

THE INSCRIPTION OF THE HOLOCAUST ONTO THE BODY, SEVENTY YEARS LATER: FROM DEHUMANIZATION OF THE SUBJECT TO REVITALIZATION OF JEWISH IDENTITY

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Abstract: *Antisemitism and the perception of Jewish identity as threatening Otherness lead to the Holocaust, the sum of nazi criminal executions directed towards Jews in World War II. After the Holocaust had ended, the survivor generation, and also the generations born after the war were left to their own struggle with the trauma as the effect of everything that happened. This paper aims to shed a light to the relation between the Holocaust and the surviving generations, as well as the way the Holocaust inscribed onto the bodies of those who survived, and those who were later in the position of defining their identity in relations to it.*

Key words: *Holocaust, postmemory, Jewish identity, bodily inscription, Otherness*

The history of Jewish nation is largely marked with constant persecutions and the intention of other dominant cultures to conquer, assimilate, isolate or minimize/erase the traces of Jewish life and culture. Antisemitism,¹ rooted in bigotry towards racial, religious, ethnic and, in total sum, cultural difference stands for one of the examples of the negative relation towards the Other. The specific way of life and isolation of the Jewish communities all over the world tend to induce the construction of the stereotypes and myths about Jews as threatening Otherness for everyone that doesn't belong within Jewish community.² Religious difference was

1 The precise definition of the term anti-Semitism includes the bigotry towards all the Semitic nations, but it is actually, from the point when it was first used in 1879, established as a term that stands for a bigotry towards Jews and Jewish people. The term itself was first used by the German publicist Wilhelm Marr, to define the conflict between Jews and other nations after the secularization of Europe in 18th century. Walter Laqueur and Judith Tydor Baumel: *The Holocaust encyclopedia*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001, p. 16.

2 As the illustration, there was a story about "Jewish poisoners of the well" who, allegedly, poisoned the well in south Germany. Because of this rumor that was spread, the whole Christian community helped in establishing the lists of the Jews and also supported torturing and killing of the Jewish families. Valentin Groebner: *Der Schein der Person. Steckbrief, Ausweis und Kontrolle im Europa des Mittelalters*. C.H. Beck, Munich, 2004; *Potvrda ličnosti: poternica, lična isprava i kontrola u srednjovekovnoj Evropi*, trans. Meral Tarar-Tutuš. Loznica: Karpos, 2013. In the recent history, the concept of "Jewish conspiracy" is based mostly on the stories of the economy domination of the Jews, as well as on the assumptions of the influence of the Jews on the global world economy.

for sure the main platform for this bigotry, and we are discovering it back in the times of Roman Empire (and earlier). Later it grew even bigger and by spreading of Christianity it evolves further and becomes the main argument for destroying and persecution of Jews.³ Surely, the real reasons behind this bigotry and discrimination, which was also institutionally executed, were connected to the idea that the Jews should be denied their economical and social rights, especially since they were very successful in the professions they took – merchandise, craftwork, economy and the other professional fields they were allowed to engage in.⁴ The hatred towards Jewish people lead to persecutions and pogroms, with the Holocaust as one of the most striking examples in recent history. The Holocaust itself was presented as the idea and plan of “the final solution” to the issue of Jews within European context. This plan was developed in nazi Germany, and its main goal was to completely destroy Jewish people in Europe, in the first place in Germany, which would thus become “cleansed” and “liberated” from “Jewish yoke”.⁵ In order for the state to come to any progress, the main people of National Socialist German working party thought that it was necessary to eliminate those who resist assimilation, and because of whom, as they concluded, the positive social, political, economical and cultural change is impossible.⁶

3 The Jews were, both from the Catholics and later Protestants, seen as “killers and the biggest enemies of Jesus Christ”. Semen Markovich Dubnov: *A short history of the Jewish people*. London: M. L. Cailingold 1936, translation: *Kratka istorija jevrejskog naroda*, trans. Andrija Gams. Sremska Mitrovica: Tabernakl, 2006. These kinds of narrations points to a long time present dynamics of the tension in the way Christianity sees Judaism, which gets bigger in the importance through the fact that the Christianity itself started by secession from the traditional Jewish belief. The constant need to go back to this break and the need to define Christianity as a separate entity in relation to Judaism in the fields of theology and religion was often leading to further tensions which mostly produced negative effects for Jewish people.

