

FAST FORWARD TO THE PAST: REVISITING TRAUMA AFTER THE FALL

CAROLINA SÁNCHEZ-PALENCIA
MANUEL ALMAGRO

Universidad de Sevilla
csanchez@us.es
almagro@us.es

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The concept of the Fall has a long tradition in cultural history and is very often, if not always, associated with traumatic events, the most outstanding example being the Fall from Grace represented in the Bible and its different re-writings. In the field of History the term has also been widely used to describe a certain crepuscular phase in the evolution of a given society, as exemplified notably in the case of Edward Gibbon's *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. And, in a more contemporary context, poststructuralists have extended the idea to refer to the "fall into language" and the inauguration of the Symbolic order.¹

In a different area of experience, the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 is also an iconic moment which is not only significant at the level of the symbolic, but also entails a dramatic change in the everyday lives of millions of people, as it signals the disappearance in the Eastern part of Europe of a whole panoply of discourses defining the Real: among them, that of History as understood by Soviet ideology. Since the fall, it has become increasingly possible to interpret History in a different fashion and, in particular, to represent from a new perspective voices that had previously been silenced.

One indicator of these silenced voices that might question the official metanarratives can be found in the profusion of jokes about the political situation that proliferated in communist countries. Two instances of this humour can be given at this point, as they help to illuminate our object of inquiry. In the first, a listener calls Armenian

Radio asking whether it is possible to predict the future. The journalist answers: “It is not hard to predict the future. The only problem is the past, which keeps on changing”. The second example can be found in Slavoj Žižek’s film *Žižek!* and goes like this:

An East German worker gets a job in Siberia. Aware of how all mail will be read by censors, he tells his friends: “Let’s establish a code: if a letter you get from me is written in ordinary blue ink, it’s true, if it’s written in red ink, it’s false”. After a month his friends get the first letter: “Everything is wonderful here: the shops are full, food is abundant, apartments are large and properly heated, cinemas show films from the West, there are many beautiful girls ready for an affair —the only thing you can’t get is red ink”.

This desire and even relish for cracking a joke can be interpreted as an unconscious desire to show the cracks (pun intended) in the texture of an apparently hard, solid surface. But jokes, of course, are also an indicator of repressed tension and evoke a traumatic experience. Most scholarly examinations of trauma, which draw heavily on psychoanalysis, address traumatic recall as “the return of the repressed”, that is, a form of intrusive past that generates a delayed response to an event, which reappears after a period of latency or incubation as a trace in the subject’s consciousness as if to haunt or possess him/her. Cathy Caruth seems to cling to this phantasmatic relationship between individuals and their past when she affirms that “[t]o be traumatized is precisely to be possessed by an image or an event” (1995: 5).

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In our case, such jokes dealing with an officially seamless, pre-fall scenario, refer to two aspects of our work: first, the revision of the past, not in order to eliminate political enemies, as in those well-known pictures where they are airbrushed out, but to insert new historical material; and, secondly, the difficulty of finding a language in which to narrativize a traumatic past and, by extension, a new version of history.

Thus, when the checkpoint at Bornholmerstrasse is opened on November 9, 1989, the so-called “fall of the wall” begins. Initially this implies only the physical disappearance of a barrier between the German Federal Republic and the German Democratic Republic, and also, in the Eastern European countries, the beginning of the collapse of the whole communist regime with its peculiar political and socioeconomic characteristics. Secondly, the fall of the Berlin Wall means the end of the Cold War, culminating indisputably in the victory of Western values and mores. To put it in terms at once trivial and symbolic: now the citizens of the old Soviet empire would not have to buy their jeans on the black market but in any ordinary clothes shop. Last but not least, what that November night triggers is the collapse of an ideology, in the shape of a historical discourse with a strong

teleological component, usually phrased as the “inevitable course of history”. This discourse gave coherence to the idiosyncrasies of the political system in the present as well as in its analysis of the past and the future, as can be seen in the well-known examples of the official hymn of the USSR, and “The Internationale”, which promise the consummation of the socialist utopia after “the final and decisive battle”.²

In the well-known German film *Goodbye, Lenin!*, the passing from one regime to another is dramatized as a coma followed by a reawakening affecting the main female character, a devout communist. For many people —unlike what we see in the film— there was an awakening from that utopian dream (or endless nightmare), only to discover that they had been trapped in a huge contraption that had simply fallen apart. The pieces, however, are still there and after dismantling the machinery, the remains of those who were trapped and destroyed within it come to the surface. Thus, the landscape of dumped statues, abandoned edifices, and destroyed factories is a visible representation of the wreckage and residue of a crumbling ideology that must somehow be recycled.

