



Public Engagement with Holocaust Memory Sites in Poland

Edited by
Diana I. Popescu

The Holocaust and its Contexts

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More than sixty years on, the Holocaust remains a subject of intense debate with ever-widening ramifications. This series aims to demonstrate the continuing relevance of the Holocaust and related issues in contemporary society, politics and culture; studying the Holocaust and its history broadens our understanding not only of the events themselves but also of their present-day significance. The series acknowledges and responds to the continuing gaps in our knowledge about the events that constituted the Holocaust, the various forms in which the Holocaust has been remembered, interpreted and discussed, and the increasing importance of the Holocaust today to many individuals and communities.

Diana I. Popescu
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Introduction: Public Engagement with Holocaust Memory Sites in Poland

Diana I. Popescu

Holocaust memory sites in Poland draw millions of visitors every year. Auschwitz-Birkenau is by far the most visited former concentration camp with over 2 million visitors in 2019 with the largest number of visitors from Poland, UK, and the US and from all over the world ([Auschwitz.org](https://www.auschwitz.org) 2020). While much has been written about the politics of memory of Holocaust sites and the narratives enacted by different national groups visiting memory sites in Poland (Buntman 2008; Adamczyk-Garbowska et al. 2014; Lehrer 2013; Liyanage 2015; Golańska 2015; Cole 2018; Craig Wight 2020; Silberman 2014; Popescu 2023), the question of how ordinary or informed visitors perceive and experience these sites, the expectations they hold from their encounters, and the meanings they develop based on their visits need to be more deeply investigated.

Despite scholarship on Polish memory spaces (i.e. memory sites, commemorative projects, former death, and concentration camps) being a vast field of research, there remains a significant lack of evidence-based research

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into real visitor experience of such sites. Published work tends to address Holocaust memory sites through a historical lens, by looking at the memory politics at play over a longer period, or by addressing Jewish or Polish memory and the tensions which arise when such memories enter a competitive and contested field of commemoration (Finder 2008; Nowak 2018; Sindbæk Andersen and Barbara 2016; Ray and Kapralski 2019; Lehrer and Meng 2015). A few studies draw on ethnographic approaches as they tell accounts of encounters with Polish locals living on, or in the proximity of former ghettos, shtetls, deportation, and extermination sites. To date, there are no studies published in the English language which provide an evidence-based understanding of how visitors (of different national, ethnic, and generational backgrounds) engage with Holocaust memory sites in Poland, and the impact such interactions have upon them. Exceptions exist—several monographs and journal articles, discussed in what follows, examine real visitor experiences, or draw on empirical research such as interviews and surveys, as well as existing museum materials (e.g. museum visitor books). Most of these studies, however, tend to focus solely or mostly on Auschwitz-Birkenau (Pettitte 2017).

Much has been written about consumerism in relation to tourists visiting Auschwitz-Birkenau, and sites such as Oskar Schindler's factory made popular by Steven Spielberg's *Schindler's List* (Cole 1999; Lacanienta 2020). This is particularly manifest in activities such as the selling of souvenirs, taking of photos, and other irreverential behaviours. Tim Cole's *Selling the Holocaust* (1999) is an early work exploring the so-called Shoah business, depicting an 'Auschwitz-land' where tourists are described as the 'ultimate rubberneckers', 'passing by and gazing at someone else's tragedy'. This consumerist memory culture emerging in the United States is associated with the Americanization of the Holocaust (Novick 2000). Tourists with no connection to this history, and of different nationalities are especially vulnerable to experiencing the sites within a consumerist mindset. A consumerist perspective is further supported by Polish tourism companies which gain profits out of organized tours of Holocaust memory sites, offering visits to film sites associated with *Schindler's List* and with historical sites such as Auschwitz, mixing history with popular culture, fact with fiction. More recently, this consumerist culture also includes an obsession with the self, as tourists take selfies particularly at Auschwitz, which they post on social media sites to show they have been there. Opinion is divided as to whether selfie taking at Auschwitz is an authentic

way of relating to the site, or reproduces common touristic practices, normalizing the visit to Auschwitz as one among many other tourist sites one can visit (Dalziel 2016; Feldman and Musih 2023).