4 “Jews use freedom to get rich, to organize big economies, to open the banks, and now they even want to become clerks, doctors, advocates, engineers, writers and publishers and to attain positions that Christians could attain; by their looks Jew is also a German, French, Russian, but he is nevertheless a stranger to us, not only by his belief, but also by his character, by his Asian-Semitic race, and we will never be able to live with him together.” Ibid. pp. 221–222. All translations from Serbian to English are given by the author.

5 Laqueur and Baumel: *The Holocaust encyclopedia*.

6 “By the final solution (which and by no accident includes Roma people and other groups proven to be immune on the pressure of integration) Nazism tried to silently liberate the Western political scene from that unbearable shadow, so to finally create German *Volk*, the people that should have cured the initial biopolitical break (it is because of this that Nazi leaders kept repeating that by elimination of Jews and Roma they will be doing the favor to all the other European countries too)”. Giorgio Agamben: *Homo sacer: Suverena moć i goli život*. Loznica: Karpos, 2013, p. 262. (Agamben, Giorgio: *Homo sacer. Il potere sovrano e la nuda vita*. Torino: Giulio Einaudi, 1995).

The fear of Other usually manifests itself through the construction of myths and through the production of the representations that create the signification of the Other as the threat towards the stability of the dominant system. Antisemitic propaganda insisted on racial difference between Germans and Jews and on the construction of the model of the perfect Arian who stood in contrast with all its Others. Within that ideology Jews were presented as everything that the Arian is not and should not be if he wants to retain his identity and position in the hierarchy of social power. In this way the Arian was also presented as a healthy, valid and proper subject, and Jewish identity was defined as a clear point of difference that served as a model of difference that should be tamed and controlled.⁷ This kind of politics lead to, as Giorgio Agamben says, “a Jew within nazism is the main negative referent of the new biopolitical sovereignty, and as such he stands for the school example of *homo sacer*”.⁸ The Nurnberg laws, which put the Jews under the sanctions and misposition as the citizens of secon order were just an introduction to the process of the complete dehumanization of persons of Jewish origin which meant full denial of all the aspects of identity, and stripping down the person to the *life itself*. The denial of all human rights, and after that deporting to the concentration camps and death camps that destroyed six million Jewish lives was the process that was thought through in advance, that was voted for, verified and made into reality.⁹ Some social groups were institutionally defined and marked not only as not compatible for social life with the other, valid members of the society, but as not worthy of the life itself. Regarding that, Giorgio Agamben says that what happened in nazi camps can't be seen just as irrational crime that one human being executed on other human being, but we need to think “which are the legal procedures and dispositives of power that made human being into a being without its rights and expectations, so much that the crime on them wasn't seen as crime at all”.¹⁰

7 Brian Treanor: *Aspects of alterity: Levinas, Marcel, and the contemporary debate*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2006.

8 Agamben, *ibid.*, , 168.

9 Шмуэль Эттингер (ред.): *Очерки по истории еврейского народа*. Tel Aviv: Ам овед, 1972, here quoted from the translation: *Istorija jevrejskog naroda*, trans. Miroslava Smiljanić-Spasić. Belgrade: Ginko, 1996.

10 *Ibid*, p. 250.

DESUBJECTIFICATION AND *BODY ANNULMENT*
OF THE JEWISH PRISONERS IN NAZI CAMPS

“When death is here, I am no longer here, not just because I am nothingness, but because I am unable to grasp.”¹¹