After the fall comes a landscape of ruins, both literal —as in the case of the actual wall in Berlin— or symbolic, and which need recycling and re-signification, like the statues in Estonia which were initially a symbol of the struggle against the Nazi occupation but are now a reminder of Soviet oppression. Ruins can also be recycled and sold as merchandise, and where the Berlin Wall used to be there is now a street market full of memorabilia where chunks of the wall, Lenin pins and military medals are sold, as exponents of the fragmentation of the Soviet empire.

But ‘fall’ and ‘falling’ may also leave some hope, which in the end leads to an attempt at reconstruction (a *perestroika* of sorts) from the ruins and debris inevitable in this kind of experience. In this respect, historical experience is not far removed from similar representations of the concepts of *ruin*, *debris* and *fragment*, which already have a literary pedigree. Thus, at the beginning of *Paradise Lost*, another famous fall, Lucifer’s, is associated with a landscape of ruin for himself and his fellow rebels. The hope of rebuilding, albeit from fragments, can take the form of bricolage, as in Mary Shelley’s “hideous progeny”, or the Fisher King figure in the last “scene” of *The Waste Land*: “these fragments I have shored against my ruins” (1999: l. 430).

Nevertheless, the past is not always glorious, but very often traumatic and painful, and, as such, doubly repressed: by official discourse and as a strategy for individual survival. Understandably, the ruins of official metanarratives are followed by attempts at reconstruction at the level of the personal, which is how, in parallel with the collective revision of a difficult past in countries such as Germany, Spain, Kosovo, Poland or Rwanda, personal stories emerge which seek to become visible

and identifiable by means of a new narrative. But not everything, of course, can be ‘tamed’, maybe because of its inherent brutality or simply because the subject places it in the realm of the ineffable and so it cannot be compared with anything else.

Our analysis focuses on three films, each with a very different origin, which, in what we might call a post-Soviet world, take advantage of the disappearing totalizing view of History in order to fill the void with new representations of actual historical experiences and to address a common European concern for revising a recent traumatic past.

The first film, *Everything is Illuminated* (2005), based on the novel of the same name by Jonathan Safran Foer, is a road movie in which a young Jewish American, Jonathan, goes on a journey across the fields of the Ukraine in search of a woman who supposedly helped his grandfather to escape from the Nazis.

From the very first moment, the film draws the viewer’s attention to the idea of the preservation of the past: the first image is a piece of amber with a fossilised grasshopper inside. After this image, the camera moves round to show a number of photographs of the young man’s ancestors together with other objects. These objects are the result of his obsession with creating a multifarious catalogue, a sort of ancestral legacy, an archive in which the history of the family is kept. Not surprisingly, Jonathan defines himself not as a writer but as “a collector”, and as such he is not so much interested in narrating the events as in building a collection that will bear witness to them. In an act that forms a counterpoint to the image of the amber, he even tries to preserve the objects that he collects (a lump of potato, a handful of sand, and even a live grasshopper) in sterile transparent plastic bags.