Visitors' emotion and perception of Auschwitz-Birkenau as an authentic site is another common topic discussed in the literature (see chapters by Anna Veprinska and Alaisdar Richardson in edited volume *Visitor Experience at Holocaust Memorials and Museums*, 2022), and particularly the theme of 'authenticity' (Charlesworth 2002) in relation to visitor experience of the sites dominates discussions—being understood as an experience that is intrinsically connected to the physical dimension of visiting the site, and perceived as a sensorial encounter which is difficult to reproduce virtually. Aside from Western non-Jewish tourists at peril of perceiving these sites through a 'dark tourism' lens (Lennon 2017), where history of the Holocaust is objectified, and trivialized for the sake of the 'thrill', much work has focused on Israeli tourists visiting memory sites in Poland. Jackie Feldman's *Above the death pits, beneath the flag* (2008) focused on Israeli youth participating in annual trips to Auschwitz and other sites. Here the focus is on the transformative power of the educational programme developed by the Israeli government and offered to young people before their army service in the IDF. As Feldman shows, the visit to Poland is essential in building an Israeli identity based on the conviction that Diaspora is a space of antisemitism and of death, while Israel represents life and the future for the Jewish people. The youth visiting these sites undergo a ritual of passage, their experience of the sites is highly emotional, even traumatizing. The visits remain powerfully imprinted in their memory, and act as motivators in their hard work of defending Israel against its enemies. This transformational effect the site exerts over its Jewish visitors is perceived by non-Jewish tourists as well. Daniel R. Reynolds's *Postcards from Auschwitz* (2018) examines visitors at Auschwitz and other urban memoryscapes (Berlin, Warsaw, Jerusalem), arguing that the so-called Holocaust tourism can bring about 'a profound destabilization of identity' (Reynolds 2018: 8). Such experiences are very different from those who encounter the sites from a dark tourism consumerist approach. In fact, Derek Dalton's *Encountering Nazi Tourism Sites* (2020), based on visitor comments, argues that tourism at former camp sites should not be linked to this phenomenon at all, since for 'most people [the visiting] is more about a reverential respect to see the remains of "history"' (Dalton 2020). That these sites are more than stops on the dark tourism trail, and in fact become catalysts for a range of encounters, with

former survivors and their families, and loci where different memory cultures meet and clash is the subject of Maurizio Cinquegrani's *Journey to Poland: documentary landscapes of the Holocaust* (2018), exploring documentaries that focus on how survivors and their families relate to death camps Treblinka and Auschwitz. Auschwitz becomes a pilgrimage site for many descendants of Holocaust survivors, who for lack of familial roots, regard the site as the resting place, the burial ground of their families, and for whom these spaces are 'sacred' and 'sacralised' (Mitschke 2016) through rituals of interaction that include laying of stones and of flowers, reciting of prayers, and shedding of tears. While such interactions inform many Jewish visitors' travels to memory sites in Poland, exceptional forms of interaction also exist, as for instance, the visit by survivor Adolek Kohn and his family now based in Australia, who chose to use humour, by filming themselves as three generations dancing on the tune of Gloria Gaynor's 'I will survive'—a form of appropriation and repair, a reversal of traumatic memories such sites produce for the survivors and their families (Patterson 2010). Survivors have visited these sites since their liberation—as ceremonies of remembrance were attended by former prisoners, and their families, many were private and took place since the liberation of the camps. Since the late 1990s educational charities in Poland, Europe and elsewhere started organizing visits to the camps as part of young people's school trips (Ambrosewicz-Jacobs 2020). Nowadays, Auschwitz is deeply embedded in a European system of education particularly in Western European countries that regularly send youth on learning tours, and as part of their civic education (e.g. Holocaust Education Trust's Lessons from Auschwitz programme).

Apart from sites visited by former prisoners and their families, and later by ordinary tourists, memory sites and particularly Auschwitz are spaces where national and international memory politics are at play. Often visited by state leaders, Auschwitz forms part of a complex memoryscape where national identities are formed and strengthened, national values and traditions are performed and reinforced. Auschwitz and other sites become symbols standing in for democratic values such as freedom, tolerance, and respect for human rights. Leaders shaking hands in the vicinity of the 'Arbeit Macht Frei' gates (a central image reproduced in countless photographs, media, and social media) send a message to non-liberal societies, about the democratic values and beliefs of the Western world which stand together to oppose totalitarian regimes from taking control of their societies. But also, being photographed with Polish leaders at such a site sends

