their own” (Winter, 2010: 62). For sites of memory to have significance to a particular group, all that is required is a shared interpretation of the group’s past. ‘Official’ ‘*meaning*’ does not need to be inscribed from above by whoever is in power. Yet it is important to reiterate here that this ‘meaning’ is always open to (re)interpretation.

While some advocates of Polish historical memory (including Thompson), tend to argue for the importance of the restoration of an ‘official’ and ‘authentic’ version of Polish history, the maintenance of ‘historical memories’ does not necessarily involve legitimization via an archival narrative. Thompson herself claims that despite a lack of concrete public memorials, Poles associated specific places with particular narratives of Poland’s past, its losses and its victories. Thompson writes:

Poland has countless *places of memory*, mainly the specters of harm done to the people, localities where traumas were experienced-but also places of glorious victories. The lost battles, the executions of random passersby on Warsaw streets by the Nazis, the hangings of leaders of Polish uprisings by the Russians, the defense of cities, places of torture, places of suffering; but also victories over invaders at Grunwald and, in 1920, on the Vistula River-all of these remain in Poland's collective memory not so much by having been archived in ‘definitive’ books, but by osmosis as it were, by committing to memory messages about such places (Thompson, 2005: 3).

¹⁷³ Similarly Cienciala et al note that during the period 1980-1990, the symbolic grave was always decorated with fresh flowers, and a cross was built there by activists of the Katyń Committee (*Komitet Katyński*) on 31 July 1981 (during the Solidarity period of 30 August 1980 – 13 December 1981) (Cienciala et al, 2007: 245). Even though the cross was taken down by the authorities, the Katyń Committee persisted in organising ceremonies and speeches on key anniversaries: the discovery of the Katyń massacre on 13 April 1943, the Soviet invasion of Eastern Poland on 17 September 1939, and the prewar Independence Day, 11 November (Cienciala et al, 2007: 245). Gasztold-Señ (2010, 145-6) also suggests that on these significant religious historical dates, the secret police would “wait by the gates of the cemetery and detain visitors, who were often forced to throw flowers and decorative items over the fence to avoid arrest” (cited in Etkind & Finnin et al, 2012: 19).

These traumas leave a trace in the Polish collective memory in the same way that the removal of the Solidarity memorial and the prevention of other forms of public memory-making (such as the crosses at Katyń Hollow), left a trace that troubled the legitimacy of the Soviet narrativisation/memorialisation of Katyń. This is illustrative of the power of subjugated knowledges (as a mechanism of power) that operate even under the most ‘oppressive’ circumstances – power is not always a repressive (institutionalised) force. It is interesting to note that after the collapse of Soviet Communism, a series of monuments dedicated to ‘Katyń’ have not only been placed all though Poland, but throughout the world. There are now monuments in Toronto, Johannesburg, Baltimore, Canberra, and Budapest (just to name a few). Thompson suggests that this “indicates that the Katyń trauma has sunk deeply into the collective memory” (Thompson, 2005: 5). Thompson suggests that “of all the murders of Poles by the Soviets this one is best remembered” (Thompson, 2005: 5). Perhaps the potency of ‘Katyń’, unlike other sites of memory within Poland, lies in the fact that the site(s) themselves are not on Polish soil and that this strengthens, and has strengthened the push for remembrance. Moreover, the locations of these places of memory exist in Russia, remaining in the control of the ‘perpetrators’. What is at stake, then, is not only the ‘freedom to remember’, but the power to (re)member ‘Katyń’ by (re)claiming control of the narrative.

Commemorative Practices as (embodied) Rituals of Remembrance

Clearly, ‘Katyń’ was never entirely forgotten in Poland and a collective memory-narrative of Polish History was maintained despite strict censorship laws. While on the one hand, if you did not know about ‘Katyń’ (because of the public suppression of the event), you could not forget about it. The memory-narratives could only remain where there was knowledge of them and spaces for them to be transferred. However, ‘memory’ as it is understood within the rhetoric of collective memory does not necessarily refer to the recollection of events which one has experienced or that you have first-hand knowledge of. ‘Remembering’ refers to (re)constructions of shared (re)interpretations of the past. Those who did have ‘knowledge’ of ‘Katyń’ (for example, relatives of the dead), ‘remembered’ ‘Katyń’ (even though they did not experience the massacres themselves), and because of the (re)production of memory narratives ‘Katyń’ was not entirely erased or forgotten. Thus far, I have drawn on the definition of cultural memory as a milieu of signs and symbols that have a shared meaning amongst certain collective groups in order to explain why this might be the case. There is also

some literature that suggests that ‘memories’ are sustained and embodied through ritual and repetition. In Paul Connerton’s book *How Societies Remember* (1989), he examines the way in which collective memory works in two distinct areas of social activity: “*commemorative ceremonies* and in *bodily practices*” (Connerton, 1989: 7). Connerton’s proposes that the repetition of ritualistic performances within commemorative practices are a form of ‘habit memory’ – these memories are not simply written into cultural artefacts and places, but are inscribed on our bodies through a process of repeated bodily performances¹⁷⁴. Commemorative ceremonies in particular, function to remind a community of its identity (Connerton, 1989: 70), by explicitly claiming continuity with the past (Connerton, 1989: 45). Connerton argues that it is through the repetition of commemorative practices, that societies are able to maintain a collective memory about particular historical event(s) or narrative(s) of national identity. The repetition of ritual performances, inscribe memories on and through the body. Foucault argues something similar when he writes that the body is “the inscribed surface of events (traced by language and dissolved by ideas)” (Foucault, 1977a: 148). Corporeality, or the embodied ‘subject’, is an effect of discourses and discursive practices. An example of this in the Polish case can be found in the practice of All Saints Day and All Souls Day rituals, both Catholic ceremonies which honour the dead.

All Saints Day, which occurs on the 1st of November, is traditionally reserved for honouring all the unknown saints and martyrs while the following day, All Souls Day, is reserved for remembering members of one’s family who have passed away (Thompson, 2005: 4). All Saints Day is a public holiday in Poland and each year Poles celebrate this day by filling their cemeteries with candles to remember the dead (Niżyńska, 2010: 471). Ewa Klekot notes that:

[T]he placing of candles on All Saints Day not only expresses private grief but is also part of an important community-building ritual, which includes visiting the graves of one’s departed biological and spiritual kin. By placing flowers and

¹⁷⁴ Connerton draws on the term ‘habit memory’ to suggest that in order for commemorative rituals to have meaning for the participants, “they must be habituated to those performances. This habituation is to be found... in the bodily substrate of the performance” (Connerton, 1989: 71). He writes: “Our bodies, which in commemorations stylistically re-enact an image of the past, keep the past also in an entirely effective form in their continuing ability to perform certain skilled actions. We may not remember how or when we first learned to swim, but we can keep on swimming successfully – remembering how to do it - without any representational activity on our part at all.... many forms of habitual skilled remembering illustrate a keeping of the past in mind that, without ever adverting to its historical origin, nevertheless re-enacts the past in our present conduct. In habitual memory the past is, as it were, sedimented in the body” (Connerton, 1989: 72).

candles jointly with friends and family, the dead are reintegrated into one's heritage. This is all part of a process of constructing and affirming social relationships among the living, and between the living and the dead (Klekot, 2007: 4).

According to Klekot then, the mourning rituals involved in All Saints and All Souls Day commemorations serve a social function: they create a sense of local, national and family community, and are also used to preserve social identity, social memory and individual identity, or to imbue them with a sense of continuity and coherence. All Saints and All Souls Day rituals are performed via the repetition of (bodily) acts.

Thompson claims that All Souls day rituals persisted in Stalinist times because “as the place where primarily religious ceremonies are usually performed, the cemetery was beyond the reach of the Communist government authorities and could be used as a gathering place for those who wanted to commemorate an event” (Thompson, 2005: 4). The cemetery provided a substitute location for the memorialisation of events. As a result, the ritualistic practices that took place within the cemeteries during the post-war years are particularly useful in ascertaining how the transference of memories took place. One gets the sense, however, that the heightened significance of these Catholic ways of remembering in Katyń narratives functions to (re)produce the Polish Catholic myth. Etkind and Finnin et al note, “the religious ‘situatedness’ of commemorative activities bore profound social and political purchase” (Etkind & Finnin et al, 2012: 18). This was particularly visible during the Solidarity era¹⁷⁵. Klekot maintains that the gesture of placing flowers and candles in a public space is not just an expression of grief within the Polish context, historically, it is also viewed as a “way of conveying popularly shared feelings and values, and even of asserting a degree of autonomy from government” (Klekot, 2007: 3). Klekot writes that during the 1980s, it was common to place ‘unofficial’ arrangements of flowers and candles in public places in order to express “opposition to authorities who, on their part, used to organize solemn flower-offering ceremonies in state-authorised ‘proper places’ and on ‘proper occasions’” (Klekot, 2007: 4). She argues that the “gesture of arranging and caring for [flower] crosses conveyed symbolic solidarity with the ‘values of the oppressed’ and by this very fact became a subversive action”

¹⁷⁵ Niżyńska supports this view, writing that “after the suppression of the Solidarity opposition movement in December 1981, homemade banners reading ‘Katyń’ and ‘Solidarity’ also appeared in Polish cemeteries, surrounded by a sea of light. Thus, ‘Katyń’ marked not only the presence of a lingering *wound* but also the persistence of memory; Polish humiliation, but also a proud refusal to forget” (Niżyńska, 2010: 471). Once again, Niżyńska’s use of the word ‘wound’ to describe Katyń indicates the way in which the *absence* of a dominant Katyń narrative functioned to heighten its *presence* in Polish counter-memories.

(Klekot, 2007: 4). These typically Polish (Catholic) rituals of mourning and memorialisation functioned as a public comment on the non-existence of an ‘official’, public history of Katyn. Ricoeur argues that in “unsettling spectacles” of public commemorations demanding memory, there is “an excess of memory” and an “excess of forgetting” (Ricoeur, 2004: xv). The persistence of Catholic ways of (re)membering Katyn ‘forgets’ that not all the victims were Catholics¹⁷⁶, and assumes that those who are partaking in the (re)membering are Catholic. This assumption is “supported by a deeply ingrained but highly exclusionary telling of national history” (Porter, 2001: 289) – that is, the Catholic narrative of Polish History discussed in the previous chapter.

This understanding of bodies as sites of memory is located in a genealogical approach to History that encourages a de-privileging of sites of ‘History’. These ritualistic practices demonstrate that rituals do not need to be state-sanctioned (as Nora suggests), and that the production of these local ritual practices are no more or less authentic than ‘official’ commemorative ceremonies. But while Foucault encourages us to recognise that the body is “totally imprinted by history and the process of history’s destruction of the body” (Foucault, 1977a: 148), he also emphasises that ways of knowing are generative, multiplicitous, and always contain the seeds of their own undoing. While I have argued that Polish memory narratives are demonstrative of an collective investment in the victim narrative of Polish national identity, Connerton’s insights suggest that it is not possible to simply ‘forget’ such narratives, given that they are in part, bodily. This is not to say that we should not be critical of the normative assumptions that these repetitions (re)produce, rather, it reminds us that we are always located and constituted within the inheritance we deconstruct. An understanding of a performative/embodied collective memory identity is useful when approaching the issue of conflicting memory-narratives.

¹⁷⁶ Frank Fox (1993), for example, has written an article detailing the efforts of Simon Schochet – an historian and Dachau survivor – who has worked to identify the many Jewish victims of Katyn.

History and Memory: Conflicting Narratives of Victimhood

One of the key obstacles to Russian-Polish reconciliation over Katyń has been linked to the idea that the Russians and the Poles have conflicting historical ‘memories’¹⁷⁷. In an interview conducted by Ulrich M Schmid, Schmid asks “Does Polish remembering of Katyń have any influence on Russian cultural memory?” To which Roginski answers:

The Russians and the Poles have an entirely different cultural memory. There are two central tenets to Polish cultural memory. Firstly: we are always the victims – at least as far as the Russians or the Germans are concerned. Secondly: we always resisted heroically. An understanding of the victim role barely registers in Russian minds, and resistance even less so. Unfortunately we have no shared cultural memory, let alone a shared memory of the terror. The Russian memory is fragmented – according to region and social grouping. The constant stream of propaganda under the Czars and particularly in the Soviet Union and under Putin has engraved in the Russian mind the conviction that we do nothing but good in the world. We saved Europe from fascism and we get only ingratitude in return. Working through the past, and this includes Katyń, destroys our constructed memories and compels us to account for not having *only* done good in the world at all times (Roginski & Schmid, 2010).

Roginski acknowledges that Russian narratives are largely informed by discourses which emphasise Russia’s greatness. Russia’s invasion was justified under the guise of rescuing Eastern Europe from fascism. Roginski suggests that communist propaganda has played a significant role in the perpetuation of these myths. But Roginski also points to another important issue – that of collective victimhood.

As I have demonstrated throughout this chapter, the Poles have maintained a sense of collective victimhood throughout the years of foreign occupation and censorship. According to Zhurzhenko, however, Russia seemed to be an exception to this rule. Zhurzhenko proposes that during the Soviet era the dominant narrative emphasised the Russian victory over Nazi occupation and as a result, “narratives of suffering were secondary to heroic narratives”

¹⁷⁷ See for example Cienciala et al (2007: 261-263) and Paul (2010: 351). Paul claims for instance, that underlining the conflicting dialogues between Russian and Poland in regards to the ‘Katyń’ debate is the “idea that many Russians lack an accurate reading of history – especially on the Katyń issue” (Paul, 2010: 351).

(Zhurzhenko, 2012). Zhurzenko provides two reasons for this. Firstly, she argues that a focus on narratives of suffering, could potentially lead to a dangerous situation in which Stalinist crimes could be compared to Nazi crimes¹⁷⁸. But Zhurzenko also maintains that there is a “geopolitical dimension to this triumphalist narrative” (Zhurzhenko, 2012). She suggests that the ‘great victory over fascism’ became the Soviet Union’s “entry ticket to the club of world powers and legitimized its new global status and sphere of influence on the European continent” (Zhurzhenko, 2012). By maintaining the myth of victory, the Russian government was able to gain allied support, legitimating their status as an important power and allowing them access to a global political scene. Since the collapse of Soviet Stalinism, however, Zhurzenko notes that there has been a proliferation of narratives about suffering, promoted within the Russian Orthodox Church as well as the Russian liberal milieu. There is also evidence of the victim narrative in Russian discourses on ‘Katyn’, often emerging as a response to Polish invocations of victimhood and therefore, always competing with the Polish victim narrative.

An example of this can be seen in the narrativisation of victims commemorated by the joint Russian-Polish memorial built at Katyn in the 1990s. When Yeltsin agreed that a memorial should be built at the Katyn site of the executions, he said “we consider this forest a memorial for the victims of totalitarianism, (a place) where a monument to all the innocent victims should be created” (cited in *Seattle Times*, 5 June 1995). The memorial was meant to commemorate the deaths of three separate groups of victims – the Polish victims, the Soviet (civilian) victims (whose whereabouts were unknown), and a group of 500 Soviet POWs who, according to the Burdenko Commission, were shot by the Nazis, but whose whereabouts were never confirmed. Etkind and Finnin et al propose that in “official Russian documents from this period, these two categories of Soviet Katyn victim – civilian, executed by the NKVD, and military, executed by the Nazis – are presented in tandem” (Etkind & Finnin et al, 2012: 129). In effect, this means that:

The trope of the Soviet POWs in this way could be deployed conveniently and effectively in both foreign and domestic policy. Abroad, and particularly in relations with Poland, it offers a symmetrical, wartime Katyn victimization

¹⁷⁸ Zhurzenko argues that “spelling out suffering narratives was uncomfortable for the Soviet authorities since it might have raised question about the disastrous failures of the Soviet military leadership, the neglect of the needs of the civilian population, and might even have evoked parallels between Hitler’s and Stalin’s repressive policies” (Zhurzhenko, 2012).

narrative. At home, it clouds public awareness of the identity of the Katyn perpetrator, the NKVD, with references to the dead as ‘victims of totalitarianism and Nazism’. It also transforms the victims into meaningful sacrifices made for the sake of victory over fascism, a victory whose traditional narrative is threatened and undermined by remembering Katyn (Etkind & Finnin et al, 2012: 129-130).

Etkind and Finnin et al suggest that in (re)appropriating a narrative of victimhood, Russian leaders were able to influence politics and (re)produce a particular narrative. In this case, the narrative functioned to dissolve a clear separation between the Poles as ‘victims’ and the Russians as ‘perpetrators’ in order to avoid a situation in which a political apology or compensation for the victims could be justified. If both nations were ‘victims’, then neither could be identified as a ‘perpetrator’ and therefore guilty of a crime.

Melentyeva has argued that in recent years, the Russian internet has become a “widely used space for public as well as academic debate on the Katyn matter” (Melentyeva, 2009: 195). Melentyeva’s study of ‘Katyn’ debates in Russian language webpages¹⁷⁹ examines some of the popular attitudes of the Russian public towards its past. She proposes that one can “roughly divide” the content of the sites into two categories: those that “defend Russia’s... innocence concerning Katyn” and those who believe that the documents released by the Yeltsin government provide sufficient “proof that the Soviet leadership organized the execution of the Polish prisoners in 1940” (Melentyeva, 2009: 196-197). Melentyeva suggests that the narratives produced by the defenders of “Russia’s innocence” drew on past Soviet-Polish relations (specifically the Russo-Polish war of 1920), but, she claims that they “examined these topics from the perspective of competitive victimization” (Melentyeva, 2009: 214). Such studies, she argues, attempt to “prove that it is the Poles who have to apologize to the Russians and to thank them for the liberation of Europe from Nazi Power” (Melentyeva, 2009: 214). One example of this is an article by Sergei Strygin and Vladislav Shved called “A Long Forgotten Genocide” (written in June 2006), which draws on the anti-Katyn narrative in mentioned in Chapter 1. The so-called ‘anti-Katyn’ movement is an example of a memory-narrative informed by a ‘collective memory’ which views the Russians as victims of the Poles, not the other way around. Similar to the authors of the Anti-Katyn movement, the authors in this article juxtapose the ‘Katyn’

¹⁷⁹ The websites studied in this article include the Katyn memorial’s official website, internet collections of links and primary sources, and non-governmental and journalistic sites.

crimes and the imprisonment of Red Army troops in Polish camps between 1919 and 1922. The narrative of 'Katyn' is (re)membered within the broader context of Polish-Russian history and the 'memory' of the Polish-Soviet war – a war in which the Russians suffered significant losses – in the same way that Polish narratives of History draw on myths about the past in order to imbue historical events with a specific meaning. Clearly, all societies draw on their myths of the past. This points to the impossibility of ever deciding, from a neutral, god's eye position, what the 'truth' is. Instead we see that narratives are necessarily multiple and competing. Both Polish and Russian historical memories are embodied effects of performative rituals of (re)membering that are integral to both individual and national identity, therefore it is not always possible to simply relinquish them at will. However, this does not mean that these subjectivities are fixed or naturally occurring, and that they cannot or should not be resisted critically or challenged.

'Memory' to-come

In *Memoires for Paul De Man* (1986), Derrida offers a (re)reading of De Man's critique of the Hegelian distinction between *Erinnerung* (an interiorising memory) and *Gedächtnis* (a thinking, exteriorising recollection). Derrida re-conceptualises *Gedächtnis* as a future-oriented memory:

The memory that we are considering here is not essentially oriented toward the past, toward a past present deemed to have really and previously existed. Memory stays with traces, in order to 'preserve' them, but traces of a past that has never been present, traces which themselves never occupy the form of presence and always remain, as it were, to come... (Derrida, 1986: 58).