On his journey across the Ukraine he is accompanied by a guide, Alex Perchov, who also helps as translator, and an old man, Alex’s grandfather, who, although in charge of the driving, considers himself to be blind and has a “seeing-eye bitch” with him. This old man is the paradoxical focus of the final illumination in the film. Alex, rather than delving into the past, is especially interested in getting away from it —“I was of the opinion that the past is past”, he says at the beginning of the film— and in being carried away by the new culture from the West. So, he walks like John Travolta and dances like Michael Jackson, and his identity is composed of a collage of icons from American popular culture, together with elements from Ukrainian culture: MacDonalds, children playing with skateboards, or large billboards next to the Odessa steps, evidencing the globalization after the collapse of the communist regimes. And still, Alex must deal with the past. To begin with, his father bears an intentional physical resemblance to Lenin and tries to dominate his family in a rather authoritarian fashion. The family business is called “Odessa Heritage Tours”, and on these tours Alex is a frequent witness to how the Soviet

past has quite explicitly survived: in the remains of the weaponry from the war against the Nazis, in the allusions to Chernobyl, and even in the famous steps of the immortal scene in *Battleship Potemkin* (1925). His own professional interest has more to do with something as objective and dispassionate as accounting. Jonathan, on the other hand, is interested in settling his family's account, and in order to do this he embarks on a search for a place called Trachimbrod, the whereabouts of which he has only a vague idea since the place is not even on the maps. When they finally find it, the first illumination occurs: the place is no longer a physical space and has become something else: "I am Trachimbrod", says Lista, the woman who one day decided to become a collector in order to keep the memories and secrets of a time and place that have been erased from the maps and from History. As a guardian of the relics and memories of Trachimbrod, the old woman has become a historian herself; paradoxically, however, she has lost all notion of the present and her connection with reality: fifty years after the massacre which took place in the *shetl*, she still does not know whether the war is over.³ The catalogue of objects which she keeps in boxes, just in case ("*na sluchoi*") somebody comes looking for them, constitutes a memorial—not in the usual sense of dates, monuments, museums, triumphal arches, and so on, to commemorate the Holocaust in the concentration camps—but to remember all the forgotten little holocausts of so many executions in lost *shetls*.

Lista was fortunate to survive one of those massacres, and her existence provides the viewer with a more relevant illumination: it seems that Alex's grandfather was also a survivor of the very same massacre and he now stands face to face with the person who witnessed his escape. Where for some, memory turns into a sort of tourist attraction (remember the "Odessa Heritage Tours"), for Alex's grandfather, the return to the past becomes an illuminating catharsis. While Lista spent her life trying not to forget, his life has been guided by the constant desire to forget, beginning at the very moment when, after he survives the mass execution, he gets rid of his coat with the yellow star, not only to stop being a Jew in the eyes of the world, but because amnesia seems to be the price to be paid for surviving. Alex's grandfather's subsequent suicide can be seen then as a sign that he has settled his own account with his past. Through this unexpected illumination we learn that Alex's grandfather's real name is Baruch, that he is Jewish and that Alex is therefore Jewish too. The result is that, before saying goodbye at the end of the journey, Jonathan gives Alex a chain with a star of David formerly belonging to Jonathan's grandfather. Finally, understanding how these objects are a repository of memory and History, Alex is forced to admit that "everything is illuminated in the light of the past".

In the second film, *The Secret Life of Words* (2005), the traumatic past is also revealed through a process of anagnorisis. The film tells the story of Hanna, a

lonely woman who is hired to nurse Joseph, a burns victim on a North Sea oilrig, whose condition needs to be stabilized before he can be transferred to a hospital. The limitations imposed by this spatiotemporal context —displaced and isolated workers subjected to an uncertain future— are not the only ones affecting the main characters, since physical limitations also come into play: Hanna is almost completely deaf and needs to wear a hearing aid, whereas Joseph is temporarily blind after his corneas were damaged in the fire on the rig. This shared condition of loneliness and extreme isolation generates a feeling of mutual sympathy, which is, nonetheless, full of secrets and half-truths. So, while she conceals from Joseph almost every detail about her life —such as when he asks about her accent, her country of origin, her real name or even her hair colour— Hanna discovers a secret about him which is the core of the melodramatic sub-plot of the story: Joseph was critically injured in the oilrig fire when trying to rescue his best friend, who apparently committed suicide after his wife had been unfaithful to him. Joseph played a key role in this betrayal, so that his physical injuries and the isolation caused by his temporary blindness are understandably aggravated by a deep feeling of guilt.