messages related to the ownership of the site, and the mingled national narratives in which Auschwitz and other sites are major players, as Auschwitz becomes a site of Polish martyrdom as much as a Jewish one (Kucia 2019). In the aftermath of the Holocaust and throughout the Communist regime, memory sites related to the Holocaust, although they continued to be visited by survivors, and their families, were perceived by the Poles as symbols of Polish victimization and martyrdom as the hands of the Nazi invaders (Huener 2003; Klein 2009; Kucia 2021). Jewish memory was at best marginalized and ignored and at worst actively discouraged within a Polish Communist memory discourse which did not recognize the genocide perpetrated against the Jewish population (Pakier 2015). Although the Holocaust is being taught in Polish schools since the 1990s, there are relatively few studies which look at how Polish youth interact with the former camp sites. This coincides with the systemic changes brought forward by the fall of the Soviet Union, and the exploration of Polish self-understanding and its recent history of the World War II (WWII). The fate of the Jews became an interest to intellectuals and artists as they began to explore Polish pasts through a newer engagement with spaces that were left derelict. The empty worn-down buildings in Lublin's old town were taken over by a group of artists who founded the Grodzka Gate-NN Theatre Centre, or Senjy's central buildings abandoned since WWII. These spaces were Jewish spaces, synagogues, schools, and homes. Their appropriation raised questions related to their recent histories and prompted curiosity, interest, and a sense of responsibility towards this past on behalf of prominent artists (see Chap. 1 in this book). While these early Polish memory activists were still exceptional within the Polish cultural landscape of the 1990s, their perseverance in engaging with Jewish absence coupled with broader international influences coming from Jewish visitors who started to arrive in Poland in search of their family traces of those perished in the camps, and a growing historical research on the topic of Jewish history and Polish-Jewish relations, the renewed call to raise funds (nationally and internationally) to preserve the former camps and an interest from Polish governments to ensure preservation of former sites—all came together to bring the subject of Jewish heritage in Poland into public discussions. Particularly the publication of Jan T. Gross' book *Neighbours: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland* (2000) triggered public debates about Polish collaboration, antisemitism, and culpability which divided public opinion, many rejecting the evidence provided in this book inculpating Poles for the murder of their Jewish

neighbours (Forecki 2013). Prior to this publication, Claude Lanzman's *Shoah* (1985) depicting Poles as collaborators caused further discussion among some Polish circles, but this was marginal (Forecki 2013). That Polish people were culpable of persecuting their Jewish neighbours is further rejected nowadays as the new political regime has made it illegal and subject to prosecution. Instead, Polish rescuers are given centrality in Polish memory narratives and celebrated as part of many commemoration projects. Polish acknowledgements of Jewish histories tend to focus on the sense of absence left by Jews and tend to engage in symbolic acts of recovery, or reconciliation and of healing of the wounds, instead of focusing on what have been Polish collaboration and antisemitism. Memory activist work conducted by artists and intellectuals in nowadays Poland is characterized by an emphasis of Polish-Jewish 'good memories', a sense of missing of the Jewish neighbour, a sense of appreciation of diversity, and an educational message of tolerance and respect of the others (now largely missing from Poland in contrast to its pre-war period). In terms of Polish visits to former camp sites, Polish visitors remain the largest number (e.g. Auschwitz), many of those who visit regard such sites as symbolic of Polish victimization, since millions of Poles lost their lives at the hands of Nazis, who after Poland's conquest proceeded to persecute and murder its elite, and any who openly opposed them, as well as the wider population. Jews in Poland became Poles murdered in the camps during the Communist regime, since no differentiation was being made—this perception exists to this day. Still, many unmarked sites in the countryside such as mass graves have been marked with crosses by Polish neighbours who knew Jews had been murdered and buried there. Camp sites are first and foremost visited by Polish school children. Most existing work looking at their experiences of the sites is available in the Polish language, and some exceptions in the English language include work exploring Polish educational approach to Holocaust teaching (Gross 2014; Borman 2018; Ambrosewicz-Jacobs 2020) research on re-traumatization in the case of high school students visiting Auschwitz (Bilewicz and Wojcik 2018). These need to be complemented by longitudinal studies which explore in further depth attitudes of Polish attitudes towards these spaces, and the memory work they engage in.

