



The Fantastic Afterlives of the Holocaust

Workshop

June 16–18, 2021

Online via zoom Link:

[https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/
tZ0pc0Ctpz4uEtC5uD2Ulgvp1nFAsvERSUSw](https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZ0pc0Ctpz4uEtC5uD2Ulgvp1nFAsvERSUSw)

WIENER WIESENTHAL INSTITUT
FÜR HOLOCAUST-STUDIEN (VWI)



The Fantastic Afterlives of the Holocaust

Ghosts, apparitions, phantoms, demons, monsters, and miracles all inhabit postwar references to the Holocaust. They constitute recurrent, though often neglected, tropes in testimonies and memoirs of survivors, but also increasingly come to the fore in contemporary engagements with the Holocaust. Fantastic, spectral, supernatural, monstrous, and uncanny figures permeate personal accounts of the Holocaust that stretch across generational boundaries, inform artistic and literary practices, and, as a recent development, also academic writing. Whether as incarnations of “ultimate evil”, concoctions of post-Holocaust imaginations, or figurations of its continuous relevance and resonance, their presence establishes a set of new themes through which to address the Holocaust and its experiential, affective, cultural, and political impact. Focussing on this fertile and, to a large extent, unexplored research terrain, this workshop aims to investigate the role and implications that the whole range of fantastic figures and phenomena have held for past and present-day approximations to the Holocaust, including their usage in popular culture (cartoons, new media, video games, etc.).

The workshop will open up space for debates on the various meanings these figures assume in relation to the Holocaust. To this end, we are equally interested in the ways they shape individual and collective perceptions and representations of the event, become means of conveying its experience (both first-hand and vicarious), and influence private and social/cultural imaginaries. Our intention is to locate this debate on a historical, political, and epistemological plane that goes beyond the questions of trauma and of representation and representability, and beyond current explorations of fantastic and supernatural phenomena in the Holocaust in terms of magic realism or ‘trauma fiction’. In a similar vein, we want to distance ourselves from conceptualisations that associate the fantastic and supernatural merely with escapist trajectories in literature and genres of evasion. Instead, we wish to address the complex and multifaceted aftereffects of the Holocaust and the phenomena that epitomise and embody the event’s haunting presence. Thus, rather than approaching them primarily as literary epiphenomena or aesthetic gestures of failed or successful imitations of the Holocaust’s realities, we propose to examine the ways in which certain aspects and experiences of the Holocaust *live on* in fantastic figures.

Each speaker has 40 minutes. This includes 15 minutes paper and then commentator notes (5 minutes) and discussion (20 minutes)

Wednesday, 16 June

14:00 **Opening Words**

PANEL 1: HAUNTING IN HOLOCAUST WRITING AND TESTIMONY

14:30 **Kathryn L. BRACKNEY**
(Harvard University, Cambridge)
Spectral Encounters and Liminal Worlds in Postwar Jewish Refugee Literature

15:10 **Marianne WINDSPERGER**
(Vienna Wiesenthal Institute for Holocaust Studies)
'Fun der toyter shtot.' The Haunting Presence of Yiddish in Contemporary Writing about the Holocaust

Commented by
Stéphanie BENZAQUEN-GAUTIER
(University of Nottingham)

15:50 *Break*

PANEL 2: CONTINUITY – DISCONTINUITY

16:20 **Ella FALLDORF**
(Friedrich Schiller University Jena)
Dancing Death. The Danse Macabre in Artworks about the Holocaust

17:00 **Kobi KABALEK**
(Pennsylvania State University)
Frankenstein in the Ghetto and Other Figures of Holocaust Horror

Commented by
María del PILAR BLANCO
(University of Oxford)

17:40 *Break*

PANEL 3: THE DEATHLESS WOMAN (2019)

17:50 **Film Screening**

19:30 **Discussion with the Director, Roz MORTIMER**

Moderated by
Éva KOVÁCS
(Vienna Wiesenthal Institute for Holocaust Studies)

Thursday, 17 June

PANEL 4: VERNACULAR GHOSTS

14:30 **Borbála KRIZA**
(Independent Researcher, Budapest)
Christian Skulls, Haunted Jewish Houses and Blood Libel. Fear and Guilt in Non-Jewish Witness Narratives about the Holocaust in Central Europe

15:10 **Aleksandra SZCZEPAN**
(Jagiellonian University, Kraków)
Palliative Magic and Postsecular Cure. Afterlives of Romani Holocaust in Poland

Commented by
Layla RENSHAW
(Kingston University, London)

15:50 *Break*

PANEL 5: SPECTRAL SPACES

16:00 **Emily-Rose BAKER**
(University of Sheffield)
Spectral Spatialities: Psychogeographic Film and the Afterlife of the Romanian Holocaust

16:40 **Yechiel WEIZMAN**
(Humboldt University, Berlin/Dubnow Institute Leipzig)
Divine Vengeance. The Demonic Aura of Profaned Jewish Sites After the Holocaust

Commented by
Tim COLE
(University of Bristol)

17:50 *Break*

PANEL 6: THE POLITICS OF GHOSTS

18:30 **Zuzanna DZIUBAN**
(Austrian Academy of Sciences, Vienna)
Powerful/Powerless. Jewish Ghosts in the Polish Post-Holocaust Imaginaire

19:10 **Martyn HUDSON**
(Northumbria University, Newcastle upon Tyne)
Imaginaires, Camps and the Dead of World History

Commented by
Gudrun RATH
(University of Art and Design, Linz)

Friday, 18 June

PANEL 7: THE HOLOCAUST IN ALTERNATE REALITIES

14:30 **Brian CRIM**
(University of Lynchburg)
Worlds Without Jews. The Holocaust and the Multiverse in 'The Man in the High Castle'

15:10 **Dany MELKONOWICKI**
(Haifa University/Yad Vashem, Jerusalem)
Treblinka, the Undead Führer, and the Fear of Totalitarianism. Images of the Holocaust in Guillermo Del Toro's Vampire Apocalypse 'The Strain'

Commented by
James MCFARLAND
(Vanderbilt University, Nashville)

15:50 *Break*

PANEL 8: EPISTEMOLOGY AND AESTHETICS

16:00 **Elana GOMEL**
(Tel Aviv University)
Defamiliarizing the Holocaust? Science Fiction and Representations of Atrocity

16:40 **Colin DAVIS**
(University of London)
"Why Did You Make Me Return?" Goethe, Semprun and the Ghosts of Buchenwald


Commented by
Kirsten MAHLKE
(University of Konstanz)

17:20 *Break*

FINAL COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION

17:40 Concluding remarks:
Wouter HANEGRAAFF
(University of Amsterdam)

FUNDED BY

 Federal Chancellery

 Federal Ministry
Education, Science
and Research



CONCEPT

Zuzanna Dziuban and Kobi Kabalek

IMPRINT

Vienna Wiesenthal Institut for Holocaust Studies (WVI), A-1010 Vienna, Rabensteig 3.
Telephone: +43(01)/890 15 14. E-Mail: office@wvi.ac.at. Internet: www.wvi.ac.at

Image: Courtesy of the artist Hila Keinan, Tel Aviv. From the cycle *Cannibalism in Concentration Camps*

By participating in this event, you consent to the publication of photos, video and audio recordings that are made during the event.