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Although both have survived a traumatic past, Joseph's seems almost trivial when compared to Hanna's experiences; in the climactic scene of the film she confesses her own experience of torture in the Balkan conflict, where rape was systematically used as a tactic of war by the Serbian troops.⁴ In contrast to Joseph's loquacity, Hanna's relationship to her own past is determined by silence and lies, which explains why, in her recall of the traumatic scenario, she has to resort to a fictional one in which she herself is a character: an imaginary friend who was tortured to the point where she longed to die. Such an invention functions simply as a strategy of transference, so that once the pain has been displaced elsewhere —to another body or country— it can be fully assimilated and represented. After all, when she narrates the outbreak of the conflict in Dubrovnik, Hanna remembers having resisted the evidence before her eyes by thinking that "wars always take place somewhere else".

Whereas Joseph's story is absolutely private and seems to be embellished by the glamour of the heroic and sentimental, Hanna's is representative of a whole community, a chance outcome of an already forgotten war on the margins of Europe. Thus, while showing Joseph the archives of the victims, Inge, the psychologist in charge of Hanna's rehabilitation, remarks, "here there are thousands of Hannas".

She bears the guilt and shame of the survivors (an issue also explored in *Everything is Illuminated*) as she constantly attempts to erase all traces of that humiliating past, which could well explain her obsession with personal hygiene. But, despite all her efforts to the contrary, the past remains well preserved in the present on the lacerated body of the main character, which has turned into a living document of

those historical events. The scars on Hanna's chest form the film's central revelation, although, ironically, this illumination is not achieved through sight —since Joseph is temporarily blind— but touch, because it is only when Joseph feels them with his hands that “the secret life of Hanna's words” is finally revealed. Kai Anderson claims that “trauma has both centripetal and centrifugal tendencies”, as it draws the individual away from its site while at the same time drawing him/her back to it (Caruth 1995: 186). We can observe this dual process in Alex's grandfather and Hanna, both of whom feel compelled to return to the traumatic scenario, drawn as if by a magnet, despite their efforts to leave it behind and forget it.

Once again, as a counterpoint to narrativized history, the materiality of objects —in the guise of Hanna's scars or the archive kept by Inge in Copenhagen— serves as irrefutable proof and everlasting testimony of historical conflicts even after they have been forgotten, an issue implied in Inge's comment to Joseph about Hitler's attempt to destroy all documents associated with the Holocaust.

The third film, *The Life of Others* (2007), explores the relationship between a Stasi officer and two artists —a playwright and his lover, a well-positioned actress— who are under surveillance because of their friendship with dissidents and their apparent opposition to the communist regime in the German Democratic Republic. In the process, the officer will learn, not only about the artists being spied upon, but also about the methods of the regime of which he is a staunch defender, knowledge that will bring about the awakening of his conscience (again an ‘illumination’), which radically changes his life.

The police state in which all citizens watch one another has an obvious literary antecedent in George Orwell's novel *1984* (significantly the year in which the action in the film takes place), and where the figure of Winston Smith is a clear intertextual referent, given his role as a manipulator of documents in order to create biased versions of History.⁵ In the case of Wiesler, the Stasi officer, his ability to manipulate is directed at the trivial and the everyday, that is, any petty thing that can be used to bend the will of citizens under suspicion. In both the film and the novel we find an instance of Walter Benjamin's idea of the way the archive encapsulates a memory of civilization, while at the same time helping to reveal the barbarism implicit in some historical processes (1988: 256). In the specific case of the film, the surveillance methods are evidence of police efficiency in the service of the cause —Wiesler is a model officer who instructs future agents. On the other hand, after the fall of the Wall, the documents used by the communist regime to inflict psychological torture and reinforce its power become the main evidence of the regime's infamy. In a police state of 100,000 police and 300,000 informants, all watching the lives of their fellow citizens, this “life of others” materialises as the macabre compilation represented by police records, blacklists, tapes with

confessions, interrogation sessions, telephone tapping, reports, code names, samples of smells, or simply notes, to the point where these elements acquire the status of reality itself. In the film, for example, the sexual relationship between the two artists is never shown but narrated in a report that includes even the most intimate details. In the end, Wiesler himself is another victim of the obsession for documentation in which he has so fervently participated, and it is thanks to the false report that he writes to protect the artists under surveillance, and also to the trace of the red ink from the typewriter, that the playwright finds out the hidden identity behind “HGW XX/7”, Wiesler’s code name as a Stasi officer. In this way, the playwright ‘reconstructs’ his own past. He returns Wiesler’s gaze (the Stasi documents) with his own, the novel he writes (*The Sonata of the Good Man*).⁶