THIS VOLUME'S FOCUS

This volume addresses this gap as it furthers understanding of Polish youth involvement in commemorative work and of their attitudes towards this past. Apart from its focus on a few national memorial campaigns which engaged the Polish visitor in Poland's capital city, Warsaw (see POLIN's Remembering Together campaign discussed by Schult), the volume mostly focuses on local memory, exploring how Poles relate to this history and interact with memory sites in towns or villages across Poland, including Sejny, and Lublin (see Chaps. 1, 4), Koźminek and Żarki (see Chap. 2) as well as in the vicinity of former camp sites such as Chełmno on Ner (see Chap. 7), and Plaszlow (see Chap. 8). Each chapter explores aspects of Polish memory culture with an emphasis on local engagement with this history, either mediated by the spaces of the former camps or through the memorialization activities of museums—particularly of POLIN, but also of camp site museums in Plaszlow, and Chełmno and of cultural and heritage organizations outside of Warsaw, such as the Borderland Foundation in Sejny and the Grodzka Gate-NN Theatre Centre in Lublin, in the vicinity of Majdanek. While focus remains on sites and spaces other than Auschwitz-Birkenau, this volume's contributors approach Auschwitz through the prism of specific groups of visitors (IDF soldiers, see Applboim and Poria), or through the experience of sound and its curation in Block 27, the Jewish Pavilion exhibition at Auschwitz (see Huether). These contributions add new perspectives to current scholarship, presenting an Israeli and Jewish engagement with Auschwitz that is neither sacralizing nor ritualizing, but which places emphasis on affective engagement and its particular and collective meaning. Jewish engagement with other sites, in this volume with Sobibor, is particularly poignant in illustrating the centrality of these spaces in Holocaust survivors' lives and their meaning for the generations that follow, in this case evidencing a particular form of intergenerational memory activism not uncommon to Holocaust survivors and their families (see Wilson). Unlike prior scholarship, this volume addresses Jewish and Polish engagements with memory sites in Poland not through the prism of dark tourism (a much-utilized frame of interpretation), but through lived experience and from a personal and collective perspective that regards these sites as spaces in/of transformation.

THE VOLUME'S THEMES AND CONTRIBUTIONS

This volume provides evidence-based insights into how contemporary visitors experience and reflect on their visits, or on living in the proximity of different sites of memory across Poland, including former concentration and death camps, and other physical sites such as museums with a connection to the Holocaust. It draws on empirical research and evaluations of real visitor experiences. The evaluations are based on small to medium size audience samples, ranging from a few participants to a few hundred participants. There are a wide range of methodologies used to collect data including in-depth open-ended or semi-structured interviews, focus groups, surveys, and visitor observations, as well as auto-ethnographic approaches and analyses of comments made on social media. In terms of methodology, this volume proposes a range of methods of data collection including interviews, surveys, focus groups, and auto-biographical approaches. This diversity of approaches ensures that different aspects of visitor experiences are captured and analyzed, leading to a deeper understanding of visitor encounters with Holocaust memory sites. With its discussion of Auschwitz-Birkenau and of other memory and concentration camps in Poland, the volume offers an invaluable opportunity to draw comparisons in terms of how visitors approach, interact and understand these sites. It will allow readers to better understand the different ways these sites appeal to visitors, the impacts they have, and the specific characteristics of these sites which produce these impacts.

Museums in Poland (whose roles are to educate and mediate the histories of these sites to a wide range of visitors) have not escaped global trends in museums educational and curatorial practice which are placing the interests and needs of the visitors at its very core. Particularly in the aftermath of the COVID pandemic, we see museums expanding their outreach, by developing intricate virtual experiences of their sites using immersive technologies. Prior to the pandemic, some museums such as POLIN (discussed by Schult and Kubica) had a well-developed outreach educational programme: Museum on Wheels and Remembering Together. These initiatives and the public engagements they draw from audiences will be discussed in depth in this volume. Despite the attempts to respond to audiences' interests and needs, some of these campaigns may not be as effective in interpreting visitors or in understanding local sensibilities, and the role Jewish pasts play for current Poles living in smaller towns and villages. Kubica analyses the outreach project Museum on Wheels (MoW), a