Rather than an understanding of memory as the "resurrection" of "truth" (Derrida, 1986: 58), Derrida proposes a deconstructive critique of memory – a memory whose meaning is never fixed in the present, but always remains to-come. For Derrida, an important part of the future-orientedness of memory is responsibility. In "Force of Law", Derrida speaks of responsibility as a "responsibility toward memory" (Derrida, 1992: 20) (which is also a responsibility to the other). He writes:

[T]he task of historical and interpretive memory is at the heart of deconstruction, not only as philologico-etymological task or the historian's task but as responsibility in face of a heritage that is at the same time the heritage of an imperative or of a sheaf of injunctions (Derrida, 1992: 19).

Deconstruction incites a responsible inheritance of the memories and histories that are part of our heritage. This responsibility is not limited to academic practitioners, but is inherited by all members of society (however one may define themselves within that society). While some argue that Russia's investment in a national narrative of heroism implies a reluctance in Russian memory to accept the implications of the inherited legacy of Stalinism and the many injustices committed in the name of Stalinist-Marxist ideology, in a similar vein, I have suggested that if Poles wish to rethink History and identity beyond the limits of the messianic myth, then this requires a critical inheritance of the truth-effects of these particular narratives¹⁸⁰. In the following chapter, I will engage with this future-oriented critique of memory as a responsible inheritance developed in *Specters of Marx*, in order to offer a possible (re)reading of the various inheritances of 'Katyn' and the issue of 'justice'.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have drawn on recent scholarship on 'memory' in order to explain the psychosomatic investments that people have in particular myths of History and national identity. I have suggested that the study of 'memory' has proven to be a useful tool for analysing how and why some narratives of History dominate over others, suggesting that History as an empirical discipline maintains one version of 'truth' while ignoring the possibilities for multiple 'memories' or versions of 'history'. Yet the ways in which narratives of History function is not always as simple as identifying a dichotomous binary between one version of History and another. While it may often appear as though a particular political regime maintains control of ways of remembering a nation's past, this chapter has illustrated the many ways in which the potential for the production of counter-memories/subjugated knowledges is always a possibility. Narratives of memory which view the past as a distinct entity that can be (re)presented in the present rely on a logocentric understanding of time and

¹⁸⁰ There is some recent scholarship that suggests that an investment in a "collective sense of victimhood has important effects on the way these societies manage the course of the conflict, approach the peace process and eventually reconcile" (Bar-Tal et al, 2009: 230).

meaning. I maintain that recollections of the “past” are always inscribed within inherited ideological frameworks. In this chapter I have focused on (re)constructions of the past via narratives of memory, and in the following chapter, I will interrogate the ways in which this ‘turning to the past’ has been framed within ‘Katyn’ narratives on justice.

Chapter 4: Towards an Ethics of Justice

Introduction

In this final chapter, I engage with narrativisation(s) of ‘Katyń’ that intersect with a broader narrative on ‘justice’. This narrative on justice is located in the inheritance of a Western philosophical tradition, as well as a global discourse on international ‘justice’, one that emerged in the aftermath of WWII. Following Nuremberg and the establishment of a universal concept about what constitutes a ‘crime against humanity’, the (linear) narrative of international justice tends to revolve around identifying, responding to, and then dealing appropriately with ‘accountability’. The ultimate goal of justice in this narrative is traditionally achieved through condemning and/or punishing the perpetrators. However, it has become more common for nations to work towards ‘reconciliation’ in the aftermath of an injustice, and this seems to be the case with ‘Katyń’. The narrative of reconciliatory justice (also linear), takes ‘accountability’ as its focal point, beginning with acknowledging or establishing responsibility for a crime (often requested in the form of an apology). This is the precursor to a series of events that must take place in order to address and/or define this wrong (this can include trials, tribunals, compensation, rehabilitation, and so on). When these demands have been met, justice has been finalised, thus leading to ‘reconciliation’. Drawing on the insights of Derrida and Lyotard, I question the limitations of ‘justice’ as it is conceived in these narratives, via a discussion of ‘Katyń’ (in particular the issues around apology, the Nuremberg Trials, genocide, compensation, and reconciliation). I explore the possibilities for (re)thinking justice outside of universality, and offer potential ways in which we might (re)read ‘Katyń’. I use Derrida and Lyotard in this chapter, not only to investigate what each theorist can add to the discourse of justice in relation to ‘Katyń’, but also to consider how we might respond to other ‘events’ and/or (in)justices.

Defining ‘Justice’ / ‘Crimes Against Humanity’

The possibility of enabling new ways of thinking about some of the dominant narratives that have emerged on ‘Katyń’ involves a simultaneous critique of the logic of an inherited (Western) concept of ‘justice’ that shapes these narrativisations. One need only look at a common dictionary definition of justice in order to reveal the presumptions that are dispersed

throughout this understanding of justice. The Webster dictionary for example, defines justice as:

1. *a*: the maintenance or administration of what is just especially by the impartial adjustment of conflicting claims or the assignment of merited rewards or punishments
b: judge
c: the administration of law; *especially* : the establishment or determination of rights according to the rules of law or equity
2. *a*: the quality of being just, impartial, or fair
b (1): the principle or ideal of just dealing or right action (2) : conformity to this principle or ideal : righteousness
c: the quality of conforming to law
3. conformity to truth, fact, or reason : correctness (*Merriam Webster Online*, 2013)¹⁸¹.

Justice, as it is conceived here, is loaded with logocentric assumptions and binary oppositions, making ‘justice’ fertile ground for a deconstructive (re)reading. Justice is understood as the establishment of a consenting narrative; it involves compensation/punishment; it is achieved via the administration of law; it is maintained via conformity to the law; it requires the imposition of a rule (a judgement); justice (and law) is impartial/fair; and justice is truth. As with any attempt to define some ‘thing’ within a ‘fixed’ meaning, this interpretation of justice relies on the assumption that the meaning(s) of the other concepts within its definition are also well-established, and that there is a pure essential quality to these concepts (for example, law, right, morality, and truth). What this definition suggests is that the current narrative of justice, functions in much the same way as a grand narrative. The idea that the law is impartial and related to truth/fact/reason serves to legitimate the use of the law and to justify the use of (violent) force. Derrida and Lyotard’s insights enable a (re)interpretation of justice, which challenges this dominant narrative of justice, and its effects.

This definition has been universalised within the grand narrative of international law that emerged after WWII. Significant to this narrative were the precedents set by international legal tribunals such as the Nuremberg and Tokyo trials, and the “international institution of a juridical concept... the ‘crime against humanity’” (Derrida, 2001a: 29). The universal acceptance of this concept has been accompanied by a growing belief that perpetrators of

¹⁸¹ <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/justice?show=0&t=1359097637>

crimes (particularly crimes against humanity), should be held accountable¹⁸² for crimes of the past, and that it was the task of international law to intervene in facilitating this justice¹⁸³. While the crime against humanity has become a ‘consenting narrative’ as such, the question of how best to pursue ‘justice’ has been addressed in multiple ways, including, but not limited to, trials and tribunals¹⁸⁴, truth commissions¹⁸⁵, political apologies¹⁸⁶, and reconciliation¹⁸⁷, in turn leading to a proliferation of discourses and definitions of justice. My discussion focuses on a critique of the logic of this universal narrative, and the ways in which these intersect with some of the ‘Katyn’ narratives on and around justice.

‘Katyn’ and Justice

In the fifty odd years between the discovery of the graves at Katyn and Gorbachev’s admission of Soviet involvement, there have been a few attempts to have the Katyn case heard in a court of law (namely, the Nuremberg Trials, the American and British efforts in 1950s and 1970s respectively). However, since Poland had been a “satellite state of the Soviet Union” (Scharf & Szonert-Biniendam, 2012: 12) during this time, the Polish government was “not in the position to pursue any independent investigation into the Katyn crime or any

¹⁸² From around the 1980s and 1990s, the term “transitional justice” has been used to describe the various processes (judicial and non-judicial) “by which a state seeks to redress the violations of a prior regime” (Fletcher & Weinstein, 2002: 574). Hayner claims that towards the end of the twentieth century, many countries were “facing questions of justice and accountability in a wide range of political contexts, following the end of a military regime or repressive government, or after a civil war” (Hayner, 2011: 8).

¹⁸³ Marrus observes that the international human rights discourse has “drawn upon a growing consensus among political élites and other concerned individuals that rights were universal, that there was an obligation to promote them, and that doing so was a proper objective of diplomacy and international organizations” (Marrus, 2007: 86).

¹⁸⁴ For example, the War Crime Tribunals following the Balkan wars (Auerbach, 2005: 471) and the three processes which were established to deal with issues of justice and reconciliation after the 1994 genocide in Rwanda: The International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR); National Genocide Trials (NGTs); and (from 2001) Gacaca jurisdictions (Apuuli, 2009: 12; see also Fletcher & Weinstein, 2002: 577).

¹⁸⁵ Arguably the most famous of these truth commissions is the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) that was established in the late 1990s. It has been argued that this shift towards truth commissions as a response to past atrocities is indicative of a movement which questions the effectiveness of traditional retributive approaches to address the legacy of ‘crimes against humanity’. Kohen proposes that the “experiences offered to the world” by the TRC “suggested that the retributive framework of Western justice systems might be lacking in some important respect” (Kohen, 2009: 399-400). This framework equates justice with the punishment of perpetrators. Recent interventions, however, focus less on what to do with perpetrators but how best to address the needs of the victims (these needs include “information, truth-telling, empowerment, and restitution” (Kohen, 2009: 401) and issues such as “healing, reconciliation, apology, acknowledgment, and forgiveness (to a lesser degree) have become central to the transitional justice debate” (Hamber, 2007: 115). The term ‘restorative’ justice has been applied to this ‘dialogic’ approach to justice (Enns, 2007: 25-26).

¹⁸⁶ For a comprehensive list of major political apologies (and related events), from 1077 – 2002, see *Political Apologies: Chronological List*, 2003, <http://www.upenn.edu/pnc/politicalapologies.html>

¹⁸⁷ Restorative justice is commonly associated with dialogues about reconciliation and forgiveness. Kohen notes that one of the goals of a restorative approach to justice is to make conditions for forgiveness and reconciliation more favourable” (Kohen, 2009: 416).

compensation claims against the Soviet Union” (Scharf & Szonert-Biniendam, 2012: 12). Consequently, the current dialogue about justice emerged in the years following the democratisation of Poland and the collapse of Soviet Communism in Russia. The discussions that took place at the recent Cleveland Symposium and Experts’ Meeting (hereinafter referred to as CSEM), (re)confirmed that these issues are still part of the ‘Katyn’ narrative on justice. Held in February 2011, the CSEM¹⁸⁸ brought together “leading international experts”¹⁸⁹ on legal theory, international law, and the Katyn massacre (Scharf & Szonert-Biniendam, 2012: 3), with the intended aim of exploring “options for accountability, disclosure, dissemination of knowledge, and reparations related to the Katyn crime” (Scharf & Szonert-Biniendam, 2012: 4). A summary report¹⁹⁰ compiled after the symposium indicated that there was conflict among the experts on how best to define the ‘massacre’. The report states that while Katyn is often described as a ‘massacre,’ the “assembled experts did not believe ‘massacre’ adequately characterized the Katyn crime” (Scharf & Szonert-Biniendam, 2012: 4-5). Various definitions of ‘Katyn’ were put forward by the experts, including ‘war crime’, ‘crime against humanity’, and ‘genocide’, with one expert suggesting that the most “useful label” was ‘genocidal terrorism’ (Scharf & Szonert-Biniendam, 2012: 4-5). Despite these conflicting interpretations of ‘Katyn’ all of the experts agreed that ‘Katyn’ “represents one of history’s most serious international crimes” (Scharf & Szonert-Biniendam, 2012: 5), and that it was therefore “a matter of international law that Russia was held accountable for committing the crime” (Scharf & Szonert-Biniendam, 2012: 5, 6, 7). While most people agree that the killings occurred, what they mean and how they should be defined indicates that ‘Katyn’ is not a simple ‘fact’, but a narrativised event open to multiple (re)interpretation(s).

Of the various recommendations proposed by the symposium attendees in order for “justice to be rendered” (Scharf & Szonert-Biniendam, 2012: 6) for ‘Katyn’, they tend to refer

¹⁸⁸ Hosted by the Frederick K. Cox International Law Center and the Libra Institute, the symposium was held at the Case Western Reserve University School of Law.

¹⁸⁹ Experts in “jurisprudence, international criminal law, and the Katyn crime, as well as representatives from Poland and Russia” (Scharf & Szonert-Biniendam, 2012: 3), and they included: Wesley Adamczyk, victims’ representative; Prof. John Q. Barrett, St. John University School of Law; Prof. Janusz Cisek, Centre for European Studies, Jagiellonian University; Hon. David Crane, Founding Chief Prosecutor at the Special Court for Sierra Leone; Allan Gerson, Chairman, AG International Law, PLLC and former Senior Counsel to U.S. Ambassadors to the U.N., Jeane Kirkpatrick and Vernon Walters; Alexander Guryanov, Ph.D, Polish Program Coordinator, Memorial Group, Moscow, Russia; Prof. Kenneth Ledford, Department of History, Case Western Reserve University; Dr. Teresa Kaczorowska, Polish journalist and author; Prof. Mark Kramer, Director of the Cold War Studies Project, Harvard University; Prof. William A. Schabas, Director, Irish Centre for Human Rights, Galway; Prof. Milena Sterio, Cleveland-Marshall College of Law, Cleveland State University; and Maria Szonert-Binienda, Esq., President, Libra Institute, Inc. (Scharf & Szonert-Biniendam, 2012: 3-4).

¹⁹⁰ The authors of the report claim that this report “does not seek to reflect a consensus or majority view of the participating experts, but rather to indicate expert opinions on a variety of issues and proposals relating to contemporary efforts to address the Katyn crime” (Scharf & Szonert-Biniendam, 2012: 4).

to the same issues that were addressed in the 1990s, and are now part of the common idiom of international law. The report states that justice requires “a full accounting of the truth” (Scharf & Szonert-Biniendam, 2012: 7)¹⁹¹, prosecution¹⁹² of the ‘crime’ via a trial¹⁹³, the establishment of an international tribunal¹⁹⁴, recognition of genocide¹⁹⁵, compensation¹⁹⁶, and apology¹⁹⁷. The discussion tended towards an understanding of justice as ‘reconciliation’, with an emphasis on “accountability”¹⁹⁸. These proposals follow the linear narrative of justice that I outlined at the beginning of this chapter. While the issue of ‘accountability’ was established at Nuremberg (particularly in relation to trials and punishment), I will first address the issue of ‘accountability’ (understood as acknowledging and establishing ‘responsibility’) as it relates to ‘apology’, and how this is constituted within reconciliatory justice.

¹⁹¹ The report claims that there are still 35 classified files which have “yet to be provided to the Polish government or released to the public”. (Scharf & Szonert-Biniendam, 2012: 10), and according to the experts “until Russia hands over to Poland all relevant documents... the truth of Katyn will remain incomplete” (Scharf & Szonert-Biniendam, 2012: 8) - Several experts also mentioned that a “knowledge gap still exists regarding the identity of the perpetrators of the Katyn massacre” (Scharf & Szonert-Biniendam, 2012: 9) and also that the “list of the names of the victims is still incomplete” (Scharf & Szonert-Biniendam, 2012: 10)

¹⁹² The experts determined that responsibility for prosecution lay with Poland (Scharf & Szonert-Biniendam, 2012: 12), Russia (Scharf & Szonert-Biniendam, 2012: 20) and some even suggested that the USA should intervene (Scharf & Szonert-Biniendam, 2012: 23 & 27).

¹⁹³ While Russia is not a member of the EU, the report argues that the EU-Russian Partnership and Cooperation Agreement “provides for a political, organizational and legal framework to carry out dialog and cooperation between the two neighboring entities” Scharf & Szonert-Biniendam, 2012: 13).

¹⁹⁴ The report maintains that the U.N. Security Council could assert its authority under Chapter VII of the U.N. Charter and thus “establish a Commission of Experts or Special Tribunal to document or prosecute the Katyn crime, as it did for atrocities in the former Yugoslavia, Rwanda, and Lebanon” (Scharf & Szonert-Biniendam, 2012: 17-18).

¹⁹⁵ Some of the experts suggested that if Katyn was viewed within the context of the Soviet occupation of Eastern Poland when the Soviet Union “acted in alliance with Nazi Germany pursuant to the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact”, then this could “potentially give the Republic of Poland a cause of action before the International Court of Justice under the compromisory clause of the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, to which both Poland and Russia are signatories” which states that “disputes between the Contracting Parties relating to the interpretation or implementation of the Convention are to be submitted to the International Court of Justice at the request of any of the parties to the dispute” (Scharf & Szonert-Biniendam, 2012: 14-15).

¹⁹⁶ There were various suggestions as to how this compensation could be administered, for example the Russian Federation could “establish an endowment fund providing the financial foundation for the educational establishment in Poland such as museum, institute or academia dedicated to the Katyn -related subject matter” (Scharf & Szonert-Biniendam, 2012: 22) or “symbolic gestures from Russia, including compensating Katyn families who paid to build cemeteries to memorialize the dead” (Scharf & Szonert-Biniendam, 2012: 22).

¹⁹⁷ According to the report, one expert “proposed adoption of legislation to include: recognition of wrong that has been done through suppression of evidence and Yalta arrangements, apology, compensation through the establishment of a Katyn Truth and Reconciliation Institute, compensation for the Katyn families with U.S. citizenship, and educational outreach through the Department of Education, the Holocaust Museum and other partners” (Scharf & Szonert-Biniendam, 2012: 25).

¹⁹⁸ The report claims that all the experts agreed that the “day of accountability for the Katyn crime has not yet arrived” (Scharf & Szonert-Biniendam, 2012: 6).

An Apology for ‘Katyń’: Acknowledgement or Accountability?

The pursuit of human rights¹⁹⁹ involves turning towards the past (Derrida, 2001a: 28) in order to address past injustices, and make amends. An effect of this universal justice narrative is that the landscape of international politics has become saturated with the proliferation of political apologies (Marrus, 2007: 86), and an increasing focus on forgiveness and reconciliation as a response to conflict²⁰⁰. The terms ‘forgiveness’ and ‘reconciliation’²⁰¹ are now widely used in politics, but most scholars in the field acknowledge that they are religious concepts that have become secularised in the twentieth century²⁰². This global narrative, which Derrida calls the “grand forgiveness” or the “grand scene of repentance” (Derrida, 2001a: 29), resembles a Christian confessional narrative in which the sinner confesses to guilt, repents, promises not to sin again, and is then absolved²⁰³. According to Derrida, this religious²⁰⁴ language has shaped the narrative, becoming the “universal idiom of law, of politics, of the economy, or of diplomacy” (Derrida, 2001a: 28)²⁰⁵, particularly reconciliatory

¹⁹⁹ What has been labelled “the developing moral consensus” (Marrus, 2007: 86).

²⁰⁰ See for example: Hamber (2007: 115); Auerbach (2005: 470); Kohen (2009: 399-400); and Schaap (2006: 623-624). See also Hayner (2011); Osiel (1997); Teitel (2000); Minow (1998); and Roht-Arriaza (1995).