Imposture and the play between reality and fiction are in fact recurrent motifs in a film in which the theatre metaphor is all-pervading: at the beginning, it is the artists who specialise in acting and simulation while the Stasi officer is occupied in finding out the truth about their lives; later, however, these roles gradually change and it is Wiesler who ends up writing false reports to protect the couple, even inventing a play in order to hide the subversive essay.⁷ Wiesler’s disenchantment begins when he discovers that ideology is absent and has been replaced by pettiness and personal ambition that end up conditioning the course of History: so, a minister is motivated only by his carnal desire for Christa (the playwright’s lover), who, for her part, is essentially concerned with getting hold of painkillers on the black market, an addiction that leads to the betrayal of her fellow dissidents. Wiesler’s superior in the Stasi can think only of his expectations of promotion in the ranks of the Party, since, as he states succinctly, “What is the Party but its members?” The scene, though tending towards sentimentalism, epitomises nevertheless Wiesler’s disillusion with the political regime as he realises that its repressive potential is used simply to satisfy the personal interests of its leaders.

These specular inversions also affect the final illumination in the film. After the playwright revises his own police record, he discovers not only that he has been spied on, but that, in the process, the political and moral views of the agent spying on them have changed, to the extent that he becomes an anonymous hero who suffers the retaliation of the regime for changing sides.

The voyeuristic activity implicit in these actions opens up the title of the film to new meanings, sometimes not without debate. The “life of others” can be taken as referring to the perspective that some Germans—the *wessies*, such as the director himself— have of their fellow citizens from the East, the other Germans. Within the film itself, the title would refer to the life of those spied upon by the police, and also the life reported in the police records that can be read, not only by the person in question but also by the historian. It is also the life that some design for others:

the life designed by the playwright for his characters or by the communist regime for the members of the Party and the rest of the population. And finally, considering the scopophilic nature of any filmic experience, “the life of others” is the life that we, the viewers, contemplate on a screen.

As we move towards conclusions, we should highlight some important aspects that the three films have in common, both in their revision of a recent past and in their articulation of trauma. A major point is their common realisation that it is not the fall that causes trauma; rather, the fall reveals the crucial event in the past and provides individuals and communities alike with the opportunity to address the repressed trauma, bring it to the surface and possibly heal it, perhaps by redefining the Real and inserting new elements into its realm. Trauma affects primarily the subjects’ relationship with their past, and also conditions their relationship with the future. Therefore, it is only when the subjects are able to come to terms with their traumatic past that the very possibility of a future can open up for them.

In *Everything is Illuminated* Alex discovers his grandfather’s—and his whole family’s— past, acquiring in this way a new personal and national identity. This determination to assimilate a difficult past and heal wounds is projected forwards in the guise of Alex’s voice-over narration to the viewer. In *The Secret Life of Words*, Hanna’s traumatic past is narrativized in Joseph’s therapeutically beneficial presence, which enables her to be reconciled with the past and allows her to envision a more positive future. In *The Life of Others*, the playwright recovers from his traumatic past by reading the Stasi files, which also enables him to come to terms with his own future and his country’s through the novel *The Sonata of the Good Man*, whose title recalls the piano piece that he used to play, the renditions being secretly enjoyed by an entranced Wiesler.