By closing Jews in the ghettos, Jews were prevented from mingling with other citizens, but it was the camp deportation that can be seen as the beginning phase of the execution of mass and organized control of the bodies of those who don't have any rights nor freedom anymore. Entering into the camp, these bodies were categorized as: working bodies, medically fit for experiment bodies, or as waste – nonusable bodies which are to be terminated, destroyed.¹² It led to further procedure: those who weren't selected for the gas chamber or other type of execution were ordered to take their clothes off, they were sent for their head and body to be shaved, disinfected and showered. They were given the camp uniform, after which they would be registered by the system of camp identifications.¹³ The first mark that was given to the prisoners was the serial number, while the second was the cloth type mark, most usually in the shape of triangle of different colors, where every color represented a category into which the prisoner is put.¹⁴ The numbers the prisoners got were the only mark of individual identity – they were called up by those numbers, and they were forbidden to use their names and last names. This treatment had its goal – the dehumanization of the prisoners, their desubjetification and humiliation. The whole chain from arresting to deporting into the camps, all the way to marking the prisoners with the serial number was followed by cruel behavior towards prisoners, which left them in the state of feeling powerless, and which, consequentially, shut down every and each will for fighting back.

11 Emmanuel Levinas: “Time and the Other”, in: *The Levinas reader*. ed. Sean Hand. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989, p. 41.

12 Jens-Christian Wagner: “Work and extermination in the concentration camps”, in: *Concentration camps in Nazi Germany: The new histories*. eds. Jane Caplan and Nikolaus Wachsmann. New York: Routledge, 2010, pp. 127–148.

13 Marijan Bosnar: “Rudi Supek i nacistički koncentracijski logor Buchenwald kroz arhivsko gradivo Hrvatskog državnog arhiva” in *Arhivski vjesnik* 54, Zagreb: Hrvatski državni arhiv, 2011, pp. 153–178.

14 The political prisoners wore red triangles, the criminals green, the homosexuals pink. Roma people got the brown ones, while Jews wore two triangles forming the star of David – one was yellow and the other one was in the color that defined the other category that they were put in – political prisoner, criminal, homosexual etc. Jane Caplan: “Gender and the concentration camps”, in: *Concentration camps in Nazi Germany*. eds. Jane Caplan and Nikolaus Wachsmann, pp. 82–107.

The specific way of marking was established in the complex of concentration camp Auschwitz, where the prisoners got their serial numbers tattooed on their body.¹⁵ This camp was mainly a place for deporting Jews, and as the practice of tattooing a serial number was not done on political and other German prisoners, the number also grew to be a mark of somebody's Jewishness. At first people were tattooed on their chest, but soon the forearm became a chosen place to tattoo the number on.¹⁶ One of the reasons for introducing the tattooing system was the greater number of deaths in the camp and the impossibility to identify the bodies which were left lying at one place without clothes onto which was initially sewed this identification number. The system of tattooed numbers was introduced as a way to solve that problem and to make the camp administration work easier, and besides that, the whole system made it easier to terminate a person's life for it was not a person whose life would be taken, but a number.

The tattooed number on the skin of survivors of Auschwitz, as well as other trauma marks on their bodies, are a material testimony of the trauma survived, and a reminder on all the horrors that body went through. However, their function was not to testify about the trauma, but to brand and mark the body as object and a commodity of the regime that generated it. The tattoos are the direct inscription into the body of those who were condemned to work until total exhaustion and death. Besides very bad conditions in which the prisoners lived, which also contributed to their exhaustion, spreading of diseases and death rates, the very hard work was one of the main causes for the prisoners' bodies deterioration. The hardest work tasks were reserved for the lowest of humans, as Nazi regime saw it: for the Jews. The compulsory work was one of the main tools not only for terrorizing and demoralizing the prisoners, but also for their destruction. That was the reason why high functionaries of the Third Reich saw *determination through work* as one of the better solutions for "the Jewish issue".¹⁷

The torture imposed on the bodies in the Nazi camps during the Holocaust was not just finished with the death of over six million Jews, but it continued to live and haunt those who somehow succeeded to survive the camps and witness the end of the war alive. The survivors are left to testify about their experiences, but

15 George Rosenthal: *Auschwitz-Birkenau: The evolution of tattooing in the Auschwitz concentration camp complex*, <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Holocaust/tattoos1.html> (05.01.2017).

16 In the beginning tattooing was used by instruments that looked like metal brands with the thorns which initially made holes in the skin, after which the ink was rubbed in. This system showed as slow and not efficient enough, so it was replaced with the tattooing process with a needle. <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2578422/The-evil-looking-implements-used-Auschwitz-guards-tattoo-numbers-prisoners-held-Nazi-death-camp.html> (05.01.2017).