²⁰¹ This global narrative of a “politics of forgiveness” (or what Derrida calls the “globalisation” of forgiveness (Derrida, 2001a: 28), revolves around three interrelated concepts: apology, forgiveness and reconciliation, and while there is a lot of debate regarding the definitions of these concepts and how (or if) they function, the common ‘narrative’ of this politics can be summarised as follows: an apology is a request for forgiveness that begins with the acknowledgement of a transgression/a wrongdoing; forgiveness is the overcoming of any ill-feelings or resentment which a victim (an individual or collective) feels towards an offender (an individual or collective); and reconciliation refers to the processes which are utilised by former enemies working towards amicable relations after a transgression. An apology does not necessarily lead to forgiveness and similarly, one may choose to forgive if there is no apology. Reconciliation on the other hand, appears to require an apology or acknowledgement of the crime/s in order for the processes to begin. Forgiveness is not necessarily an outcome of reconciliation, but for some, reconciliatory politics enable the process of individual or collective forgiveness. Kohen, for instance, argues that it is the “experience of restorative justice – with its emphasis on forgiving, letting go of the offense” that “offers victims the possibility of both healing and empowerment” (Kohen, 2009: 404).

²⁰² Nicholas Tavuchis, for example, describes an apology as a “secular ritual of expiation” (Tavuchis, 1991: x). See also Schaap (2006) and Auerbach (2005). Derrida similarly argues that geopolitical dialogue about forgiveness is informed by a religious inheritance - what he names the Abrahamic tradition, or religions of the Book (Christianity, Judaism, and Islam).

²⁰³ Derrida refers to the processes involved in reconciliatory politics as an “economic transaction” which both “confirms and contradicts the Abrahamic tradition of which we are speaking” (Derrida, 2001a: 34).

²⁰⁴ What Derrida calls the Abrahamic language.

²⁰⁵ Derrida points to an important tension that lies at the heart of this inheritance which includes “a conjunction at once double and contradictory” (Derrida, 2001a: 35) between, on the one hand, a “demand for the unconditional, gracious, infinite, an economic forgiveness granted to the guilty as guilty, without counterpart, even to those who do not repent or ask forgiveness”, and on the other hand, a “conditional forgiveness proportionate to the recognition of the fault, to repentance, to the transformation of the sinner who then explicitly asks forgiveness” (Derrida, 2001a: 34-35).

justice²⁰⁶. The issue of ‘forgiveness’ does appear in Polish ‘Katyn’ narratives in both religious²⁰⁷ and political-legal²⁰⁸ contexts. I contend that what is often referred to as ‘forgiveness’ within this global discourse, amounts to a “therapy of reconciliation” (Derrida, 2001a: 41). Furthermore, current dialogues around ‘Katyn’ and the issue of ‘justice’ tend to emphasise the need for a Polish-Russian ‘reconciliation’, so I will focus on apology and reconciliation in this chapter.

As discussed in Chapter 1, ever since Gorbachev’s admission of Soviet involvement in ‘Katyn’, there has been continued public discussion in Poland regarding the need for an official Russian apology for the Katyn massacre (Cienciala et al, 2007: 257). And yet while Yeltsin rejected Polish demands for an official apology in his correspondence to Wałęsa in 1995 (Cienciala et al, 2007: 257, 261; Paul, 2010: 349), one could argue that Yeltsin had already ‘apologised’ a few years prior. In 1993, Yeltsin knelt down before the Katyn cross in Warsaw, asking Poles to ‘Forgive us, if you can’ (Etkind & Finnin et al, 2012: 115). A common understanding of an apology is that it is an “act of expressing remorse and asking for forgiveness” (Auerbach, 2005: 476). And for most scholars on the subject of apology and reconciliation, a fundamental aspect of the apology is “acknowledgement”²⁰⁹ of a wrong, an

²⁰⁶ Scharf and Szonert-Biniendam, for example, claim that several experts at the CSEM, “felt that any meaningful reconciliation must be based on atonement, *contrition*, accountability, remembrance and deterrence” (Scharf & Szonert-Biniendam, 2012: 7, my emphasis).

²⁰⁷ Pope John Paul II spoke to the Katyn families in Rome in 1996 and said to them: “You are here as a family so that you will not forget but likewise so that you will forgive” (cited in Kaczorowska, 2006: 31). Similarly, Father Zdzisław Peszkowski (1918 – 2007), a Kozelsk escapee who became the official chaplain for the Katyn families dedicated his life to the preservation of the memory of Katyn and a “call to forgiveness” (Etkind & Finnin et al, 2012: 21). This Catholic narrative of forgiveness is not restricted to religious leaders. In a speech given by Polish Prime Minister, Jerzy Buzek, at the opening of the Polish War Cemetery at Katyn in 2000, he said: “when Our mutual teacher Jesus Christ was asked how many times a human being should forgive – he answered seventy-seven times. Here at Katyn we should remember those words and learn the difficult art of forgiveness” (cited in Cienciala et al, 2007: 352).

²⁰⁸ Sanford outlines the results of a survey conducted within the Katyn Family circles in 2003 regarding the issue of forgiveness (Sanford, 2005: 229). Responses to this questionnaire revealed that an overwhelming majority (190 out of 200 respondents) were against the granting of unconditional forgiveness and only 5 per cent said they were willing to grant it. About a third of respondents said that they would forgive if suitable contrition or compensation were offered, while another third said they would do so if, additionally, forgiveness was requested directly. A sixth of the respondents considered that the following conditions needed to be fulfilled in order for forgiveness to be granted: That judicial investigations be completed; that all existing documentation about the massacre be made available; that an end be brought to public secrecy so that Russian public opinion would be conscious of the crime(s) that had been committed; and that the atrocity and its perpetrators be morally condemned by an international judicial tribunal (Sanford, 2005: 229). A number of responses also “indicated dissatisfaction with the absence of a full and unreserved apology by the President and Duma of the Russian Republic” (Sanford, 2005: 230), and only a tenth considered that the massacre could not be forgiven under any circumstance (Sanford, 2005: 229). What this survey indicates to me is that the dominant idea(l) of forgiveness that is articulated by many of the respondents draws on normalising discourses about law and justice that are inscribed within a dialogue about reconciliation.

²⁰⁹ See for example: Tavuchis (1991: 6); Govier (2003: 84); Marrus (2007: 79).

element that is essential to all forms²¹⁰ of apology. But while Yeltsin's (non)apology explicitly refers to forgiveness, and indicates acknowledgment of and responsibility for a wrong via the invocation of a collective "us", this is not considered an official apology. Many critics of the Russian position on 'Katyń' claim that Russia has not done enough to apologise to the Poles (Etkind & Finnin et al, 2012: 102), yet there has been no denial of Soviet involvement since 1990. Etkind and Finnin et al out point out that since Mikhail Gorbachev's admission of Soviet responsibility, every Russian leader has "admitted the guilt of the Soviet government in the massacres" (Etkind & Finnin et al, 2012: 101-102)²¹¹. One could argue then this crucial aspect of an apology – the acknowledgment of responsibility for a transgression – has been achieved; the 'who' and 'what' of 'accountability' has been established. But while the collective apology²¹², like the individual apology, is seen as an act of expressing (individual) responsibility and remorse²¹³ (Auerbach, 2005: 476), official apologies²¹⁴ must "put things on record, to document as a prelude to reconciliation" (Tavuchis, 1991:109 cited in Marrus, 2007: 81; see also Auerbach, 2005: 476)²¹⁵. Therefore Yeltsin's (non)apology in 1993 and the continued acknowledgment (or non-denial) of responsibility by Russian leaders, does not sufficiently meet the international standards of 'accountability' in that the establishment of guilt for a crime must be accompanied by a series of judicial and/or institutional interventions. In order to function within a global politics of reconciliation, the official apology must respond to a definition of 'accountability' codified in international law.

Reconciliatory 'Justice'

Reconciliation, broadly defined, refers to the resolution of a dispute or conflict as a collaborative process that results in the restoration of some sort of order, or "peace".

²¹⁰ Nicholas Tavuchis (1991: 17) differentiates between four models of apology: "from one to one (individual to individual); from one to many (individual to collectivity); from many to one (collectivity to individual); from many to many (collectivity to collectivity)" (Auerbach, 2005: 476).

²¹¹ President Yeltsin in 1992, President Putin in 2002, and President Medvedev in 2009. (Etkind & Finnin et al, 2012: 101-102).

²¹² Collective apologies for historic wrongs are "symbolic acts" which may be communicated on behalf of wrongdoers – often by a state official, to victims or their ancestors (Marrus, 2007: 80-81).

²¹³ As well as expressing remorse, the apology is also seen as "asking for forgiveness" (Auerbach, 2005: 476). This has prompted Derrida to label this entire geopolitical scene as prompting Derrida to call this phenomena the "grand forgiveness" or the "grand scene of repentance" (Derrida, 2001a: 29).

²¹⁴ Tavuchis uses refers to 'official apologies' as "collective apologetic speech" Tavuchis (1991:109).

²¹⁵ Marrus adds that in order to function as a 'prelude to reconciliation' official apologies "often involve public ceremonies, carefully documented declarations, and sometimes even legislated pronouncements" (Marrus, 2007: 81).

Kriesberg, for example, defines reconciliation as a “relatively amicable relationship typically established after a rupture in relations involving one sided or mutual infliction of extreme injury” (Kriesberg, 1998: 351 cited in Auerbach, 2005: 474). The use of the prefix “re” in reconciliation and its related components - (restoration²¹⁶, rehabilitation, rebuild, relationship, resolve) – promises the (re)establishment of an idea(l) state (political and/or emotional²¹⁷) that existed prior to the conflict, one that is preferable to the present and can be retrieved from the past²¹⁸. The nostalgic longing for a lost presence that can be retrieved/resurrected/reconciled/restored assumes that this presence actually existed in the past (as a pure presence), and that it can be (re)activated in a pure now-present. Referring to the possibility of reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, Diprose argues that the “re” in reconciliation requires the “restoration of an original harmony that... has never existed [between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians]” (Diprose 2002: 148, cited in Schaap, 2006: 622). If a Russian-Polish reconciliation were to be conceived in this way, it would similarly be problematic in that their relationship in the ‘past’ has always been one of tension, discord and conflict. A reconciliatory politics that promised a (re)turn to the ‘past’ (however that past it is (re)interpreted via narrative/s), promises the (re)turn of something (a harmony) that was not there (and the non-existence of this harmony is reiterated in Polish and Russian narratives). More importantly, a constant (re)turning to the idea(l)s of the past, risks the repetition of inherited logic and concepts (such as Polish messianism or Stalinist Marxism), and in so doing, encourages a (re)turn to the systemic and ideological assumptions that are often the cause of the very conflict(s) which they are attempting to resolve²¹⁹. Paradoxically, the same structure/logic that makes the promise a possibility also ensures its impossibility.

The relationship between apology and reconciliation – and the possibility for one to lead to the other – relies on this logic of presence. The goal of reconciliation, the “conclusion” of

²¹⁶ The ‘re’ in restorative justice functions in the same way - to restore means to reinstate order, to give back what was taken, to make whole, or perfect. The focus on victim narratives and truth-telling in restorative approaches suggests also that by speaking of trauma, survivors regain lost worlds and lost selves (Minow, 2000, cited in Kohen, 2009: 402). The emergence of the victim narrative within the political sphere has been explained by the “growth of (largely Western) expressive, psychologically minded individualism from the late 1980s onward” (Summerfield, 2001, cited in Hamber, 2007: 116-117).

²¹⁷ The intersections between reconciliation and forgiveness tend to be located within the emotional needs of the victim: Kohen (2009: 404), Govier (2002: 144) and Minow (1998: 16) propose that in order for people to rebuild relations, it is necessary to overcome emotions such as resentment, anger, bitterness and so on.

²¹⁸ Similarly, Schaap argues that the “re” in reconciliation refers to a return, to the restoration of friendship or harmony following the rupture of a relationship by some wrongdoing” (Schaap, 2006: 622).

²¹⁹ In a similar vein, Dianne Enns suggests that conflict resolution strategies need to resist the logic of victim and perpetrator because an “attachment to victimhood is an attachment to the very divisions instigated and perpetuated by those in need of stabilizing their rule” (Enns, 2007: 33).

this grand narrative begins (to end) by (re)turning towards the past (which is also where the narrative begins, that is, by establishing who should be held accountable). This can be seen for example in Kriesberg's understanding of reconciliation, which, like an apology, begins with the acknowledgment of a wrong. Kriesberg proposes that there are four steps that must be taken (on both sides of the conflict) in order to achieve reconciliation between former enemies. He writes that they must:

[A]cknowledge the reality of the terrible acts that were perpetrated; accept with compassion those who committed injurious conduct, as well as acknowledging each other's sufferings; believe that their injustices are being redressed and anticipate mutual security and well-being (Kriesberg 1998: 352 cited in Auerbach, 2005: 474).

Reconciliation, as it is defined here, emphasises that a mutual relationship is integral to the practice of reconciliatory politics. For acknowledgement to occur as the precursor to this dialogue, the conflicting parties must reach an agreement as to how to define the 'crime', there must be a consenting narrative which establishes the "reality" of what really was; for the narrative to progress, attitudinal adjustments must be made on both sides in order to enable an empathic reciprocity towards one another, and there should be attempts made to 'right' the wrong(s); the narrative conclusion requires evidence of an established trust in order to move forward, a shared movement in which both parties maintain the mutual relationship which the reconciliation made possible – a future promise which must somehow be enacted/made/materialised in the present. There are some (re)interpretations of reconciliation, which more explicitly evoke the temporal-futurity of reconciliatory interventions implicated here, and I will (re)turn to these towards the end of the chapter.

The understanding of reconciliatory practices as separate/distinct from a retributive inheritance encourages a binary reading of the two approaches that favours reconciliation. The use of punishment in retributive systems means that it is often interpreted as a more violent response to injustice, and is associated with revenge. Reconciliatory approaches, on the other hand, appear to encourage an emotional dialogue (forgiveness, healing, empathy, and so on), and so reconciliation sounds 'nice' (peaceful, not vengeful). I propose that while their approaches and intended outcomes may differ, retributive and reconciliatory discourses operate within a shared (dominant) inheritance of international law, and thus can function to (re)produce similar effects. While most definitions of reconciliation emphasise the resistance

to use violent force (as punishment), Susan Dwyer, who has studied the process of reconciliation in South Africa, suggests that reconciliation is achieved via “narrative incorporation” – the bringing together of “apparently incompatible descriptions of events into narrative equilibrium” (Dwyer, 2003: 96, 100–109 cited in Marrus, 2007: 96). A reconciliation that is understood as the consolidation of narratives about the past, or the (re)“construction of a common discourse” (Marrus, 2007: 95), suggests that it must involve an appropriation of the other. An understanding of justice as consensus is inscribed within our traditional legal inheritance – a justice that is inextricable from law, and unachievable and undefinable without law. While reconciliatory approaches have been viewed as an attempt to address justice via non-traditional-judicial mechanisms, this ‘justice’ still requires institutional interventions, and official archiving.

This understanding of reconciliatory justice informs narratives on ‘Katyn’. Following the 2010 plane crash, Arseni Roginski, president of Memorial, was asked whether Russia should apologise to Poland for the crime of Katyn. Roginski proposes that Russians should “assume our civic responsibility – individually and as a nation” (Roginski & Schmid, 2010). What this means for ‘Katyn’ then is:

Quite simply – it means bringing to light the whole truth. This has not happened yet. We have to reopen the investigations into this crime, which were shut down in 2004. We have to provide access to all archive material on the subject, without exception. There must be a court ruling on the crimes in Katyn. We have to rehabilitate the victims. It is extremely important to define the events in legal terminology. We cannot simply name a set of names (as the military courts did) and say that these persons overstepped their competencies. This makes a mockery of the victims. We must adopt the norms of international law: Katyn is a crime against humanity or a war crime. We have to publicly name everyone involved, Stalin included. I am not insisting that we drag the names of every last executioner or henchman into the public eye, but all those pulling the wires behind the scenes must be named (Roginski & Schmid, 2010).

For Roginski, reconciliation can only be achieved through the full revelation of the ‘truth’²²⁰. This ‘truth’ is to be found within archival material, a trial, rehabilitation of the victims, a public condemnation of everyone involved, and a (re)narrativisation of the crime within a narrative of international law²²¹. In order to develop this critique of the inheritance of justice-as-law, I will now turn to the “foundational event” in the current dominant narrative on international justice – the Nuremberg Trials.

Nuremberg: Justice (and the force of) (International) Law

The IMT is recognised as a “major foundational event of our era” (Hirsh, 2008: 729), in that it has been viewed as one of the “law’s first great efforts to submit mass atrocity to principled judgment” (Douglas, 2001: 1). In so doing, it ushered “in a new era of international human rights” (Hirsh, 2008: 701), setting the standards for international law²²². There are three principles in particular that have been credited to the efforts of the IMT:

- Accountability²²³;
- Trials (and punishment)²²⁴;
- The establishment of a universal concept of ‘humanity’ (which led to the global discourse around ‘human rights’), and an international legal system who had the authority to protect and/or punish accordingly²²⁵.

²²⁰ Sterio holds a similar view regarding Polish-Russian reconciliation. He writes that while the “Russian acknowledgment of its secret police’s responsibility in the Katyń killings represents a tremendously important step toward a potential reconciliation between Russia and Poland”, there are other steps that could be taken by both countries in order to continue to work towards this goal (Sterio, 2012: 631). Sterio suggests that “Russia could potentially accept the label of war crimes or crimes against humanity for its acts at Katyń; a true acceptance of responsibility could include an acknowledgment of Katyń as genocide, although this label appears to be more controversial. Russia could also continue to honor Katyń victims at the erected memorial, which Russian leaders should routinely visit along with their Polish counterparts. Poland could formally accept a Russian apology and move forward while acknowledging the past and ensuring that similar crimes never happen in the future” (Sterio, 2012: 631).

²²¹ Roginski stresses the importance of defining the “events in judicial terms” (Roginski & Schmid, 2010).

²²² Rosenberg points out that “Nuremberg’s norms are now part of most major legal codes, and the United Nations in 1950 adopted a list of seven principles from Nuremberg’s charter and judgement that has come to known as the Nuremberg Principles” (Rosenberg, 1995: 350-351).

²²³ Meaning that “individuals can and should be held accountable for the most serious international crimes” (Kirsch, 2007: 502).

²²⁴ The idea that “individuals should only be punished through a fair trial which safeguards the rights of the accused” (Kirsch, 2007: 502).

²²⁵ See for example, Marrus (2007: 86).

The frameworks established at Nuremberg continue to be upheld and idealised, informing the entire scene of international law (understood as justice). Thus a critique of the logic of these concepts is necessary in order to reveal the assumptions that shape our understandings of justice and injustice, ‘humanity’ and ‘rights’.