The three films share the common belief that collective trauma is enacted primarily at the personal level, and feature protagonists immersed in their respective healing processes and trapped in the characteristic traumatic paradox, reconciling testimonial accuracy with the essential ineffability of their experiences. If we agree with T.S. Eliot’s famous dictum “human kind cannot bear too much reality”, (1986: ll.42-43), we must also admit that the desire to articulate the incommunicable poses a problem of representation. Caruth addresses this fundamental dilemma when she states that “while images of traumatic re-enactment remain absolutely accurate and precise, they are largely inaccessible to conscious re-call and control”, precisely because the original event that first constituted them exceeds any frame of comprehensibility (1995: 151). Žizek, however, in his film *The Pervert’s Guide To Cinema*, offers the possibility of circumventing the problem: “If something gets too traumatic, too violent, gets too, even too filled in with enjoyment, it shatters the coordinates of our reality: we have to fictionalize it”.

A good example of how multifaceted this issue can be might be found in the controversial quality of most representations of the Holocaust —ranging from the Berlin Memorial or the musical about Anna Frank to films like *Life is Beautiful* (1997), and more recently *The Boy in The Striped Pyjamas* (2008)— which are often considered banal in relation to the real event. Notable in this context, is the extent to which the historical uniqueness attributed to the Shoah has been overused, thus minimising other genocides.⁸

The three texts invoke the idea that history is not an abstraction and as a result insist on the literalness of the traumatic testimony, whether presented in the form of scars, objects, documents or detailed descriptions that confront the event itself, rather than its symbolic or metaphoric re-creation. This apparent paradox can be explained, however, if we take into account that the material quality of the Real serves to give shape to something that is essentially ‘shapeless’ and incommensurable in nature. The material vestiges of that traumatic past, therefore, are shown to be the actual repository of the “real” history, indicators of the authenticity and legitimacy of trauma, which in this way ceases to be ineffable and becomes tangible, verifiable.⁹

In all three films there is some trivial element which objectifies the connection between present and past, an idea conceptualised by Pierre Nora in the term *lieux de mémoire*:

The *lieux* we speak of, then, are mixed, hybrid, mutant, bound intimately with life and death, with time and eternity; enveloped in a Möbius strip of the collective and the individual, the sacred and the profane, the immutable and the mobile. For if we accept that the most fundamental purpose of the *lieux de mémoire* is to stop time, to block the work of forgetting, to establish a state of things, to immortalize death, to materialize the immaterial —just as if gold were the only memory of money— all of this in order to capture a maximum of meaning in the fewest of signs, it is also clear that *lieux de mémoire* only exist because of their capacity for metamorphosis, an endless recycling of their meaning and unpredictable proliferation of their ramifications. (1989: 19)

Significant examples of this concept can be found in the three films: the amber jewel in which some object from the past has been encapsulated and kept ‘alive’; the soap that Joseph steals from Hanna, which is both a personal item and also an allusion to the ethnic cleansing she and her nation have undergone; and the playwright’s police record, which luckily survived destruction by the Stasi, in which he finds the existence of a ‘good man’. Taken together, these elements might be seen as what might be termed an objectual heteroglossia which in turn refers to issues related to History and its textuality, since all those objects, metamorphosed and recycled, whether symbolically or literally, are somehow connected with some aspect of the writing of History, including its re-writing, and even erasure.

Furthermore, this material quality, as seen in apparently trivial objects, supplies an extra element of freshness and immediacy. This makes the representation of the past in each film differ from the stereotypes offered by the official versions of similar narratives. A clear example is the contrast between the forgotten little holocausts and the grandiose, heroic tinge of the film *Exodus*; or, in a similar vein, the contrast between the epic tone of spy films and novels from James Bond to Hitchcock and John LeCarré and the miserable everyday life depicted in the Stasi reports.

The second half of the twentieth century has seen a redefinition of the boundaries of what should be considered historical material. This means not just an acceptance of the narrative quality of any form of history, but also the inclusion of other histories which up to now have been spurned as irrelevant, subjective or partial, and which are now being re-valued as historically worthwhile. Seen in this light, we may speak of a broadening of the discipline in order to accept a wide range of new areas of historical research: from women's history, history 'from below', or the history of the body, to micro-history, the history of events, the history of images, and political history, to name but a few.¹⁰ So, in line with the tenets of this new historiography, and as another variation on the story vs. History dichotomy, we can see Memory predominating over History and, in this new context, narratives more attentive to personal vicissitudes proliferating, as an indicator of the fragmentation of a now obsolete totalizing discourse. Just as the old Soviet empire disintegrated into new countries with new national narratives, so the metanarrative of History with its emphatic discourse of collective heroic struggle and denial of the private disperses into myriad different stories by anonymous individuals whose earlier mission was to be just "cogs and wheels" (to use Lenin's terms) in the great machinery of History, but who can now stand up as true historical subjects.