travelling initiative of Warsaw's POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews, run in rural Poland as a collaboration between the museum and local communities. Museum on Wheels was initiated in 2014 as a travelling exhibition and consists of a transportable pavilion—a small exhibition which encourages learning about Jewish history, and culture in Poland throughout centuries. Yet, as Kubica shows, for the visitors, the focus of POLIN on the stories about continuity of Jewish life in Poland remains in tension with their needs to address Jewish absence and to talk about the Holocaust in their towns (Kubica and Van de Putte 2019). Kubica examines this tension in-depth, through a close reading of selected interviews with local visitors, conducted in different towns in the summer of 2015. The mismatch between the needs and expectations of the locals reveals the complexity of collective memory about Jews at local level, in Poland. Kubica argues that by focusing on the stories of Jewish life and continuity in its core message and programme, POLIN overlooks some of the chances to engage with the difficulty and complexity of the topic in rural Poland. The analysis of these interactions with locals demonstrates that Jewish history and heritage provide local Poles with the vocabulary with which to define their sense of belonging to the Polish nation, by means of which they negotiate the inclusion and exclusion of Jews into and from rural memoryscapes in Poland. While Kubica looks at how locals relate to the absence of Jews and even instrumentalize this loss to unconsciously define their own sense of belonging to a Polish memory space, Schult's reading of POLIN's memorialization campaign 'Remembering Together' presents us with an active memory activism of young volunteers who take upon themselves the work of remembering the Jewish Warsaw Uprising and of reaching out to Warsaw's inhabitants with a message of remembering making Jewish past an integral part of Poland's history. Since its launch in 2014, the outreach campaign *Remembering Together* is emblematic of a multi-layered historical narrative where Jews are an integral part of Poland's history, argues Schult. The campaign invites passers-by in Warsaw and elsewhere to wear a daffodil paper flower-pin on 19 April, the day commemorating the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. It recalls Marek Edelman, the last commander of the Jewish Combat Organization, and one of the few survivors of the ghetto uprising, who used to place each year yellow flowers at Nathan Rapoport's Monument to the Ghetto Heroes and on other places associated with the extermination of Jews. While these acts of commemoration were a one-man undertaking which ended when Edelman passed away in 2009, the campaign has, despite its short existence,

managed to engage innumerable people in and outside of the museum, not only in Warsaw but in many parts of Poland—and even found an echo in other countries. Furthermore, it has affected (social) media, and led to other forms of materialized memory culture. Taking this example, Schult discusses how museums such as POLIN can act as memory agents at a time of growing antisemitism and political repression, and how simple means—providing a paper flower to passers-by in the street, worn on people’s clothes on the commemoration day—can attract new audiences and establish a sense of community which insists that working through the national past is a societal task, and that the history of the Jews is an integral part of European history. To support this argument, Schult uses empirical data collected over a period of three years (2016–2018): interviews with educators, observations in the streets, and surveys to access the experiences of the 1000 volunteers who participated annually in the campaign.

Following up on the core argument that Polish participants come together, remembering together as a community bound by their active memory of Jewish pasts, Popescu focuses on the commemorative activities of two local cultural and heritage organizations: the Borderland Foundation in Senjy in north-east Poland, near the border with Lithuania, and the Grodzka Gate-NN Theatre Centre in Lublin, south-east of Poland. Since the early 1990s, these cultural organizations have been inspired by theatre and performance to design elaborate commemorative initiatives which actively engage the locals in processes of remembering. Popescu argues that a specific Polish memorial culture focused on ‘repair’ and ‘ritual’ is created through local participations of young people which borrows from official forms of memorialisation governed from atop and specific local sensibilities, creating a messier version of Polish Holocaust memory defined by a greater awareness and tolerance of the other. Here, the locals perform rituals of repair and healing of the ‘wounds’ of the past—perceived as the breaking apart of a Jewish-Polish symbiosis and aim to reinstate Jewish presence within the current landscape through elaborate performances that engage members of the community in active ways. The different commemorative projects discussed in this chapter reflect an active memory culture sustained in Poland by cultural and social activists which attracts participations and becomes embedded in local memory but does not confront (at least not actively) darker chapters of Jewish-Polish relations, and particularly Polish antisemitism. While these commemorative actions take place annually and involve schools, authorities, and local inhabitants, they often engage with segments of the Polish nation who

already embrace multiculturalism and diversity embodied now by the lost Jewish communities of Poland. This chapter paints a complex picture of the local Polish participant engaged in processes of remembrance—each in its own way point to both the willingness to remember and embrace Jewish pasts as integral to Polish history and a tendency to shun away from remembering darker episodes which point to Polish culpability or anti-semitism. The commemorative projects tend to adopt a ‘positive’ memory aimed at celebrating diversity and difference as values of the present, and not to actively remember Polish-Jewish relations in all their complexity.