Hirsch proposes that the classic Western narrative of the trials is an “Anglo-American tale of liberal triumph” (Hirsh, 2008: 701) in which the Western Allied representations “put the desire for vengeance aside and gave the Nazis a fair trial before the law” (Hirsh, 2008: 701)²²⁶. According to Hirsch, the wide dissemination and acceptance of this Western (predominantly American) narrative, “testifies to the success of the U.S. and its Western allies” in seizing control of the trials and “making Nuremberg their own” (Hirsh, 2008: 703, 729-730). A common critique of the IMT is that the justice sought was “victors’ justice” (Hirsh, 2008: 702 and Kirsch, 2007: 506). As I discussed in Chapter 1, the general Polish view is that the Western alliance with the Soviet government means they were complicit in the silencing of ‘Katyń’, and therefore guilty of not adequately pursuing the ‘just’ trial of ‘Katyń’ at Nuremberg. In avoiding the London Poles’ attempts to introduce evidence and witnesses that argued for their case, Nuremberg was considered a failure from the Polish perspective in that the ‘perpetrators’ (the Soviets) were neither correctly identified or punished (Zawodny, 1962: 74). The Katyń case was dismissed and did not appear in the final verdicts of the IMT (Zaslavsky, 2008: 63-64), and while no one was ‘wrongly’ accused of the killings, neither was anyone ‘rightly’ accused of them. Nuremberg was also considered a ‘failure’ from the Soviet point of view then, in that the verdict did not meet their main objective, which was to establish their “‘version’ of the Katyń Massacre in court” (Zaslavsky, 2008: 63-64). So from both the Polish and Russian perspectives, the IMT failed to adequately deal with ‘Katyń’ within its own established (universal) terms (that is, by establishing ‘accountability’ through a ‘just’ trial)²²⁷.

²²⁶ Hirsh argues that this narrative became established in the West “during the long decades of competition between the Soviet Union and the United States” (Hirsh, 2008: 701). Interestingly, Hirsh suggests that this narrative silences the role of the Soviets in shaping these foundational concepts. Hirsh asserts that the Soviets “made significant contributions to the jurisprudence of the IMT from start to finish, with the contribution of the concept of “crimes against peace” in particular. But in spite of these contributions, the Soviets found themselves isolated at Nuremberg, with little influence over the actual course or outcome of the trials” (Hirsh, 2008: 726-727, see pp. 703-710 for more details).

²²⁷ Szonert-Binienda echoes this sentiment arguing that “As long as the Katyń crime remains unpunished, the international justice system born out of Nuremberg does not meet this basic standard” (Szonert-Binienda, 2012: 634-635).

The tribunal claimed that its purpose was to punish ‘war criminals’²²⁸, however, the identification of ‘war criminals’ lay with the victors. The ‘accountable’ had already been defined and established as a “straightforward tale of good versus evil” in which the “Allies agreed from the start that the ‘Hitlerites alone’ (the Germans and the other Axis powers) would be treated as villains” (Hirsh, 2008: 717)²²⁹. However since Nuremberg marks the onset of Cold War politics (Sanford, 2005: 141; Hirsch, 2008), this agreement later worked against the Soviets in that when the German prosecution presented a convincing case for Soviet guilt, the Allied judges dismissed the Katyn case by arguing that “since the crime had not been committed by the Nazis, it was not the duty of the court to launch a further investigation into the incident” (Zaslavsky, 2008: 63). Western triumphalist and Polish ‘Katyn’ narratives on Nuremberg emphasise Soviet efforts to use the trial to manipulate the ‘truth’ and avoid accountability for their own crimes, but it has also been argued that the Americans were similarly “intent on using Nuremberg to advance their own agenda—an agenda that included setting themselves up as the moral arbiters of the postwar order” (Hirsh, 2008: 726). These competing political agendas influenced the outcomes of the trials, and yet the foundational logic of our inheritance of international law, rests on this idea of ‘justice’ (as law) as universal and impartial.

In “Force of Law”, Derrida considers the possibilities for justice through a deconstructive problematisation of the assumed relationship between law and justice. Derrida proposes that the “very emergence of justice and law, the founding and justifying moment that institutes law implies a performative force, which is always an interpretative force” (Derrida, 1992: 13)²³⁰. Laws are often enforced as a response to a violence that is considered to be unjust, but in order for law to be enforced in the name of justice, some type of (violent) force must be used. Since law relies on the idea of ‘justice’ to justify the use of force in the application of law, Derrida asserts that it is not ‘justice’ that is being enforced but “justice as law (*droit*)” (Derrida, 1992: 5). Referring to the work of Michel de Montaigne, Derrida

²²⁸ The main aim of the International Military Tribunal (IMT) at Nuremberg was established as the “just and prompt trial and punishment of the major war criminals of the European Axis” (Frey & Spar, 2008, <http://avalon.law.yale.edu/imt/imtconst.asp#art1>).

²²⁹ Similarly, Zawodny argues that in the case of ‘Katyn’, “the Germans were the accused, and their guilt was to be established. At the moment when German guilt could not be proved, it can be supposed that the jurisdiction of the court ended. It definitely was not the function of this court to establish who killed the Polish prisoners-of-war by arranging a separate investigation to look for the murderers elsewhere” (Zawodny, 1962: 71).

²³⁰ Derrida reflects on the violence already implicit in the very notion of law by deconstructing the phrase ‘to enforce the law’. He notes that when one translates ‘to enforce the law’ into French “one loses this direct or literal allusion to the force that comes from within to remind us that law is always an authorised force, a force that justifies itself or is justified in applying itself, even if this justification may be judged from elsewhere to be unjust or unjustifiable” (Derrida, 1992: 5).

argues, “Laws are not just as laws. One obeys them not because they are just but because they have authority” (Derrida, 1992: 12), and that is the “mystical foundation of their authority” (Derrida, 1992: 12). Laws maintain their validity, not necessarily because they are ‘right’, but because they assert their authority as law with violence. And even if we do not agree with the law, we comply because we fear the possibility of enforcement should we transgress.

At Nuremberg, the Allies had established themselves as the authority on universal law²³¹. This authority is explicitly emphasised in various articles of the IMT charter (Frey & Spar, 2008)²³². But while there have been many critiques of the political motivations of the Allied powers at Nuremberg, the universal narrative of justice, law and humanity that it claimed to be addressing, remains an authorising force in international politics. As I suggested earlier, from the Polish perspective, this universal logic is undermined by the tribunal’s failure to address the issue of ‘Katyn’ by determining responsibility within its own ‘universal’ code. Article 6 of the IMT charter listed the following acts, as “crimes coming within the jurisdiction of the Tribunal for which there shall be individual responsibility” (Frey & Spar, 2008)²³³: (a) Crimes against peace²³⁴; b) War crimes²³⁵; and (c) crimes against humanity²³⁶. In Chapter 1, I referred to the debates around defining Katyn as a war crime as outlined by the Hague and Geneva Conventions. Using the same logic, one could argue that ‘Katyn’ falls into the definitions coded within the IMT charter. Whether one views the Poles killed at Katyn as

²³¹ Arguably replacing the transcendental authority of God in Catholic law which was echoed in the Polish messianic myth of “universal justice”.

²³² See for example Article 3 which states: “Neither the Tribunal, its members nor their alternates can be challenged by the prosecution, or by the Defendants or their Counsel” (Frey & Spar, 2008, <http://avalon.law.yale.edu/imt/imtconst.asp#art3>); Article 25 which states: “All official documents shall be produced, and all court proceedings conducted, in English, French and Russian, and in the language of the Defendant. So much of the record and of the proceedings may also be translated into the language of any country in which the Tribunal is sitting, as the Tribunal considers desirable in the interests of the justice and public opinion” (Frey & Spar, 2008, <http://avalon.law.yale.edu/imt/imtconst.asp#art25>); and Article 26 which states: “The judgment of the Tribunal as to the guilt or the innocence of any Defendant shall give the reasons on which it is based, and shall be final and not subject to review” (Frey & Spar, 2008, <http://avalon.law.yale.edu/imt/imtconst.asp#art26>).

²³³ <http://avalon.law.yale.edu/imt/imtconst.asp#art6>.

²³⁴ Defined as the “planning, preparation, initiation or waging of a war of aggression, or a war in violation of international treaties, agreements or assurances, or participation in a common plan or conspiracy for the accomplishment of any of the foregoing” (Frey & Spar, 2008, <http://avalon.law.yale.edu/imt/imtconst.asp#art6>).

²³⁵ Defined as “violations of the laws or customs of war. Such violations shall include, but not be limited to, murder, ill-treatment or deportation to slave labor or for any other purpose of civilian population of or in occupied territory, murder or ill-treatment of prisoners of war or persons on the seas, killing of hostages, plunder of public or private property, wanton destruction of cities, towns or villages, or devastation not justified by military necessity” (Frey & Spar, 2008, <http://avalon.law.yale.edu/imt/imtconst.asp#art6>).

²³⁶ Defined as “murder, extermination, enslavement, deportation, and other inhumane acts committed against any civilian population, before or during the war; or persecutions on political, racial or religious grounds in execution of or in connection with any crime within the jurisdiction of the Tribunal, whether or not in violation of the domestic law of the country where perpetrated” (Frey & Spar, 2008, <http://avalon.law.yale.edu/imt/imtconst.asp#art6>).

prisoners of war or as members of a civilian population – then the Katyn killings could be considered a war crime defined as the “murder or ill treatment of prisoners of war”, as well as a crime against humanity interpreted as the “murder, extermination, enslavement, deportation, and other inhumane acts committed against any civilian population, before or during the war”. The perceived ‘universality’ of this narrative is further undermined in that it assumes that the definitions of “civilians” and “prisoners of war” are fixed – this relies on a logocentric assumption that the sign refers to a ‘thing’. This points to another problem with the discourse of justice as law, and in particular justice as international law – that is, that the law responds to universals, and as such it is impartial and beyond politics.

The law serves a legitimating function much like the grand narratives that Lyotard critiques in *The Postmodern Condition*. And like grand narratives, the law, in Derrida’s schema, tends towards universality. The law maintains its universality by operating as a “pure form, irreducibly and perpetually concealing its content” (Buonamano, 1998: 169). In order for the authority of the law to remain unquestioned, the law must be “without history, genesis or any possible derivation” (Derrida 1992, 191). The law appears as an empirical fact, a History that goes unexamined. And this includes the passive acceptance of the inheritance of an international law that responds to a universal human. Derrida writes:

Even if words like ‘crime against humanity’ now circulate in everyday language. That event itself was produced and authorised by an international community on a date and according to a figure determined by its history. This overlaps but is not confounded with the history of a reaffirmation of human rights, or a new Declaration of Human Rights (Derrida, 2001a: 29).

As established earlier, since the tribunal consisted mainly of representatives from the democratic west, the trials symbolised triumph of liberal democracy over Nazi-totalitarianism. But as Hirsch points out, a reconsideration of Nuremberg demonstrates that “legal mechanisms (i.e., tribunals) and legal principles (i.e., complicity) can be used for positive or negative ends, to buttress legitimate or illegitimate processes, in liberal or authoritarian states” (Hirsch, 2008: 729)²³⁷. The imperative behind establishing a narrative of international law in

²³⁷ Hirsch also adds that “At the same time, the postwar era has also shown that universal principles, once established, can be used for ends that contradict their original intentions. In the postwar USSR, the international legal principles codified at Nuremberg would be invoked to punish so-called “enemy nations,” Soviet “returnees” from German POW camps, and other groups on trumped-up charges of forming fifth columns and plotting terrorist acts against the Soviet state” (Hirsch, 2008: 729).

order to deal with ‘injustice’ is not unnecessary or wholly negative. What Hirsh is suggesting is that the utilisation of law in order to achieve certain ends is not unique to totalitarian states, and the IMT was not immune to it, and was similarly ‘guilty’ of it. Rosenberg contends for example that the Nuremberg Tribunal was widely “criticized for violating the accepted legal standards of its time” (Rosenberg, 1995: 350). According to Telford Taylor²³⁸, one of the most “glaring” instances of this was the tribunal’s “use of ex post facto justice” (Rosenberg, 1995: 350) – that is, prosecuting crimes, which were not codified at the time that they were committed. Rosenberg contends that:

[S]ince the Third Reich’s criminal code had ‘legalised’ many of the Nazis’ criminal acts, the Nuremberg Tribunal had to reach outside German law to international law to prosecute Nazi activities as war crimes, crimes against peace, and crimes against humanity. It even reached outside international law, as the last category did not exist until Nuremberg invented it (Rosenberg, 1995: 350).

This ‘accountability’ movement is informed by a metaphysical privileging of presence, which maintains that it is possible to (re)call the past, and (re)define and (re)establish it as a reality in the pure present. While Derrida is not against the imperative of this international justice movement²³⁹, it is the *logic* of universal humanism that inflects international law (and other systems of justice as law) that he finds problematic, and what makes it deconstructible.

Derrida argues that it is just that we have laws, but the structural calculability of the law distinguishes it from a Derridean notion of justice, which is incalculable and yet which must at the same time “calculate with the incalculable” (Derrida, 1992: 16). In order to make a supposedly ‘just’ decision within a discourse of law, one must “follow a law or a prescription, a rule” (Derrida, 1992: 23), a pre-established narrative. Derrida proposes, however, that “no exercise of justice as law can be just unless there is a ‘fresh judgement’” (Derrida, 1992: 23) every time. Justice as law is a structural impossibility in that “Each case is other, each decision is different and requires an absolutely unique interpretation, which no existing, coded rule can or ought to guarantee absolutely” (Derrida, 1992: 23). This was implicated at Nuremberg. Rosenberg writes that:

²³⁸ Taylor was chief prosecutor for the U.S. military tribunal.

²³⁹ Derrida argues that this “theatrical space” in which the “grand scene of forgiveness” is played out, responds to a “‘good’ movement” (Derrida, 2001a: 29).

Stepping outside legal norms was defensible at Nuremberg because the whole process never pretended to be normal; it was a series of abnormal trials, in an abnormal period, for abnormal crimes (Rosenberg, 1995: 350).

That international law had to reach outside of itself in order to (re)invent the law in the face of this singular, originary, (yet somehow universal) horror, suggests that there is a structural flaw inherent in any system of justice which claims to respond to singular injustices via a universal transcendental authoritative law. Yet at Nuremberg, the experience of the ‘singular’ in the face of justice (as law) – did not lead to an anticipatory politics of law/justice. When the ‘world’ (which was (re)presented by the IMT ‘authority’) was faced with an unanticipated, unparalleled and unprecedented event²⁴⁰, this did not lead to a critique of the limits within systems of justice in that there was no established discourse within which to understand/judge/define/punish this event. Instead, the tribunal sought to (re)define this injustice, establish a series of laws, institutionalise them, and preserve them, so that if ‘we’ ever witness another unprecedented and unparalleled horror, ‘we’ have the legal mechanisms in place to respond to/define/punish/prosecute the crime. While it was hoped that these laws would prevent future injustices that cannot be anticipated (which again, is a ‘just’ movement), the establishment of these (universal) laws means that ‘we’ (or so ‘they’ tell us) have already anticipated what the response will and should be. It has been established, adequately, how *all* of us will measure, adjudicate, respond to and (re)appropriate the unanticipated. The perceived pureness and uninterpretativeness of law(s) institutionalised at Nuremberg is legitimated by this claim to universality and human rights, and this is how it maintains its authority as a dominant discourse. This law is impartial, universal, and therefore not open to interpretation. Yet at the same time, the lawmakers were exempt from their own universal judgement²⁴¹, as were the “universal humans” that were killed at ‘Katyn’.

It is this paradoxical relationship between law and justice that Derrida finds crucial to deconstruction – more specifically, a deconstructive ethics of justice which gains its momentum via an understanding of the aporetic experience of impossible justice²⁴².

²⁴⁰ Which all events are according to Foucault, Lyotard and Derrida.

²⁴¹ Hirsch argues, for instance that, “British, French, and U.S. war crimes (which arguably included incidents of mistreatment of POWs, the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and the firebombing of German cities) were kept out of the courtroom”(Hirsch, 2008: 727).

²⁴² Derrida argues that “it is the deconstructible structure of law (*droit*), or if you prefer of justice as *droit*, that also insures the possibility of deconstruction. Justice in itself, if such a thing exists, outside or beyond law, is not deconstructible. No more than deconstruction itself, if such a thing exists. Deconstruction is justice” (Derrida, 1992: 14-15). What Derrida means by the claim that ‘deconstruction is justice’ is that deconstruction has always been concerned with dismantling fixed ideas about politics, morality, and so on. Derrida’s understanding of

Deconstruction always finds itself caught between contradictory poles (calculable/incalculable; justice/law; singularity/universality), and they are not diametrically opposed. Derrida claims that while law (*droit*) often “claims to exercise itself in the name of justice” it is also often the case that “justice is required to establish itself in the name of a law that must be ‘enforced’” (Derrida, 1992: 22). Derrida illustrates this contradictory relation between justice and law via a discussion of three aporias of justice (Derrida, 1992: 23-27), which highlight the impossibility of ever being able to make a decision in the present which could be established as a ‘just’²⁴³. Derrida proposes an understanding of justice that is always situated in the future to-come. Derrida writes: “Justice remains, is yet, to come, *à venir*, it has an, it is *à-venir*, the very dimension of events irreducibly to come” (Derrida, 1992: 27). This future-oriented movement of justice resists being narrowly defined by a discourse of law. The open promise of a justice to-come rejects totalising narratives of justice that promise finality²⁴⁴ in the ‘now’. Derrida (re)defines justice as an open anticipatory response to the other²⁴⁵, and the singularity of the other can never be appropriated by law²⁴⁶.

justice then is not bound up with a politics of law (as fixed, universalising), but one that is located within a deconstructive critique of meaning, a justice that functions to challenge dominant hegemonies – a justice that is never final.

²⁴³ The experience of the aporia is a recurring ‘theme’ in Derridean deconstruction. Elsewhere Derrida highlights its relevance, suggesting that the aporia is “not a paralysing structure, something that simply blocks the way with a simple negative effect. The aporia is the experience of responsibility. It is only by going through a set of contradictory injunctions, impossible choices, that we make a choice.... For the responsible decision to be envisaged or taken, we have to go through pain and aporia, a situation in which I do not know what to do” (Derrida, 2001b: 62). While an aporia describes an impossible experience, it is closely related to possibility. The condition of its impossibility enables possibility. Derrida writes that “As its Greek name suggests, a horizon is both the opening and the limit that defines an infinite progress or a period of waiting” (Derrida, 1992: 26). The significance of the aporia to Derridean thinking is that it points to the tensions between multiple points of view, and entry points. The aporia is the opening of other ways of thinking and responding. As a constant negotiation between impossible/possible, the aporia resists totalising narratives, and as such, is an ethical response to the other.

²⁴⁴ This is not to do away with the law entirely, but is intended to be used as a constant pressure on thinking through current systems of justice, in order to negotiate ‘justice’ via a universalising narrative of law. As Buonamano explains it, the ‘to come’ of justice “ensures that it remains present in law and its institutions only as a *possibility* and not as an expectation or idea regulator” (Buonamano, 1998: 173).

²⁴⁵ Derrida’s concept of justice is situated within a deconstructive ethics of alterity inherited from Levinas, which he makes explicit in the following quote: “Levinas says somewhere that the definition of justice... is the relation to the other (*Totality & Infinity*: 89). That is all. Once you relate to the other as other, then something incalculable comes on the scene, something which cannot be reduced to the law or to the history of legal structures. That is what gives deconstruction its movement, that is, constantly to suspect, to criticize the given determinations of culture, of institutions, of legal systems, not in order to destroy them or simply cancel them, but to be just with justice, to respect this relation to the other as justice” (Derrida cited in Caputo, 1997: 17-18).