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Notes

¹. A significant development of this linguistic turn is the so-called 'narrative turn' in the field of historiography, best exemplified by the work of Hayden White who views historical texts as literary artefacts inasmuch as they partake of the same rhetorical devices as are normally found in fictional texts.

². Ironically, while these hymns anticipate a glorious future, they also become instances of the Protean quality of the past, as shown in the lyrics of the official USSR and German Democratic Republic anthems, which also underwent successive rewritings depending on the political present.

3. Pierre Nora offers an interesting insight about modern memory, which according to him is, above all, archival. It relies entirely on the materiality of the trace, the immediacy of the recording, the visibility of the image [...]. In just a few years [...] the materialization of memory has been tremendously dilated, multiplied, decentralized, democratized. In the classical period, the three main producers of archives were the great families, the church and the state. But who, today, does not feel compelled to record his feelings, to write his memoirs —not only the most minor historical actor, but also his witnesses, his spouse, and his doctor (13-14).

4. The issue of women's rape as warfare has a literary antecedent in the anonymous novel *A Woman in Berlin*, which has long been perceived as an uneasy text in German society.

5. Winston Smith makes an interesting remark about the materiality of History that is pertinent to our analysis: "Do you realize that the past, starting from yesterday, has been actually abolished? If it survives anywhere, it's in a few solid objects with no words attached to them, like that lump of glass there" (126).

6. A more prosaic but more necessary version of this process of "reconstruction" concerns the project carried out by the unified Germany authorities for the purpose of literally piecing together the fragments of documents destroyed by the Stasi during the final days of the communist regime. In contrast with the Stasi's attempt to destroy the past and forget it by reducing it to fragments, there is the determination of the new authorities to remember by 'remembering'.

7. Falsifying the Real is another of the main issues in *Goodbye Lenin!*, in which the recent past of the German Democratic Republic is revisited, not from the point of view of trauma but from nostalgia. The film has been linked to the so-called *Ostalgie*, a movement which vindicates the lost ethical and aesthetic values of the defunct GDR.

8. Norman Finkelstein's *The Holocaust Industry* is a detailed account of the uses and abuses to which the Holocaust has been put as a historical event.

9. The physicality of objects is not the only way to represent a traumatic past. In fact, *Everything is Illuminated*, the novel by Foer, unfolds into two distinct stories: Alex's realistic account of Jonathan's journey to the Ukraine, and Jonathan's magical history of his ancestral *shetl* (omitted in the film). As the search moves backwards, the fantastical history moves forwards, thus weaving a rich texture of intergenerational symmetries and providing, through its use of magical realism, an interesting counterpoint to the more conventional chronicle of tragic events. In a similar fashion, Toni Morrison's *Beloved* resorts to the immaterial gothic world of ghosts and spirits as the most appropriate language for articulating the horrors of Afro-American slavery.

10. Georg G. Iggers summarises these new approaches when he states that

...the social and cultural concomitants of a technological society under conditions of modern capitalism, the widening of cultural perspective from Europe to a world scale, the end of European political predominance, the decline of all elites, the awakening to political and cultural consciousness of previously submerged classes and peoples, the manifestations of conflict which accompanied these transformations—all of these developments have provided a real basis for the reorientation of historical studies. The result has been an enlargement of our picture of the past: a new interest in social classes, cultures, and aspects of daily life which had been neglected by the conventional historiography; a deeper probing into the psychological and anthropological bases of historical behaviour; and, in a limited but not negligible way, an expansion of the conceptual range of history and a more critical attitude within the profession regarding the methodological procedures of the historian. (203-204)

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