The next two chapters explore public engagement with Auschwitz-Birkenau site and memorial museum. Israeli visitors are among the most dominant group visiting Auschwitz, and although work on the transformative impact of their visit has been published already (see Jackie Feldman’s book), Applboim and Poria explore Israeli soldiers’ engagement with the site through a lesser-known programme called ‘Witnesses in Uniform, the journey to Poland’ whose participants are members of the Israeli Defence Force’s standing army. This research examines the effect of participation on the soldiers’ sense of commitment to IDF as a community. The study employs qualitative research methodology and is based on structured interviews with personnel of the standing army who took part in a journey to Poland, as well as interviews with those involved in the management and organization of the journey. The journey to Poland appears to have a positive impact on the organizational commitment of IDF soldiers. In this case, Israeli soldiers’ commitment to IDF is strengthened by their participation in this programme, reflecting how Holocaust memory plays an active role in definitions not only of Israeli identity as a nation, but at an organizational level, strengthening belief in and commitment to the IDF as a powerful Israeli institution. Moving on, Huethner also engages with Jewish memory at Auschwitz, by exploring public engagement with the permanent exhibition of Block 27—the Jewish Pavilion in the National Exhibit at the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum. The designer and architect of the Pavilion, Tal de Lange, aimed Block 27 to ‘be suffused with two primary features: Simplicity and the Senses’ and identified the primary challenge would be to create an exhibit that conveyed the enormity of the Holocaust in a ‘clear and accurate manner’ to visitors who were predominantly ‘young, non-Jewish, European citizens’. The focus on ‘the senses’ led the designers to curate a highly affective experience, including through the use of sound and music, and the incorporation of ‘Ani Ma’Amin’, a Jewish prayer of faith and Messianism. Huethner explores the sonic

experience of ‘Ani Ma’Amin’, as an affective agent, and argues that through its lyrics and musical elements, it contributes to the cultivation of an affective soteriological ‘third space’—namely, an environment that breaks down a museum visitor’s individuality—and with that any collective affiliations, such as nationalities, religion, or other personal beliefs. Instead, she argues, this invites the audience into a new collective that focuses on feeling, rather than fact, and reflects the multiplicity of diverse—and often contrasting—emotional responses felt when one visits the Auschwitz-Birkenau memorial museum. Emotion is a dominant characteristic of visitor engagement with Auschwitz and by proxy, other death, and concentration camps. Other studies (e.g. Alasdair Richardson) show the diversity of emotional reaction leading to overwhelm, and potentially re-traumatization, and a difficulty to process and name feelings on from young people taking part in the UK’s charity, Holocaust Educational Trust’s ‘Lessons from Auschwitz’ programme. Huether, Applboim and Poria point to the transformational potential of a visit to Auschwitz and dominantly its affective power, and less the visit’s potential to enlighten the visitor intellectually by teaching him or her about the history of the Holocaust as it is manifested at Auschwitz. Given that this site sits central within a collective and global memory discourse and attracts most visitors compared to other sites, one wonders what the affective reactions lead to. In the case of Israeli-Jewish visitors (many other programmes—for instance, March of the Living—support Jews in Diaspora to travel and engage with memory sites in Poland, but Auschwitz remains central), the effects are a strengthening of the sense of Jewish identity formed against and despite this history, a sense of resilience and determination to actively combat antisemitism, and to defend Israel, a commitment towards Israel’s policies. Moving on to Polish engagement with memory sites, Chap. 7 examines the commemoration of the Holocaust in Chełmno on Ner Museum, which rests on the site of the first extermination camp during the Second World War. Chełmno on Ner Museum differs from the main museums and memory sites of the Holocaust: it has never formed a part of the mainstream politics of memory shaped by the official Polish and international authorities, like Auschwitz-Birkenau or Majdanek Museum. Apart from a focus of memory culture, along with the fact that most material remains were destroyed during the war, it functions mostly as a symbolic cemetery and commemoration of the victims. Visiting Chełmno on Ner Museum may generate feelings of unease which result from different approaches than the canonical commemoration forms and memory