²⁴⁶ As D’Cruz explains it: “Exposing the gap between law and justice is not part of a strategy to undermine struggles for legislative change, but to show that there are very good reasons *not* to conflate law with justice when engaging in such struggles. Not only would the conflation of the two be susceptible to a conservative view that confuses what can be deemed just with what the law is, but it would also assume that justice can be calculated. It is only by maintaining the space between law and justice that the singularity of the Other, who is beyond and outside of the law, can be given room to interrupt the universality and generality of calculated laws. For Derrida, it is justice that requires (calculable) law to negotiate with its incalculability. (D’Cruz, 1996: 166). Derrida’s critique of law is not a critique for critique’s sake, but rather, it is a call to responsibility, one that is

Deconstruction requires us to negotiate between binaries, acknowledging that any deconstruction is always part of the inheritance it critiques. Thus while Derrida critiques international law and its institutions for dominating decision within the field of international politics, he does not denounce these laws entirely or claim that they are unnecessary. He writes:

These facts do not suffice to disqualify international institutions. Justice demands, on the contrary, that one pay tribute to certain of those who are working with them in the direction of the perfectibility and emancipation of institutions that must never be renounced. However insufficient, confused, or equivocal such signs may still be, we should salute what is heralded today in the reflection on the right of interference or intervention in the name of what is obscurely and sometimes hypocritically called the humanitarian, thereby limiting the sovereignty of the State in certain conditions. Let us salute such signs even as one remains vigilantly on guard against the manipulations or appropriations to which these novelties can be subjected (Derrida, 1994: 104-105).

An element of justice demands that we continue to work with the law in pursuit of justice. Derrida does not advocate a vigilante approach to justice, nor does he promote an abstract model of justice as over and above the law and forever out of reach. Derrida encourages us to acknowledge the many things that have been achieved by people working within the field of international and human rights law, all the while remaining critical of the kinds of narratives that can be produced. Essentially, one can never be fully complacent and accept that the law is working perfectly, and that justice has been done.

(Re)Defining Victims: Lyotard's Politics of the Differend

Lyotard is similarly critical of an understanding of justice as law. For Lyotard, the law is an inadequate vehicle (as all universalising discourses are) within which to articulate suffering. In order to communicate the experience of a wrong, one must draw on a pre-existing narrative that dictates the way in which that can be expressed. The law provides a standard lexicon of

always conceived of as a responsibility to the other. A justice which in order to be just, must always remain to come (Derrida, 1992: 27).

justice in which suffering is defined according to grand narratives that equate justice with compensation, punishment, human rights, and so on, effectively reducing the singularity of the experience, or of the event, into a hegemonic order. From Lyotard's perspective, the problem with institutions like the IMT, is that they function on the basis of what we might call a humanist model of knowledge and/or truth, and thus they disavow and/or claim to have resolved the differend(s). This is how they fail according to Lyotard.

As established in Chapter 1, Lyotard views any attempt to impose a singular, overarching narrative as an injustice. Rather than attempting to resolve differences in a (misguided) attempt to achieve agreement, Lyotard insists that "There is no genre whose hegemony over the others would be just" (Lyotard, 1988: 58). There is no one singular story which is more authentic than any other and there will never be total agreement between narratives. For this reason, Lyotard proposes that we "arrive at an idea and practice of justice that is not linked to that of consensus" (Lyotard, 1984, 66). His hope for justice is that we acknowledge, "every one of us belongs to several minorities, and what is very important, [is that] none of them prevails" (Lyotard and Thébaud, 1985: 32). Lyotard views this "competing arena of narratives... as more capable of promoting justice" (Loving, 2008: 98; Lyotard, 1984), than grand narratives²⁴⁷. But the proliferation of idioms does not necessarily mean that 'justice' has been done, because that would imply that once a certain narrative was told, then justice has been restored, and this would be a totalising gesture. Instead, Lyotard advocates for a multiplication of non-legitimizing narratives, an ongoing situation in which one narrative does not rule the other(s) out.

Lyotard maintains that the differend occurs when someone suffers wrong but is deprived of the means to prove it, and therefore becomes a victim (Lyotard, 1988: 8). This inability to express a wrong is a structural effect of the dominant model of knowledge. The situation of the 'victim' (in the Lyotardian sense) is an effect of the ways in which political power operates in and through knowledge (and its institutional authorisation). Lyotard describes the differend as the "unstable state and instant of language wherein something which must be able to be put into phrases cannot yet be" (Lyotard, 1998: 13). In Chapter 1, I maintained, by way of a genealogical critique of 'History', that narrativisations of 'Katyń' took place within a series of power relations and at times this power favoured narratives that supported the Russian story and silenced an alternative narrativisation of 'Katyń'. Lyotard's work on the differend is significant in that he suggests that silencing and disavowal is not

²⁴⁷ For Lyotard, the goal of narrative should not be consensus, but paralogy (Lyotard, 1984, 65-66), which, as he uses it, refers to a recognition of the "heteromorphous nature of language games" (Lyotard, 1984: 66).

unique to particular narratives (such as ‘Katyń’), but an effect of narrative structure. Throughout this thesis, I have engaged with various narrativisations of Katyń which focus on examples of this ‘silencing’ in order to emphasise a grand narrative of Polish (double) victimhood and it would be tempting to (re)interpret ‘Katyń’ as a series of differends that highlight Polish victimisation. The Nuremberg trials can be seen as an example of this insofar as it was the ‘victors’ who were able to determine what could and what would not be discussed. The issue of genocide could similarly be read as a differend in that there is a ‘victim’ (or group of ‘victims’) who feel that a wrong has been committed and yet there is no means to articulate the significance of this experience within the dominant narrative of Russian (or international) law. Rather than using ‘genocide’ as an example to illustrate that the Poles were victimised, I aim to bear witness to the tensions in these narratives, and highlight the disputes and different ways of narrating an event. I do not attempt to resolve the differend and define ‘suffering’ in the idiom of one party, or one interpretation of ‘injustice’ (as ‘genocide’).

Defining ‘Katyń’ as ‘Genocide’

Many Poles view Katyń as the site of genocide and over the years, the genocide narrative has been debated by Polish and Russian politicians²⁴⁸, the Katyń Families Association, historians²⁴⁹ and the academic community in general. The issue of genocide was raised again in relation to Putin’s speech at the 2010 commemoration. While there were some who acknowledged the significance of Putin’s attendance at the commemoration and recognition of a ‘crime’²⁵⁰ or a wrongdoing (which is a necessary condition for reconciliation within a normative international narrative)²⁵¹, Poland has been criticised for continuing to push for the

²⁴⁸ According to Viktor Shankov (A Belarus political analyst living in Warsaw), Jarosław Kaczyński stated in 2006 that, “there will never be amicable relations between Moscow and Warsaw until Moscow recognizes Katyń massacre as a genocide of the Polish people” (*Pravda*, 8 April 2010). This narrative has been met with resistance from the Russian side. In 2006, Yeltsin argued that the requests for an admission of genocide were “political games” and warned that rather than encouraging reconciliation, such proclamations could “divide the two countries” (Paul, 2010: 349).

²⁴⁹ Louis Fitzgibbon for example describes it as “one of the most brutal and atrocious acts of genocide ever committed” (Fitzgibbon, 1972: ii-iii).

²⁵⁰ Roginski, for instance, has argued that “The first step has already been taken: Putin called the events in Katyń a crime. I listened to his speech on April 7 in Katyń. It struck me as honest, emotional and full of horror at the crime” (Roginski & Schmid, 2010).

²⁵¹ Polish Prime Minister Tusk for instance, noted that while Russia and Poland “still have a way to go on the road to reconciliation,” a “word of truth can mobilize two peoples looking for the road to reconciliation” (Cited in *Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty*, 7 April 2010). Note that for Tusk, ‘truth’ here refers to the Polish narrative on Katyń, thus drawing on a discourse of ‘truth’ telling as it pertains to restorative reconciliatory justice.

crime to be recognised as genocide, thus detracting from the reconciliatory potential of this event²⁵². The genocide debate (re)emerged in Polish politics in the aftermath of the crash and Polish President Komorowski confirmed that his government still adhered to the ‘genocide’ classification (Etkind & Finnin et al, 2012: 149-150).

In the arena of international law, cases of genocide are determined against the definition provided by the UN Convention on genocide²⁵³. Yet the interpretations of this ‘universal’ narrative are perspectival. Russian resistance to the genocide label have been legitimated by (re)interpretations of both the Russian legal and international frameworks. This narrative was ‘officially’ rejected by the Russian Main Military Office in 2005. As I have previously noted, when the head of the Russian Katyń investigation announced that no one would be prosecuted for ‘Katyń’, he also stated that there was “no evidence that genocide had been committed against the Polish nation” (Cienciala et al, 2007: 259). Cienciala et al propose that this statement was supported by the institution of Russian law in that prior to January 1997 (and the institution of a new Russian criminal code), the concept of genocide was “absent from Russian criminal legislation” (Cienciala, 2007: 261). While the concept of genocide became legislated in Article 357 of the new criminal code (Cienciala, 2007: 261), Article 10 of the new code stated that “punishment for these crimes did not apply to crimes committed before the code entered into force” thus making it legally impossible for those responsible for the executions to be prosecuted (Cienciala, 2007: 261)²⁵⁴, or for the definition of genocide to be applied to the ‘crime’. This could potentially be read as a differend in that the ‘victim(s)’ (in this case, the Poles), believe that a wrong has been committed, yet they lack the means to describe it within the language of the other party’s legal terminology. However,

²⁵² For example, the “left-leaning” German newspaper *Die Tageszeitung* wrote: “The demand made by the Polish Institute of National Remembrance that Russia recognize the Soviet massacre at Katyń as ‘genocide’ is also unhelpful in the search for the truth... The massacre in Katyń is without a doubt a war crime, but not genocide. If Poland would back away from this demand, then Wednesday’s memorial ceremony could mark the start of rapprochement between Poland and Russia” (cited in Kelsey and Novak, 2010). Similarly Paul has suggested that “What the Poles really want is information about victims whose fate still is not known, a clear explanation of why and how the executions were ordered, and a profound apology from the Russians. They also want the Russians to confirm that they have no “privileged interests” in Poland. It hardly seems too much to ask. In order to get it, the Poles may have to renounce all claims to compensation and the charge of genocide because of its threatening legal exposures for the Russian government, as successor to the Soviet Union” (Paul, 2010: 354-355). That these two criticisms came from a ‘left-leaning’ paper and an author who aligns himself with a pro-Polish agenda (see Paul, 2010: xiii-xv), suggests that resistance to defining ‘Katyń’ as genocide cannot be explained simply as a form of ‘Anti-Polish’ sentiment.

²⁵³ Straus notes that “despite widespread dissatisfaction with the UN Convention, the document is a benchmark for genocide scholars and an important place to begin a review of definitions” (Straus, 2001: 361).

²⁵⁴ Cienciala et al also claim that “followed Russian legal tradition in not allowing the prosecution and judgement of criminals no longer living” (Cienciala, 2007: 261). According to Cienciala et al, “both the new Russian code and Russian legal tradition are contrary to Article 6 of the IMT Charter, as well as Article 2 of the 1968 international convention on the inapplicability of the statute of limitations to war crimes and crimes against humanity” (Cienciala, 2007: 261; see also Scharf & Szonert-Biniendam, 2012: 19).

at the same time that Russian law has been critiqued for not punishing ‘crimes’ that were not legally defined before the event, international law has some of the same characteristics²⁵⁵. As I previously discussed in regards to Nuremberg, the IMT has been criticised for using ex post facto justice. While the genocide debate requires legitimation from the legacy of this international discourse regarding crimes against humanity, there are multiple points of contention within this ‘universal’ narrative. In the case of ‘Katyń’ this has been particularly apparent with the definition of ‘genocide’ codified within the Genocide Convention.

Genocide is defined in Article II of the Genocide Convention of 1948 as “actions directed towards the full or partial destruction of a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group” (cited in Cienciala et al, 2007: 262; see also Straus, 2001: 361). For some, the Polish prisoners of war could be defined as a national group (see Cienciala et al, 2007: 262; Szonert-Binienda, 2012: 672). However, while the Beria Memorandum of 5 March 1940 refers explicitly to the nationality of the Poles²⁵⁶, the reason given for shooting the prisoners was that the men were all “sworn”, “hardened and irremediable enemies of Soviet power” (cited in Cienciala et al, 2007: 118-119). Cienciala et al claim that since “any action directed against the Soviet State was ‘counterrevolutionary, the Poles were criminals according to various paragraphs of Article 58 of the Soviet Criminal Code” (Cienciala et al, 2007: 262). Consequently, it has been argued that the “massacres constituted murder on *political* rather than ethnic or national grounds” (Cienciala et al, 2007: 262, my emphasis)²⁵⁷. At the same time that the Russian Federation has rejected the definition of ‘genocide’ due to the ‘political’ nature of the killings, according to the Memorial Society, the Russian Main Military Prosecutor’s Office has refused to “enforce the current Russian law on rehabilitation of victims of political repression” arguing that the “political motive, and even the very fact of the shooting, in relation to each individual prisoner of war, cannot be ascertained” (*Memorial on Katyń*, 2010). Whether or not one considers ‘Katyń’ to be genocide, this serves as an example of the interpretative and calculable force of law, and the structural impossible of ever achieving ‘justice’ within these systems. The ‘genocide’ debate can also be viewed as an example of how (universal) law

²⁵⁵ Scharf and Szonert-Biniendam, for example, claim that one of the difficulties in having ‘Katyń’ defined as genocides is that “the Katyń crime pre-dated the adoption of the Genocide Convention, and ex-post application of the Convention could be problematic in light of the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties” (Scharf & Szonert-Biniendam, 2012: 14-15).

²⁵⁶ Referring to the men being held in the prisoner-of-war camps, the note states that more than 97 percent of them are “Polish by nationality” (cited in Cienciala et al, 2007: 119).

²⁵⁷ This view was reiterated in a recent article in *Pravda* which stated: “The Polish are clearly crossing the line in their intent to prove that genocide took place in 1940. The released documents state that Polish officers and officials were killed as “hostile elements” and “class enemies.” They were not killed because of their nationality. Hence, there are no grounds for classifying the crime as genocide” (*Pravda*, 8 April 2010).

functions to proliferate differends. According to Lyotard, systems of justice are inherently exclusive²⁵⁸. Russian law is no different to any other state-law in that like any system or concept of self, it “attempts to impose a necessary order upon the contingency of events” (Dunn, 1994: 196). From the perspective of the Soviet-Marxist narrative, the Poles were executed for ‘political’ reasons; but for the Poles, who did not subscribe to this interpretation of the prisoners, these men were Polish nationals and therefore they were killed because of their nationality. The universalisation of genocide via the Genocide Convention fails to address the fact that these classifications of identity are not innate; these ‘identities’ are truth-effects of particular discourses. Therefore the interpretative force of these universal laws is always subject to (re)interpretations and their meaning(s) cannot be fixed in the present.

Straus argues that since 1948, “a recurring criticism of the UN definition is that it excludes ‘political’ groups from the possible victims of genocide” (Straus, 2001: 361-362)²⁵⁹. Straus suggests that this category was excluded, to some extent, because the Soviet Union “rejected the idea that genocide could be committed against social classes” (Straus, 2001: 362). At the time of the drafting of the UN convention in 1947, the Soviet government claimed that political groups were “entirely out of place in a scientific definition of genocide, and their inclusion would weaken the convention and hinder the fight against genocide” (Naimark, 2010: 21). This indicates that the Soviets rejected an interpretation of genocide in which they would be implicated, opting for a concept of genocide aligned with their own policies, imposing a necessary order over a contingency of events. Whether or not one believes that the ‘Katyn’ ‘victims’ should be defined as a national or political group, the application of a universal law, which defines ‘genocide’, assumes that these categories are fixed, and also ignores the interpretative force(s) which were instrumental in their establishment.

Defining the Event as an Established Reality

Lyotard’s interpretation of justice as bearing witness to the differend does not involve identifying victims by ‘correctly identifying’ them, because this would be a totalising and finalising gesture. Such a move would entail (re)appropriation, and the reiteration of a grand

²⁵⁸ Dunn argues that for Lyotard, the differend is “produced by the inevitability that systems of justice will exclude individuals who do not share the system’s basic premises” (Dunn, 1994: 196).

²⁵⁹ Straus maintains that the ‘political’ refers to “groups that have a real or purported class basis, political party affiliation, or regime loyalty” (Straus, 2001: 362).

narrative of Polish victimhood. The genocide narrative can be read as an attempt to resolve the differend via the legitimating language of the law, thus establishing the wrong as an empirical fact or reality. This is why Lyotard differentiates between a differend and a litigation. He writes:

[A] differend [*différend*] would be a case of conflict, between two parties, that cannot be equitably resolved for lack of a rule of judgement applicable to both arguments. One sides' legitimacy does not imply the other's lack of legitimacy. However, implying a single rule of judgement to both in order to settle their differend as though it were merely a litigation would wrong (at least) one of them (and both of them if neither side admits this rule) (Lyotard, 1988: xi).

The differend describes the incommensurability of the phrase – the idea that no one narrative is more legitimate than the other. The differend is unresolvable in that any attempt to define the wrong via a 'single rule of judgement' would be to impose a totalising discourse. Lyotard does not deny the experience of suffering, but as he sees it, we cannot afford to take one narrative as factual/or true since this inevitably does violence to other ways of seeing/known/being.

In Lyotard's discussion of the State of Israel in *The Differend*, he says that if wrong and differend there be (if Israel has suffered these things) they cannot, by definition, be established as reality. This does not mean that they do not exist or have not been experienced as such, it means, rather, that they are not empirical facts. He writes:

By forming the State of Israel, the survivors transformed the wrong into damages and the differend into a litigation. By beginning to speak in the common idiom of public international law and of authorized politics, they put an end to the silence to which they had been condemned. But the reality of the wrong suffered at Auschwitz before the foundation of this state remained and remains to be established, and it cannot be established because it is in the nature of a wrong not to be established by consensus (Lyotard, 1988: 56).

Lyotard is suggesting that a totalising narrative appropriated the Jews' suffering. And by expressing the inexpressible within a common idiom, a dominant narrative of international

law, the singularity of the event was effaced. This does not mean that there is some ‘pure’ metaphysical (experience) of suffering that precedes and exceeds language and law as such, but that one must resist the effects of universalising narratives of law that claim to resolve the differend in a move of consensus (or finality for Derrida). Once an injustice is ‘defined’, it is assumed that justice has been done, and the *meaning* of that ‘injustice’ is now established, and the experience of ‘suffering’ is knowable and quantifiable.

The use of ‘genocide’ to define a crime is another example of how the law can be used to legitimate a particular narrative. Finkel proposes, “there is probably no better way to nail down a specific vision of a tragedy than labelling it genocide” (Finkel, 2010: 55). Finkel suggests that it the “logic of victimhood” and series of “history wars” that characterise the politics of post-1989 Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) and the former USSR has led “search of lost genocide” throughout the region (Finkel, 2010: 52 & 70). He writes:

Faced with the challenges of independent statehood and haunted by legacies of the not-so-distant, but silenced, past, many post-1989 elites view historical and political narratives of suffering and victimhood as an important component of the state-building process (Finkel, 2010: 70).

This implies that the genocide narrative is an effect of the memory of Marxism in post-communist states, haunted by the spectre of suffering (Caputo, 1997: 127). As I argued in the previous chapter, many Polish WWII and ‘Katyn’ narratives on memory are driven by this movement to (re)call a past that was silenced, and to (re)establish it in the present in order to avoid erasure. In the Polish case, this memory plays into an already established narrative of victimhood and suffering. If ‘Katyn’ is (re)defined as ‘genocide’, it serves to function as another example of how Poles have been sacrificed for the greater good (the nation). But more than that, it would also provide a means to legitimate this collective victimhood identity within a universal narrative, and thus have this narrative more widely recognised. It would (re)inforce the binary logic of Russian-Polish identity along the universal categories of victim/perpetrator. This would be problematic in that would involve reducing the singularity of the event to a universalising narrative of the same²⁶⁰. Some of these problems also arise in ‘Katyn’ narratives on compensation.

²⁶⁰ Ultimately, what this indicates is that the request to have the crime recognised as genocide is perhaps less an issue of ‘justice’, than of ‘memory’.

Transactional Justice

Lyotard argues that to describe suffering by invoking “implicit norms of justice” (Dunn, 1993: 201), then what suffers is the very ability to express that suffering. He writes: “What is subject to threats is not an identifiable individual, but the ability to speak or to keep quiet. This ability is threatened with destruction” (Lyotard, 1988: 11). Lyotard is “adamant that the differend does not express the need for any measurable or negotiable form of compensation” (Dunn, 1993: 201). Lyotard maintains that if ‘injustice’ is quantifiable and a conflict can be resolved through a monetary transaction, then the singularity of the incommensurable becomes established as a universal ‘fact’. For Lyotard, any attempt to address injustice via a paradigm of universal internationalism involves a “suppression of the local narrative” (Dunn, 1993: 214), is practically impossible, and it violates the imperative to respect the differend (Dunn, 1993: 214). The failure of international law is twofold, then: in one movement, it silences the expression of multiple narratives in order to maintain a cohesive, universal narrative of justice, resulting in an annihilation of the local; and this move results in a failure to bear witness to the differend and thus constitutes an injustice. I will elaborate this point by looking at how compensation is understood in ‘Katyn’ narratives on justice.

There have been many appeals to receive compensation via Russian courts who have established that the families of the Katyn victims are “not entitled to any compensation under the Russian Rehabilitation Act of 18 October 1991 for victims of political repressions” (Scharf & Szonert-Biniendam, 2012: 19). In 2008, the Association of Katyn Families passed a resolution stating that material compensation will not be sought, and this was reconfirmed in 2010 when the Families met with Russian President Dimitrii Medvedev (see *News From Poland*, 2011; Etkind & Finnin et al, 2012: 28). Despite this appeal coming directly from the Katyn Families, the (in)direct ‘victims’ (at least from the Polish perspective), one can find instances of the continuation of a discourse that conflates ‘justice’ with compensation and damages. In April 2012, following a complaint submitted to the European Court of Human Rights by descendants of Katyn ‘victims’ which challenged the competence of Russia’s enquiry into the killings, the European Court of Human Rights ruled that Russia had “violated the rights of relatives of Poles who were killed by the Soviet secret police in 1940, and described the Katyn massacre as a ‘war crime’” (cited in Buffery & Reilhac, 2012). Referring to the court’s description of ‘Katyn’ as a war crime, Polish Justice Minister Jarosław Gowin

highlights that what is “most important from the Polish point of view” is that “the world heard a very emphatic confirmation of the criminal character of the actions of the communist government of Russia” (cited in *News From Poland*, 17 April 2012). ‘Katyń’ was defined in a universalising terminology – one that defines the killings according to a preferred narrative of Polish History. This implies that justice continues to be thought of as consensus, as an imposition of a dominant narrative (of ‘Katyń’). But for some, this victory is not complete without some form of reparations. Gowin, for example, argued that the human rights court ruling was unsatisfactory in not going further in demanding action from the Kremlin (*News From Poland*, 17 April 2012). According to Gowin, the ruling does not “open new paths for the legal rehabilitation of victims or potential damages”²⁶¹, nor does it “oblige Russia to disclose further material” (cited in *News From Poland*, 17 April 2012).

Scharf and Szonert-Biniendam refer to two Katyń-related cases pending before the European Court of Human Rights and point out that the plaintiffs “sought no monetary compensation for pain and suffering or their families’ lost possessions” (Scharf & Szonert-Biniendam, 2012: 26). One of the experts at the CSEM symposium criticised the “reluctance on the part of the Katyń families to demand monetary compensation” in that it “runs contrary to contemporary international law that calls for acceptance of responsibility through tangible evidence of *contrition*” (Scharf & Szonert-Biniendam, 2012: 26-27, my emphasis). Several experts maintained that the Katyń families “should demand monetary compensation from the Russian Federation” (Scharf & Szonert-Biniendam, 2012: 27) in that a “necessary component of reconciliation is best assured through monetary compensation”, and that ‘contrition’ is “meaningless” without it (Scharf & Szonert-Biniendam, 2012: 27). Derrida refers to the logic of this assumption as an “economic transaction” which both “confirms and contradicts” the religious (Abrahamic) tradition (Derrida, 2001a: 34) which permeates the entire global discourse of ‘reconciliation’. The norms of international law draw on a universalising narrative in order to define how ‘justice’ should be sought and achieved – justice is understood as a transactional economy, one that (re)calls a religious tradition in which ‘justice’ is achieved through repentance, penance, and absolution, and one which (re)calls the Catholic-centric romantic myth which defined Poland’s suffering as a ‘universal injustice’.

This move of appropriation denies the ‘victims’ of their agency, and their ‘right’ to decide how this ‘injustice’ should or can be addressed. ‘Justice’ is best left to the authoritative, interpretative force of (international) law. This is why Lyotard is resistant to the

²⁶¹ While no damages were awarded to the victims, Russia was ordered to pay the applicants jointly 5,000 euros (\$6,500) for costs (see Buffery & Reilhac, 2012).

logic of internationalism in that these discourses utilise universality to legitimate their 'authority'. According to this narrative, if all 'humans' are the same, then all 'victims' are the same and should thus pursue the same judicial avenues codified within a universal law that addresses *all* of 'them'. This is an example of the differend as an effect of the structure of all systems of justice (as law) (or any other totalising narrative), resulting in the situation of a 'victim' (in the Lyotardian sense). The enforcement of a narrative which dictates how that suffering should be defined and quantified, thus threatens the expressivity of the suffering as perceived by the 'victims', and claims to have resolved the differend. That these 'norms' assume the status of universal applicability and often remain unchallenged is an effect the mystical foundation of the authority of (international) law, which creates a culture of passive acceptance of the law and its inheritance.

On the other hand, it is important to point out that Lyotard is not saying that 'victims' or 'plaintiffs' should not seek or receive various forms of compensation. If two parties are able to agree on the interpretation of a 'wrong' and the resolution of that 'wrong' via some sort of exchange (monetary or otherwise) – although he is reluctant to presume that such 'settlements' are an achievable, established reality – then this is a litigation, not the resolution of a differend. What Lyotard and Derrida are suggesting is that we resist becoming complacent with any judicial system/ or universalising narrative that perpetuates a belief in justice as a definable and transactional 'thing' (that is, if one commits a wrong, then one can be punished for it, or the victim can be compensated, and then justice has been done and order is restored). This narrative suggests that justice and/or reconciliation can be experienced as closure, and that the singularity of 'suffering' can be defined in universal terms. All of these elements of justice (as law) that I have discussed thus far (trial/punishment/revelation of truth, genocide and compensation), promise finality, and involve an appropriation of the singular within the universal. The point of deconstructive interventions is to always remain open, and to offer an ethical (re)interpretation of justice that is constantly negotiating 'justice' within and through current systems, never accepting the assumptions (re)produced in our inherited concepts. For Derrida, this includes a critique of Marxist 'justice'.

Inheritance of Marx

In *Memoires*, Derrida reconceptualises memory as a future-oriented movement, an ethical opening towards the other. In "Force of Law", this movement is understood as a

(de)constructive ethics of justice, which is open to the anticipation of the other to come, in which the meaning of justice is always deferred. In *Specters of Marx* (1994), Derrida grapples with the inheritance of a memory haunted by spectres. Derrida argues that remembering the dead, particular those who have died “as a result of the political and economical forces... is necessary for the work of justice” (Valverde, 1999: 661). Derrida’s critique of the logic of presence does not and cannot be given over to any pure future presence, in that traces of the past always remain, and it is impossible to erase them (an idea that is also integral to Derridean mourning). “Responsibility” as Derrida understands it, is not to be confused with a liberal humanist concept of responsibility (or accountability), but should be understood as a Levinasian ethical *response*-ability towards the other (see Derrida, 1997a: 21-29). This ‘memory’ work does not encourage us to (re)define the past in order to control the ‘present’. Derrida’s insights reveal the importance of continuing to respond to the past via an active (re)membrance of ‘victims’ of war and politics, not in order to (re)produce dominant narratives of memory, but in order to critique the inherited ideologies and narratives that continue to shape ways of knowing, and can often lead to the perpetuation of injustice(s). One such narrative is the narrative of justice as law. In order to responsibly inherit the narrative of justice as law, it is necessary to respond to acts that have been committed in the name of ‘justice’. Derrida’s focus in *Specters of Marx* (as the title suggests) is the various acts of terror and annihilation committed within communist states throughout the twentieth century, in the name of Marxism and a particular interpretation of Marxist justice. And for Derrida, “there is no inheritance without a call to responsibility” (Derrida, 1994: 114). He writes:

An inheritance is never gathered together, it is never one with itself. Its presumed unity, if there is one, can consist only in the *injunction* to *reaffirm by choosing*. “One must” means *one must* filter, sift, criticize, one must sort out several different possibles that inhabit the same injunction. And inhabit it in a contradictory fashion around a secret. If the readability of a legacy were given, natural, transparent, univocal, if it did not call for and at the same time defy interpretation, we would never have anything to inherit from it (Derrida, 1994: 18).

Inheritance requires more than simply carrying the ‘memory’ of the past into the future. Traditionally when we think of inheritance, we think of something that has been left for us by someone who preceded us. There is not necessarily a sense of responsibility involved in this

experience. Inheritance is passive: we simply accept what is given to us. For Derrida, however, inheritance is always and already a call to responsibility and this necessarily involves an active response to, and participation with, the ‘thing’(s) that one inherits. One critiques this inheritance in order to breathe new meaning(s) into the object²⁶², to bring (re)interpretations of the past, rather than assuming that meaning is given. An inheritance without responsibility risks subjugation and (re)appropriation.

Derrida’s subtitle ‘state of the debt’ is an affirmation of responsibility to Marx, and a promise to engage *responsibly* with his many ‘spirits’. This inheritance must address the many ‘injustices’ that have been *justified* by evoking the name(s) ‘Marx’ and ‘Marxism’. But Derrida is also asking us to avoid seeing the idea(l)s we have inherited as either wholly good or wholly bad, wholly true, or wholly false, suggesting instead that we critically interrogate them, the assumptions that underpin them, and the effects they have (re)produced. Of the many spirits of Marx, there are two in particular which are of interest to Derrida and are pertinent to a critical interrogation of ‘Katyn’. The first “gains its understanding of time and thus of history’s proper end” (Kellogg: 1998: 58) from Hegel’s²⁶³ teleological account of History which he developed in *Introduction to the Philosophy of History*. Hegel believed that History is predetermined and in order for History to fulfil its purpose, it must be guided by the movement of ‘Spirit’²⁶⁴. Marx re-introduced Hegelian ‘spirit’ as an economic transformation in which the “slave class overthrew his masters” (Brown, 1981: 50), adopting a model of History moving forward along a trajectory of class struggle, the ultimate outcome of which would be the establishment of a communist state. Like Lyotard, Derrida is critical of this teleological understanding of time and History as the “succession of a series of ‘nows’” in that it gives rise to a “notion of justice as revenge” (Kellogg: 1998: 55). Derrida compares Marx to Shakespeare’s Hamlet in that like Marx, Hamlet believed that the rightful progression of history was ‘out of joint’. In order to rectify this disjointed time, justice as vengeance must be used in the present to make it right²⁶⁵.

²⁶² I use the word ‘object’ here to only to refer to artefacts that one may inherit, but also to refer to historical memory, narratives about national identity, messianic myths of history, and so on.

²⁶³ Lyotard is also critical of Hegel’s history. Dunn notes that for Lyotard, modernism was characterised by a “refutation of Enlightenment optimism” (Dunn, 1993: 212). For Lyotard, “Auschwitz is not just an event but an emphatic denial of Hegel’s claim that history has a direction, a purpose, and a result” (Dunn, 1993: 212).

²⁶⁴ Hegel writes, “Spirit does not toss itself about in the external play of chance occurrences; on the contrary, it is that which determines history absolutely, and it stands firm against the chance occurrences which it dominates and exploits for its own purpose” (Hegel, 1988: 58).

²⁶⁵ Similarly, Sanford argues that the Russian investigations of the early 1990s “did nothing in terms of satisfying any possible desire for vengeance in the form of the trial, condemnation and punishment of surviving perpetrators” (Sanford, 2005: 227).

This deconstructive (re)reading reveals a trace of the binary oppositional logic of international law as it was established at Nuremberg. We have on the one hand, an interpretation of ‘justice’ as a totalitarian politics of violence and retribution, and on the other hand, a liberal democratic politics of accountability and fairness. But this is not the trace, because the opposition is an effect of logocentric concepts. The trace is the opening of a possible (re)reading, a ‘sheaf of injunctions’, which requires one to ‘filter’ and ‘sift’ through the logic of our inheritance. The foundational logic of this Western inheritance, this grand scene of accountability returns to Nuremberg (as the originary event), an inheritance that both confirms and contradicts its own logic. The defeat of Nazi totalitarianism was seen as a victory for liberal democracy (which was silently collaborating with a another totalitarianism – Stalinist communism), ushering in a new era of international law which was authorised, interpreted and enforced as fair, moral, right; a universal justice applicable (but not applied) to all of humanity, which held everyone accountable (but not accounted for). This diachronic interpretation of time and justice haunts the entire global discourse on international law and ‘accountability’, and it continues to negotiate the contradictory logic (justice/law; conditional/unconditional; singular/universal) that underpins it as it is (re)named and (re)invented as (re)conciliation, (re)storation, (re)habilitation. While the politics of democratisation in the post-communist era has enabled a dialogue that emphasises Soviet avoidance of accountability, ‘Katyn’ justice narratives return to those same principles, hoping to be included in a broader narrative from which it was (always) ‘excluded’²⁶⁶. The legal norm which calls for accountability in the form of condemnation, punishment, monetary compensation, or symbolic performative apologies, is enabled by a similar logic of time, suggesting that it is possible to (re)turn to the ‘past’ in order to ‘rectify’ a ruptured time (out of joint), in the (pure) present. A (re)storation of time, which must always be legitimated and defined by the law, despite its limitations. The force of law maintains its authority through the mystical foundations of the *universality* of the narrative, which both legitimates and undermines its liberal principles. Now to a second injunction.

Kellogg maintains that it is “precisely in the complex articulation between time and justice that Derrida enters into a dialogue with Marx” (Kellogg: 1998: 52). In *Specters*, Derrida asserts that the “normative thrust of Marxism secretly relies on an alternate and undeveloped notion of justice”, one that is permitted by what Derrida calls a “messianic notion of time” (Kellogg: 1998: 53). Derrida gives the name ‘messianic’ to Marx’s idea of

²⁶⁶ According to the romantic myth, this was not just at ‘Katyn’, but Poland’s entire ‘History’ is testament to this ‘exclusion’.

time because, like the Polish romantics, Marx believed in a teleological History of progress, which would culminate in a final messianic event. This narrative influenced the Marxist-Leninist ideology adopted by Stalin, who put some of these theories into practice. This messianic narrative placed emphasis on class as an identity category, elevating the status of particular subjects (the proletariat – the revolutionaries), by recognising the role that they would play in the development of this linear progression of History. This narrative of History simultaneously excluded particular subjects (namely, the bourgeoisie), in that they did not have a part to play in the enactment of this revolutionary History. But more than excluding these subjects from the history of class struggle, the narrative meant that they were viewed as class enemies who would hinder the progress of History and thus they were removed via whatever means were deemed necessary (and this was understood as ‘justice’). For Lyotard, the authoritarian Marxist metanarrative is illustrative of the violent effects of universal grand narratives. One of the dangers of totalising narratives such as the Stalinist-Marxist-Leninist ideology is that they will ultimately lead to an annihilation of others, who do not confirm to the dominant ideology. Within this ideology, terror becomes a legitimate response to the other. For Lyotard, terror, annihilation, and massacre constitute an ‘absolute injustice’ in that the “the people whom one massacres will no longer be able to play the game of the just and the unjust” (Lyotard & Thébaud, 1985, 66-67). The obliteration of the other results in a removal of the differend in that it prevents the proliferation of conflicting narratives.

Lyotard proposes that an inherent flaw within any universalising discourse is the “presumption that any political logic might be universally applicable and hence provide the basis for a human solidarity” (Dunn, 1993: 213-214). Lyotard suggests that the failure to unify people within the Christian Church and (Marxist) internationalism²⁶⁷, for example, is a consequence of utilising “abstract universals” in order to “derive authority” (Dunn, 1993: 214). He writes:

Peoples do not form into one people, whether it be the people of God or the sovereign people of world citizens. There is not yet one world, but some worlds (with various names and narratives). Internationalism cannot overcome national worlds because it cannot channel short, popular narratives into epics, it remains ‘abstract’ (Lyotard, 1988: 161).

²⁶⁷ It is interesting that Lyotard draws on the two ‘opposing ends’ of the binary which is often emphasised in narratives on the Polish-Russian conflict (that is between Christian ideals and Marxist ideology) in order to demonstrate how they share a similar universalising logic.

Yet this entire global economy of accountability emerged in response to a violent politics and practice of ‘injustices’ that were legalised. This “unthinkable” (Lyotard, 1990: 25), “limit” (Gigliotti, 2003) event, which encouraged the need for an international narrative of law was a consequence of violent (re)appropriations of the other through ideology, and was legitimated by the force of law. And yet the guiding principles of the narrative of Universal Humanity and the authoritarian systems of Nazi (and Stalinist) totalitarianisms share a similar logic in that both attempt to assert a single discourse of justice, law, identity, humanity, and so on, and so the mystical foundation of their authority goes unchallenged. Any attempt to provide a universal narrative of identity (whether it is based on class, religion, politics, ethnicity, and so on), will ultimately fail in its aim, because universal categories remain ‘abstract’ and “traditions are mutually opaque” (Lyotard, 1988: 157). In other words, all narratives of ‘identity’ claim authority and authenticity within their specific contexts, yet these identities are similarly fictitious (or truth-effects of a particular situated discourse) – and so no one narrative is more legitimate than another, at least not in any absolute sense²⁶⁸.

Inheritances of ‘Katyń’ and Stalinist-Marxist Messianism

Stalin’s decision to execute the ‘Katyń’ prisoners has been linked to this teleological view of history and interpretation of justice as revenge. Zaslavsky, for example, claims that this particular way of knowing, meant that members of the Stalinist leadership:

[D]id not consider themselves to be criminals, but rather benefactors of humanity, since they were, after all, merely accelerating the course of history on the progressive path to a ‘perfect society.’ History had already condemned these groups [i.e. the Poles] to ‘social extinction’; the Soviet Union merely had to do its part to hasten this historical development in a rational and systematic manner (Zaslavsky, 2008: 46).

²⁶⁸ Furthermore, these universal categories remain abstract because “there is no court or higher appeal that might synthesize them or reconcile them with a higher ‘international’ justice” (Dunn, 1993: 214, see Lyotard, 1988: 157).

In other words, Stalin's investment in a Marxist messianic narrative of History as class struggle resulted in an interpretation of justice and humanity which legitimated the removal of any societal elements that did not fit in with the progressive history of the proletariat. This is an extreme example of the effects of logocentric teleologism in that the need to establish a particular concept (of History), can lead to the use of violent force in order to establish this as a reality. Zawodny claims that this extended to the issue of war and suggests that this doctrine may have been the underlying factor behind the decision to shoot the Katyn prisoners. He writes:

We know the importance attached by the Soviet administrative apparatus in Stalin's era to the pronouncements of Lenin and his interpretation of the communist doctrine. The fact that the majority of men who were massacred in Katyn were officers might be, in the light of the doctrine, the reason for their death. According to the doctrine, war is not a conflict between individuals or states but *between classes* – the oppressors and those who are being oppressed – bourgeois against the proletariat. If the war promotes the interest of the proletariat, according to Lenin, such a war is 'progress, irrespective of the victims and sufferings which it entails' (Zawodny, 1962: 128-129).

The Marxist-Leninist narrative (re)interpreted by Stalin shared with the Polish messianic narrative a progressive view of history in which society is moving towards a perfect, utopian state. So in the same way that I argued that the Piast and Jagiellonian myths, while seemingly different, functioned to produce similar effects, I propose that while the mythologisation of Polish Messianism and Marxist Messianism is (re)inscribed within the binary logic of their oppositional Histories, they produce similar effects – a tendency to homogenise, to appropriate (the other), and efface the singularity of the event. Both nations were invested in political myths which, on a structural level, were strikingly similar and which functioned by "purifying" things, giving them a "natural and eternal justification" (Barthes, 2009: 169-170). The Polish messianic myth encouraged Poles to take part in any type of political or military action, which served the nation's struggle for freedom, and, if necessary to die for this cause, since no greater honour could be granted to a Pole than to die a martyr as part of Poland's political plight. But as I have demonstrated throughout this thesis, the heightened narrativisation of this myth is often maintained via the exclusion and/or (re)appropriation of otherness. The Stalinist-Marxist messianic myth provided an ideological framework that

legitimated the actions of the Soviet leadership, justifying the annihilation of subjects who did not belong in this 'purified' and 'perfect' version of (Soviet) society, which did not yet exist, but whose attainment was the ultimate goal of History. While one could argue that Marxist messianism led to a more 'extreme' politics, what is important from Derrida and Lyotard's point of view, is that we consider what the *logic* of the binary narrative conceals and produces. If an investment in one particular interpretation of universalism could lead to an 'injustice' such as 'Katyń' in a(n)'other' context (that is, one that is other to 'ours'), then surely there is potential for the (re)production of 'injustices' within our own narratives of universality. The logic of the binary inheritance conceals this possibility by encouraging an investment in the oppositional tendencies of the narrative.

Messianism without a Messiah: Democracy-to-come

Lyotard and Derrida are both committed to an unrelenting 'idea' of 'justice', which in order to be just, must always respond to a politics of singularity. At the end of *The Postmodern Condition*, Lyotard refers to the terrors of the nineteenth and twentieth century and concludes: "Let us wage a war on totality; let us be witnesses to the unrepresentable; let us activate the differences" (Lyotard, 1984: 82). Lyotard is proposing that we resist totalising narratives because they all have the potential to produce damaging effects (such as those produced by Stalin and Hitler). By asking us to 'be witnesses to the unrepresentable', Lyotard suggests that an ethical response to injustice is the proliferation of idioms, always resisting attempts to resolve the differend via consensus. In *Specters of Marx*, Derrida opens a (re)reading of the Marxist promise as an anticipatory ethics of deferral, and a singularity of the other that can never be (re)presented within a totalising narrative.

The task of a responsible memory in the face of a (deconstructive) heritage (Derrida, 1992: 19-20) is not to (re)produce what is assumed (Richter, 2010: 152), in order enable possible (re)readings of a legacy (Derrida, 1994: 18). Engaging responsibly with Marx's many spirits, Derrida offers a critique of the totalising effects of the 'messianic' in Marxist 'justice'. But Derrida's reading does not end there. The temporal opening of the messianic leads him to another spirit, a "spectral spirit" (Kellogg: 1998: 58), and one which Derrida aligns himself. He (re)interprets the future-oriented movement of messianism into an "idea" of a democracy *to come* (Derrida, 1994: 81). In other words, he does not simply (re)produce a (re)reading of the violent politics of messianism, he looks at the concept in a new light, in

order to (re)consider what other possibilities this futural structure enables. The promise of 'democracy-to-come' is situated as a welcoming of possibility, thus creating a politics of potential that is open to multiple future(s)²⁶⁹. Derrida proposes a politics of spectrality, which deconstructs the binary opposition of life/death; past/present; absence/presence, alterity/finality and so on. From the outset of *Specters of Marx*, Derrida is haunted by spectres. He writes "I have just remembered what must have been haunting my memory: the *first noun* of the *Manifesto*, and this time in the singular, is 'specter': 'A specter is haunting Europe – the specter of communism' (Derrida, 1994: 2). Derrida argues that this was the promise of a specter to come. It was announced as 'not yet there' (Derrida, 1994: 35) and therefore the "international labour movement marked as communist in Marx's time was by definition yet to come" (D'Cruz, 1996: 173). D'Cruz argues that this spirit of Marx "gives itself to the future of an emancipatory promise which—in order to be just—must always remain to come" (D'Cruz, 1996: 172). This promise of a communism to come could never announce itself in the present. In the same way that 'justice' always remains to come, the promise of the emancipation of the revolutionary class must remain 'to-come' in order to be just. It must remain 'to-come' so that it resists teleological interpretations of history as a narrative of progress, which anticipates particular (fixed) identities and events, ignoring the possibility of others. D'Cruz proposes:

Taking responsibility for the inheritance of Marx's injunction therefore involves aligning the spirit of Marx's emancipatory promise with the unrepresentable space in which justice is undeconstructible. The inheritance of the emancipatory promise, as with justice, commands like the call from the other. To respond to this call without annihilating the other, however, contains the paradox of having to negotiate with the necessary violence of recognising the other in the language of ontology at the same time in which a non-violent relation toward the other requires that the other must avoid being inscribed under the sign of presence. A similar paradox confronts the spirit of Marx's emancipatory promise, which is why Derrida marks the promise as *hauntological*—as that which makes possible ontology, but cannot be given over to the present (D'Cruz, 1996: 173).

²⁶⁹ Kellogg proposes that the key to understanding what Derrida means by the 'democracy-to-come' is spectrality (Kellogg: 1998: 60).

Derrida proposes a messianic opening towards the other as welcoming hospitality. This anticipatory openness resists the messianic (re)appropriations that are often an effect of teleological Histories in which the singularity of every event and every other is effaced within the grand narrative of calculation. The future-oriented movement of a politics of possibility resists finality. This politics of unremitting deferral, remains, like justice, always to-come.

However, Derrida distances himself from the Abrahamic messianic promise, which is the promise of an actual messiah – this is a “messianism without religion” and a “messianic without messianism” (Derrida, 1994: 74). Derrida dissociates messianism from its religious²⁷⁰ implications for the same reason he insists on an idea of justice as distinct from law, and an idea of democracy without a present politics. This messianism without a messiah remains to-come, because there is no final event that that will end all events once it has arrived, there is no justice that we can say has been finalised, and no democracy that has been realised. Fritsch argues that for Derrida, a democracy recognises and negotiates:

[T]he ultimate unownability of the ‘messianic’ future – that which remains to come forever, allowing all subjects to present, and struggle for, their horizons of the future, and that means, their interpretations of history (Fritsch, 2001: 292).

Derrida’s democracy does not refer to any particular working interpretations of democracy, but rather, should be conceived of as a messianic democracy-to-come, one that opens itself to the incalculable singularity of the other. This commitment to the possibility of the other means that no universal narrative of History, or ideal version of the future can be predicted or enforced, and all subjects have a ‘legitimate claim’ to respond to and (re)interpret that future in that no subject has a more or less ‘legitimate’ claim than another subject.

While it may sound quasi-utopian, I propose that if a messianic justice-to-come was adopted as a political strategy, this would create a situation in which the annihilation of a particular group of people could never be legitimated via a narrative of justice. Derrida’s (re)interpretation of the messianic also has implications for the narrativisation of ‘Katyń’ by both the Polish and Russian nations. For those Poles and Russians who are no longer satisfied with the limitations of their various messianic national myths, the future-orientedness of a democracy-to-come offers an anticipatory interpretation of history and identity no longer

²⁷⁰ This refers to the Abrahamic religious tradition – or the religions of the book (Christianity, Judaism and Islam).

defined by exclusionary myths of religion, gender, class, the nation, the state, and so on. More importantly, this future-oriented messianism does not involve forgetting the ‘past’ (because that is impossible), but requires a responsible active inheritance of possible pasts, and a continuous critical engagement with these pasts in the deferred experience of the waiting-for. Derrida’s (re)interpretation of the messianic into a politics of deferral challenges the understanding of justice as presence that promises an idea of justice as finality. The future-oriented movement of the messianic leads to a (re)interpretation of justice situated within the possibility of a perhaps. In the following sections of this chapter, I propose a (re)interpretation of (re)conciliatory politics as a futural promise of a justice not there yet. I offer a (re)reading of reconciliatory narratives that have emerged in Poland and Russia since the 2010 presidential plane crash, not in order to fix the meaning of these narratives in a pure presence, but to defer the (non)meanings in a (non)temporal unknowable future – the futural (non)space opened up by Derrida’s ethical anticipatory politics.

Futural Politics of a (Re)conciliation-to-come

I (re)turn now to the issue of reconciliation. In this chapter I have been critiquing teleological narratives of (international) justice, which culminate in a final ‘justice’ event (reconciliation). While the type of ‘justice’ that reconciliatory narratives promise is often thought to be disentangled from retributive forms of justice, I propose that this reconciliation is not entirely removed from the same logic of retributive justice. The ‘achievement’ of reconciliation is enabled via a normative practice of ‘justice’ (as law), which requires consensus, institutionalisation, and the promise of finality and closure experienced as a “full and perfect reconciliation” (Auerbach, 2005: 478). However, in my earlier discussion I suggested there may be an opening for a futural politics of (re)conciliation, and there is some indication of this in the literature.

In response to the Australian apology, for instance, Edwards urges a (re)consideration of the restorative potential of the apology. Reconciliation, he argues, “does not come from one rhetorical act. It is a process that takes time and effort on both sides to truly build deep communal bonds” (Edwards, 2010: 72). Edwards encourages us to look beyond the narrative of apology and reconciliation as a singular transformative event, instead focusing on the processes of reconciliatory politics. However, there is still an implied element of finality in this definition. At a recent conference reflecting on the Polish-German Reconciliation,

Lipowicz suggests that “reconciliation should have no final target” (Lipowicz, 2011). Rather, it is a “series of actions, a patient fight against stereotypes and hostility which will never be fully achieved” (Lipowicz, 2011). I suggest that a politics of a (re)conciliation-to-come is a (necessary)²⁷¹ possibility within current reconciliatory dialogues. But in order for (re)conciliation to resist totalising practices, it should not be conflated with a normative politics of law, but rather, could be understood as a non-finalised future-oriented movement, a justice that always remains to-come.

In the final section of this chapter, I refer to a series of events which have emerged following the presidential plane crash which I have (re)interpreted as indications of political and attitudinal shifts towards ‘Katyń’ and Polish-Russian relations (in both Russia and Poland). I engage with these shifting discourses in order offer a way in which these narratives could potentially be (re)read as part of a process of (re)conciliation (one which will never be final). There is no one ‘final’ event that will end the processes of (re)conciliation and like justice, (re)conciliation always remains to-come. Deconstruction is not a ‘method’ or a way of uncovering ‘truth’ (Eagleton, 2002: 28); it is a way of thinking and responding (Eagleton, 2002: 28). I do not offer these insights in order to provide an ultimate definition of justice, (re)conciliation, or ‘Katyń’, but to (re)consider ways of thinking through and responding to events, and to sift through our inherited concepts and to see them in a new light (Janover, 2005: 226).

(Re)conciliation in Response to the Exceptionality of the Singular Event

In Chapter 1, I examined some recent literature that suggested that the Russian political response to the 2010 plane crash marked the beginning of a series of developments regarding access to ‘Katyń’ documents. One could argue that these changes could only have been made because the contemporary historical and political context within which the plane crash occurred is significantly different to the context of the 1940 killings. Drozdowski, for instance, compares the ways in which the ‘Katyń’ narrative unravelled following the German discovery of the graves in 1943, to how the news of the 2010 plane crash was broadcast

²⁷¹ While Derrida is sceptical of the idea of a finalised forgiveness promoted within reconciliatory discourses, he does not suggest that we do away with narratives of reconciliation all together. He writes “no one would decently dare to object to the imperative of reconciliation. It would be better to put an end to the crimes and discords” (Derrida, 2001a: 51). For Derrida the important thing is not to confuse this process of reconciliation with a finalised justice (or forgiveness).

“internationally” and “within minutes” in order to suggest that “a politics of memory changes with both time and context” (Drozdowski, 2012: 317-318). But while political and historical context is certainly a contributing factor to the (re)shaping of ‘Katyń’ narratives in contemporary Russia and Poland, there appears to me to be another element at play here, and that is that the ‘exceptionality’ of the event inspired a response that had not (and perhaps could not) have been achieved within a normative discourse of reconciliatory justice (as law). Etkind and Finnin et al write that:

While the former Polish President Lech Wałęsa immediately called this loss of life ‘the second Katyń’, Russian Prime Minister Putin emphasized the unprecedented character of the event. Nothing like this has ever happened before, said Putin, trembling in his first televised statement after the catastrophe (Etkind & Finnin et al, 2012: 109).

Putin’s response could be read as an attempt to distance himself from the possible contextualization between this event and ‘Katyń’ (Etkind and Finnin et al, 2012: 109), but I agree with him that all events are unprecedented and ‘singular’²⁷². The significant changes in policy and attitudes that emerged in the aftermath of the crash did not involve a tribunal, a truth commission, or compensation. There was no ‘official apology’ and no recognition of genocide. I propose that they were brought about as an effect of the singularity of this event in a way that could not have been anticipated.

In Chapter 1, I referred to some of the policy changes made following the crash. Here I will focus on examples of Polish and Russian responses which suggest attitudinal (emotional/empathetic) shifts, and that either address or aim to encourage reconciliation²⁷³, or

²⁷² Unless, of course, you believe that the crash was a Russian conspiracy.

²⁷³ Etkind and Finnin et al suggest that this reconciliatory dialogue began prior to the joint commemorations. They claim that on 2 April, 2010, a televised debate following a screening of Wajda’s film on the *Kul’tura* channel raised the following key issue: “had the post-Soviet Russian people chosen to be a new nation that claimed no continuity with the Soviet past and therefore could condemn it in an objective way, as other post-Soviet republics have done?” (Etkind & Finnin et al, 2012: 112). Historian Aleksandr Chubar’ian, Director of the Institute of Global History, responded thus: “We should be thinking about historical reconciliation. Our relations with Germany are the best example. We lost many millions there. But do we have anti-German feelings in Russia? No, we do not... It is very important to draw the conclusion that the tragic events of the past should not be brought to the present. It evokes mutual distrust and hostility. Our Russia is an entirely different country now. It has changed completely” (Chubar’ian cited in Etkind & Finnin et al, 2012: 112). Chubar’ian is encouraging an active engagement with a new model of relations between Poland and Russia – one that moves away from old historical narratives that inspire this deeply embedded antagonism. Etkind and Finnin et al note, however, that Chubar’ian’s proposal of ‘distancing’ is “not acceptable to those in Russia who celebrate and hold fast to the Soviet legacy” (Etkind & Finnin et al, 2012: 112). Once again, this reiterates the idea that narratives

can be (re)read as attempts to (re)approach narrativisation(s) of ‘Katyń’ and Polish-Russian History. Adam Michnik emphasised the significance of the outpouring of emotions released in light of the crash. He wrote that the “Smolensk catastrophe broke something in our Polish and Russian hearts... It was as if a gigantic dam opened....” (cited in Etkind & Finnin et al, 2012: 135-136). Polish Minister for Foreign Affairs Radosław Sikorski likewise announced an “‘emotional breakthrough’ in Polish-Russian relations” (Etkind & Finnin et al, 2012: 136). But there were significant changes noted from Polish and Russian perspectives²⁷⁴. According to both Russian and Polish writers, the “outpouring of support and grief after the crash ‘humanized’ Russia in the eyes of Poland and the international community” (Etkind & Finnin et al, 2012: 144). Besemeres also notes that as a result of the Katyń dramas, “Russian popular awareness of the issue and sympathy for the Poles increased markedly” (Besemeres, 2010). This (re)calls the definition of reconciliation I referred to earlier which emphasises reciprocal empathy. But is empathy only possible by reducing the other to the same? Or is it possible to ‘feel’ the other’s difference as difference? The comment that Russian displays of mourning ‘humanised’ the Russians is indicative of an appropriation of the other to the same. Narratives of suffering and mourning are integral to Polish ways of remembering, so in seeing Russians perform these scenes of mourning, this allowed the Poles to view the Russians as more like them, that is, more ‘human’. And this also plays into the oppositional logic of the binary relationship between the two nations, which has Poland as ‘civilised’ and ‘human’ on the one side, and Russia as ‘uncivilised’ and ‘barbaric’ on the other side. So while I am open to the possibilities for a reciprocal (re)conciliatory dialogue, I am reluctant to close the dialogue through (re)appropriation. An ethical relationship to the other could be understood as an aporetic negotiation between understanding and appropriation on the one hand, and a respect for the alterity of the other on the other hand²⁷⁵; an ‘aporetic’ empathy rather than a ‘reciprocal’ empathy.

are never unanimous, nor should they be. What is important to note here is the proliferation of new narratives and approaches to Polish-Russian relations.

²⁷⁴ Similarly Roginski writes that “all my Polish friends tell me that they have been so touched by the scale of Russian sympathy that it might be time to move beyond the toxic residue of the past” (Roginski & Schmid 2010)

²⁷⁵ This slippery territory between an appropriation of the other and a recognition of difference is discussed as aporia of forgiveness. Derrida argues that in forgiveness, it is “necessary on the one hand to understand, on both sides, the nature of the fault, to know who is guilty of what evil toward whom” (Derrida, 2001a: 48). But at the same time, it is also necessary “in effect that alterity, non-identification, even incomprehension, remain irreducible” (Derrida, 2001a: 49). In order to encourage a dialogue of forgiveness (or reconciliation) between two parties, then some measure of consensus is necessary, but at the same time, one must always respect the alterity of the other, in order to avoid reducing the singularity of the other to the same. Derrida articulates this aporia nicely in regards to a politics of mourning which requires a negotiation between the incorporation of the other who has passed, and an ethical imperative to reject this appropriation at the same time. He writes: “I speak of mourning as the attempt, always doomed to fail... to incorporate, interiorize, introject, subjectivize the other in

In February 2011, President Dimitrii Medvedev expanded the Presidential Council for the Development of Civil Society and Human Rights, and developed a new ‘de-Stalinization’ programme in cooperation with the ‘Memorial’ Society. Etkind and Finnin et al argue that if this programme came into effect it would “create memorial centres across Russia to enlighten the public about Stalinist crimes and prohibit by law the denial of these crimes by state officials” (Etkind & Finnin et al, 2012: 111). This indicates a considerable variation in the dominant narrative, which claims that Russians still refuse to come to terms with their Stalinist past, challenging the assumption that Russian leaders refuse to actively engage with the inheritance of the past. Viktor Iliukhin, a member of the communist faction of the Russian Duma, was critical of this proposal, however. Iliukhin wrote a letter to Medvedev which stated that some of the major documents that proved Soviet responsibility were forged in the early 1990s by a former colleague (a prosecutor with connections to the Russian security services) (Etkind & Finnin et al, 2012: 111). Of course there will never be total agreement between narratives; consensus is not ‘justice’. What is significant here is that the proliferation of multiple narratives is able to transpire in Russia in a way that was not possible for a long time.

As mentioned earlier in the thesis, when President Bronisław Komorowski defeated Kaczyński in Poland in 2010, he went about implementing changes that would distance his politics from the rhetoric of the Law and Justice party, and in particular the anti-Russian sentiment expressed by its members (see Besemeres, 2010; Etkind & Finnin et al, 2012: 142-143). One of these changes came about when Komorowski was faced with the 90th anniversary of the 1920 Battle of Warsaw in the Polish-Soviet war (which tends to be a point of contention between the two nations). Komorowski decided that a new monument should be built at Ossów (near Warsaw), a site where the remains of 22 Red Army soldiers had been discovered in 1918 (Etkind & Finnin et al, 2012: 143). As a “symbol of reconciliation” the monument was “intended to reciprocate establishment of the memorial complexes at Katyń and Mednoe [*sic*]” (Etkind & Finnin et al, 2012: 143). This gesture, then, can be read as an attempt to create a new memory-narrative through the use of memorialisation, in order to encourage future relations.

In the wake of the plane crash, Etkind and Finnin et al claim that there was a “renewed public focus on Soviet war graves on Polish soil” (Etkind & Finnin et al, 2012: 143). In May

me... This is also what I call ex-appropriation, appropriation caught in a double-bind; I must and I must not take the other into myself; mourning is an unfaithful fidelity if it succeeds in interiorizing the other ideally in me, that is, not respecting his or her infinite exteriority” (Derrida, cited in Starling, 2002: 112).

2010, a large group of Polish intellectuals and civic figures (including Andrzej Wajda), issued an appeal, spearheaded by *Gazeta Wyborcza* which “called upon young Poles to light candles at Soviet war graves on Victory Day²⁷⁶ as a mark of respect and gratitude for Russian response to Smolensk” (Etkind & Finnin et al, 2012: 143). This move towards solidarity between the nations was enabled by the Russian response to the plane crash (the ‘unprecedented’, singular event). Yet there were some who viewed this as an attempt to relinquish the Polish-Soviet War narrative and have it (re)appropriated into the Russian one. Critics of this appeal claimed that it “presaged a wholesale capitulation to the Russian narrative of the Red Army’s liberation of Poland” (Etkind & Finnin et al, 2012: 143). Historian Adam Hlebowicz, for instance, claimed he could not see the link between the Soviet soldiers and the Russian remembrance of Smolensk (Etkind & Finnin et al, 2012: 143). The Russian remembrance of Smolensk was read by some as a sign of Russian sympathy towards the Poles and enabled the possibility of coming to terms with the long history of ‘conflicting memories’ between the two nations. The request for Poles to remember Russians on Victory day reflects a ‘reciprocal empathy’ and another move towards encouraging this (re)conciliatory dialogue. It also indicates an understanding of multiple versions of events (and competing ‘mythhistories’), suggesting that there is more than one way of (re)membering, (re)interpreting and so on.

In an article of July 2010 entitled ‘The Russian Katyń’, Sergei Karaganov²⁷⁷ called upon Russia to “find within herself the strength to admit that the whole of Russia is one big Katyń, strewn with the mostly nameless graves of millions of the victims of the [Soviet] regime” (cited in Etkind & Finnin et al, 2012: 145). He then proposed that that Russia should become “strewn with monuments to the victims of Soviet Stalinism” (cited in Etkind & Finnin et al, 2012: 145). Etkind and Finnin commend Karaganov for his attempt to confront Russia’s Stalinist past, however, they suggest that by claiming that ‘the whole of Russia is one big Katyń’, this narrative threatens to deprive the massacre of its “specificity and singularity” (Etkind & Finnin et al, 2012: 9). Yet as I have argued throughout this thesis, this tendency is also prevalent in Polish ‘Katyń’ narratives. ‘Katyń’ does not stand alone as a singular event but has been (re)read within an entire history of Polish suffering and victimhood. This is particularly the case with the narrativisations of the presidential plane crash. Propagators of the ‘Katyń 2’ and ‘Smolensk Lie’ are limited to possible ways of (re)reading and (re)interpreting these gestures of (re)conciliation in that these narratives

²⁷⁶ Victory Day (held on May 9) commemorates Nazi Germany’s surrender to the Soviet Union in 1945.

²⁷⁷ An “expert in international relations and an influential lobbyist” (Etkind & Finnin et al, 2012: 145).

attempt to obliterate the singularity of the event with a conflation of the “original” Katyn massacre, and within a broader narrative of Polish (double) victimhood.

The White Book of the Smolensk Tragedy (2011) provides another example of this tendency. This book, published by a PiS initiative²⁷⁸, comprises of a collection of documents “compiled in defence of the public’s right to factual information about the catastrophe” (Etkind & Finnin et al, 2012: 151). According to Etkind and Finnin et al, these ‘facts’ are “clearly intended to suggest that Lech Kaczyński was murdered precisely for his historical policy on Katyn” (Etkind & Finnin et al, 2012: 151). The sociologist Hanna Świda-Ziemia is critical of projects like the *White Book* in that they have “surrendered the memory of Katyn to Smolensk and made the massacres a mere footnote to the crash” (Świda-Ziemia cited in Etkind & Finnin et al, 2012: 151). Essentially, Etkind and Finnin et al and Świda-Ziemia are arguing the same thing – that is, that the singularity of the event is reduced to a logic of the same. Etkind and Finnin et al are critical of Karaganov’s comments because he reduces the specificity of the Katyn massacre by incorporating it within a grand narrative of Soviet Stalinism and all its crimes. The ‘Katyn 2’ narrative similarly involves a (re)appropriation of the event(s) (‘Katyn’ and ‘Smolensk’), as well as a (re)incorporation of the ‘Katyn’ and ‘Smolensk’ ‘victims’ within this dominant narrative. An effect of this attachment to a collective ‘memory’ of Polish victimhood is that these narratives are (re)victimising the ‘victims’ by (re)appropriating their singularities in order to fit a broader narrative, thereby obliterating the alterity of the other within a universal, totalising History. This suggests that an investment in the victim narrative affects the way in which these groups approach reconciliation (see Bar-Tal et al, 2009: 230). By overly investing in grand narratives (justice as law, apology as the precursor to reconciliation, reconciliatory justice as consensus, Polish or Marxist Messianism, and so on), and all that they promise to achieve, it restricts the possibility for other ways in which to (re)read events.

My proposal that the crash be read as an exceptional event that led to a proliferation of narratives (some of which could be read as (re)conciliatory), does not imply that tragedy necessarily leads to ‘catharsis’ or ‘healing’, because that would be to fall into a messianic narrative which romanticises suffering. Instead, I draw on Derrida’s future-oriented messianism without a messiah in order to (re)read the crash as an event that could not have been anticipated and which in turn led to the proliferation of smaller ‘events’ that also could not have been anticipated. The future surprises, it always (re)turns anew, we cannot

²⁷⁸ The Polish Parliament’s Group for the Study of the Causes of the Smolensk Catastrophe, established in July 2010

appropriate the future (or the other) into a singular universalising narrative. This is why Derrida insists on a justice as (im)possibility, as always to-come. Not to promote helplessness and despair, but to inspire hope for the future, and to encourage us to look beyond a pre-existing ideal of what 'justice' should look like. Justice – and (re)conciliation – is a process, not an event. These 'little narratives' (Lyotard, 1984: 60) on 'Katyń' which have emerged post-crash hold greater potential for 'justice' and the possibility of (re)conciliation, but one that is never final, never pure or perfect, and that in order to be just, must always remain to-come.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have not offered a definitive resolution to the question of justice, nor do I wish to ignore the efforts of those working in the continuous struggles against injustices. It is hoped that my interventions may contribute in some way to ongoing dialogues on 'justice' and to offer possible alternatives to the traditional discourse of justice as law (as a fixed universalising narrative). Derrida and Lyotard are critical of the concept of justice as law in that the type of justice advocated by legal systems rests on totalising narratives about subjectivity, truth, finality and so on. Universalising narratives of law rely on the force of law to legitimate their use. An investment in these grand narratives means that we expect them to achieve certain things and when they do not deliver, we are left without any alternatives. Lyotard and Derrida both envisage a form of justice as ethical response to the other. Both theorists advocate resistance to totalising narratives, inciting a responsibility to inherit narratives in a way that we constantly critique and deconstruct them. I have suggested the potential of this responsibility to encourage a (re)reading of History and 'justice' beyond the limits of grand narratives of messianism or universal law²⁷⁹. A responsible inheritance of the past requires an active interrogation of narrative-effects that is future-oriented, not a passive acceptance of their meaning as a map for the (pure) present.

²⁷⁹ Needless to say, this is not limited to Polish or Russian narratives, but can be (re)applied to any situation in which one wishes to challenge the effects of dominant, universalising narratives.

Conclusion(s)

The overall aim of this thesis was to critically interrogate dominant narrative(s) of ‘Katyn’ in order to develop a poststructuralist/deconstructive critique of narrative and meaning. I set out to explore what this approach enables that a more traditional Historical study does not. There were three main theoretical tenets to this analysis: resistance to totalising narratives; a politics of singularity; and an ethics of difference and the other. With this theoretical framework in mind, this study sought to identify what the dominant narratives on ‘Katyn’ are and ask (but not absolutely answer):

- Who or what is silenced in these (re)tellings?
- How might a deconstructive ethics allow for a more nuanced (re)reading of events?

I engaged with four dominant concepts – History, myth, memory and justice – around which ‘Katyn’ narratives are (re)produced and this involved a simultaneous analysis of the logic of these concepts. My (re)readings have revealed some of the ways in which dominant narratives have silenced or subjugated knowledges. I have not provided an exhaustive ‘alternative’ narrative, nor was that my intention. My critique has focused mainly on the Anglophone literature of ‘Katyn’ so I do not claim to have resolved the differend (which is impossible and would be unethical). Rather, my interventions are attempts to bear witness to the differend by “listening to the points at which the content” of these texts have been “torn apart by a difference that they cannot express” (Readings, 1991: 128). This is why I have *asked* these questions, but not completely *answered* them. This is an effect of the ethical implication(s) of deconstruction (Readings, 1991: 128).

Using a Foucauldian critique of History, this thesis questioned dominant hegemonies of History, and indeed, the very idea that there is one Katyn History. I have shown instead, that there are many ‘Katyn’ histories, and that these ‘histories’ have emerged at various times in response to other histories, and investments in national narratives, political positions, and so on. Beginning, like Foucault, with a commonly accepted version of events, one which is thought to be morally good, right, and true, I set about exploring what truth-effects this narrative propagates. Recent narratives on ‘Katyn’ have established (for many people at

least), that the Poles were (doubly) victimised by the Soviet crime of ‘Katyn’, and the continued silencing of the injustice after the event. Now that this narrative has been maintained and widely accepted in the West, it seems to be the most legitimate. The narrative of victimhood maintains its legitimacy, and (re)inforces its legitimacy by (re)producing narratives that highlight examples of this double-victimisation. There are many Histories that focus on the victimisation of the Polish nation, the injustice of Stalinist politics and practices, and/or the effects of censorship, and I have resisted (re)producing the same (re)readings that are common in the inherited literature. Rather than accepting the narrative of the ‘victim’ and condemning the ‘perpetrator’, I have taken a poststructuralist/deconstructive approach that asks us to always remain critical of our inheritance. This has involved a critical inheritance of my own (Polish, Catholic and Western liberal humanist) heritage, and a detachment from my preconceived ideas about Polish History and history more broadly. My initial research adopted a Derridean politics of mourning in order to articulate the silencing and suffering of ‘Katyn’ narratives in Poland. I noticed the repetition of common narrative threads in my analysis and it was then that I began to understand something of the impossible mourning of which Derrida speaks. He describes the aporia of mourning as a “double-bind” where one must negotiate between appropriation and alterity. For Derrida, mourning is “an unfaithful fidelity if it succeeds in interiorizing the other ideally in me, that is, not respecting his or her infinite exteriority” (Derrida, cited in Starling, 2002: 112). Throughout my research, I have tried to negotiate a balance between objective, critical analysis and respect for the other (and my heritage).

Yet while I have focused on an interrogation of the narratives of the “victims” or the “wronged” party, in order to avoid falling in to the trap of accepting these narratives as ‘true’, and as unmediated by discourse, I do not deny that an injustice has been done, nor do I disregard the very real, material effects of trauma that people have endured as a consequence. My focus has been on the narrativisations of this ‘suffering’, and how justice and injustice has been (re)conceptualised at various points in ‘historical time’. I have shown that ‘suffering’ has often been understood with reference to broader mythical narratives of identity and History, memory and memorialisation, and (universal) narratives on international law and justice. The killings could never be defined as a pure unmediated event. ‘Katyn’ and its various manifestations have always been (re)interpreted by referring to signs – crime/massacre/genocide/class cleansing – and each of these signs is a loaded concept that refers to other signs – identity, ethnicity, ideology, religion, class, and so on, and yet none of these signs ever refers to a single, originary signifier. ‘Katyn’ narratives are a negotiation of

the meaning(s) of these referents. Each of the concepts that intersect with ‘Katyń’ narratives – History, identity, myth, memory, justice, and reconciliation – adds another layer of infinite signification.

Even though I acknowledge that ‘Katyń’ constitutes an injustice, I did not set out to make a judgment, or to prove this injustice as a ‘fact’ or an established reality. Instead I have shown that there is nothing outside of the text (Derrida, 1997b: 158) – meaning is never pure, final, knowable, and (in)justice is never universal. While many people would consider murder, massacre, interrogation, invasion, as ‘universal injustices’, these same injustices are *justified* via grand totalising narratives. For the people/groups who invest these narratives, these actions are legitimated as right, just, and so on (which, of course, does not make them ‘right’). What Foucault’s genealogy, Lyotard’s critique of narrative and Derrida’s deconstruction of meaning enables is an understanding of these various narratives as perspectival, multiple, conflicting, revealing truth-effects (not truths).

The unfolding of these various ‘Katyń’ histories is illustrative of how History (as a form of narrative) is always mediated. The role of political elites and the use of censorship, in maintaining various ‘Katyń’ narrativisations is useful in demonstrating the extent to which interpretation(s) of event(s) do not exist in a vacuum, but are contextually specific. Meaning is not stable, but is constantly deferred through time, space, place and politics. However, a lot of the ‘Katyń’ and post-communist literature espouses the idea that manipulation and mediation is an effect of communist methods. The use of “censorship” is read as a distortion of History or Memory (which is true, factual, and unbiased). But I have shown the limits of an overly simplistic binary view of ‘Katyń’ in which the Soviet version is seen as a ‘lie’ and the Polish version is deemed the ‘truth’. If things are understood in logocentric dichotomous oppositions, this encourages a passive acceptance of the oppositional, and reinforces an ‘us’ and ‘them’ logic. An effect of this logic is that we accept that censorship is wrong and manipulative, and that totalitarian ‘law’ is ‘unjust’ and vengeful, and we fail to see the limits of our own concepts and systems because “we” are always on the side of good, truth, morality, right, and so on. While a study of communist or totalitarian systems does offer insights into the mechanisms of power that function to control narratives and knowledges, such a critique relies on an absolutist understanding of truth, ‘History’ and justice. A deconstructive (re)reading encourages us to critically engage with the effects of *all* dominant narratives that claim universal truth status.

Throughout this thesis I have maintained that ‘manipulation’ is not merely an effect of totalitarian methods, but an effect of narrative. A deconstructive (re)reading would encourage

us not to ignore the same tendencies that inhabit our own politics of narrativisations (whether it is through History, the media, science, identity, law, and so on). For those of us living in ‘democratic’ Western societies, it is important to acknowledge that a critique of communism/totalitarianism is always situated in a particular (privileged) position, a position which enables ‘us’ to distance ourselves and our politics from the ‘otherness’ of a political regime we have not experienced, and one which perhaps allows us to overlook the possibility of ‘less overt’ techniques in our own inherited concepts, histories, and narratives. So while we are able to reflect on the politics involved in the shifting accounts of ‘Katyń’ and the maintenance of a dominant Soviet narrative, I suggest that we continue to approach all narratives (not just ‘Katyń’), with the same infinite vigilance. Not in order to propagate paranoid conspiracy theories, but as a deconstructive ethics. An ethics that bears witness to the incommensurable, one that resists homogenisation and totalisation, and is open to the unexpected, the unprivileged, the unestablished, the unprecedented, and always remains open to the anticipation of the unknowable, unownable other.

History (as a form of narrative) is interpretative both in its structure and (re)readings. My particular (re)readings of ‘Katyń’ are informed by my interpretative framework – deconstruction – as well as my own situated and subjugated knowledges and this deconstructive approach has shaped my (re)interpretations. I have been looking for tensions within narratives that are illustrative of dominant knowledges, investments in national myths, collective memories of victimhood, limitations of justice as law, and so on. If it were my aim to reinforce narratives of Polish victimhood or Soviet ‘evils’ (which it was initially, to some extent), then my findings would, no doubt, be somewhat different. But my (re)readings are not intended to reveal a particular ‘truth’; they should be understood as (re)interpretations enabled by a deconstructive approach, one which always reveals trace(s). I am interested to see how ‘Katyń’ narratives continue to unfold, and how both nations persist or resist working towards a (re)conciliatory politics (which I hope remains future-oriented). Such an investigation would require a more in-depth engagement with Polish and Russian literature. The absence of this literature should not detract from the implications of this thesis in that these theoretical insights extend far beyond the scope of this thesis, and beyond (re)readings of ‘Katyń’. In thinking about how a deconstructive ethics could work as a viable political practice, I am reminded of Niżyńska’s comments regarding the presidential crash and the “knee-jerk” (Niżyńska, 2010: 470) reaction to (re)read the event within a broader narrative. Although I have been encouraging a politics of (im)possibility, one which emphasises the (im)possibility of ever deciding on ‘truth’, of ever resolving a differend, of ever establishing

that ‘justice’ has been done, the point is not to render everything meaningless and hopeless. Rather, I hope that my insights encourage a way of thinking that moves beyond the “knee jerk” reactions and responses that dissolve the singular into the universal. My “deconstruction” of ‘Katyń’ is not a “destruction”. While we cannot (re)construct the ‘past’, it does not mean that the past disappears – a trace always remains. In resisting a universal definition of ‘Katyń’, I am hoping that the trace of ‘Katyń’ always remains as a constant pressure on thinking (Eaglestone, 2002: 31). Ultimately, the ‘meaning’ of ‘Katyń’ is to be infinitely deferred; its meaning(s) can never be ‘present’ but is always open to the ‘future’. ‘Katyń’ remains to-come.

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