17 Wagner: "Work and extermination in the concentration camps", pp. 139–140.

they can't give a testimony about the worst of the horrors which happened there, which is death of so many people. Death is the ultimate Otherness which marked the Holocaust, "an event over which the subject is not master, an event in relation to which the subject is no longer a subject".¹⁸ Knowing that, the death remains to be the point that has no survivors to testify about, after it there is no one who could understand it and tell it. "The now is the fact that I am master, master of the possible, master of grasping the possible. Death is never now. When death is here, I am no longer here, not just because I am nothingness, but because I am unable to grasp."¹⁹ It is precisely for that reason that we cannot experience, tell, describe and represent death, that it is impossible to testify and talk about everything that happened in the Holocaust. The only thing that left of it are testimonies, stories about it, interpretations and representation that have an aim to remember and save it from forgetting. The Holocaust is, thus, the point of trauma onto which both the survivors, and the latter generations come back persistently.²⁰

THE HOLOCAUST HERITAGE

"...the identity without memory is empty,
the memory without identity is pointless"²¹

The generations born after the Holocaust can be connected to this dark period of human history only through the narration of the past given in textual descriptions made during the Holocaust and after it. Those texts are the media for displacing the trauma from the generation of survivors onto the generation that followed. Their heritage is not only to ask questions and inform themselves about the Holocaust, but also to fill in the blanks and (re)construct the memories attached to it, so as to try to remember things that did not directly happen to them. The trauma of the survived scenario was transmitted directly from the first to the second generation not only through verbal communication and talks about past, but also through the direct insight into the consequences that these happenings induced. Even in

18 Levinas: "Time and the Other", p. 40.

19 Ibid. p. 41.

20 "Eclectic definition of the second big term – trauma – is nested into the map of memory and remembrance (internal worlds), historical happening (external world), the physical and psychological pain and facing the fact through narrative articulation [...] In the trauma of contemporaneity there is a trauma of the past; on the traumas of this moment there are traumas that are laying in the forgetting of the past generation, so the quest leads to their textual discovery and connection". Nevena Daković: *Studije filma: ogledi o filmskim tekstovima sećanja*. Beograd: Fakultet dramskih umetnosti, 2014, pp. 153–154.

21 Robert Eaglestone: *The Holocaust and the postmodern*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004, p. 75.

the cases where there were no conversations between the first and the second Holocaust generations, the burden of what the parents survived put a pressure onto the whole family. In these cases, it was exactly this emptiness which was a part of the family history that opened up the most of the questions in children and made them research and complete the memory so they could (re)create the line that was broken.²² However, although the second generation²³ can be seen as a generation that, through their parents, had a *live connection* to what happened, and that was the closest to the pain and suffering that followed the Holocaust, it doesn't end the process of transmitting the trauma onto the generations. Every following generation, however less their direct connection to the Holocaust would be due to time distance, will have the same need to fill in the blank space, to try to understand, to identify with the victims and to continue to talk and create their own narration that connects them to the past.

Marianne Hirsch was analyzing the problematic of the second generation's relation to the Holocaust and the phenomena of the memory and she introduced the term *postmemory*, for which she says that "describes the relationship of the second generation to powerful, often traumatic, experiences that preceded their births but that were nevertheless transmitted to them so deeply as to seem to constitute memories in their own right".²⁴ She thinks that postmemory as a process is not necessarily connected only to the persons that have direct family relations to the trauma, in this case the Holocaust, but that it is created also by all the other persons that developed a certain attitude and standpoints towards what happened to the victims within the historical context. In that sense, she claims *postmemory* not as the identity position, although there is a certain identification/positioning process within it through which the one who forms it relates to a certain happening.

The personal stories published as diaries, memoirs, interviews, as well as the photographs and documentary material that shows what happened inside of Nazi camps leave a strong mark on the reader/viewer and transform into the medium of postmemory. The photograph depicting dead, emaciated, tortured human bodies left up in pile induces an *abjection* within the viewer, it unsettles him or her and

22 Marianne Hirsch: "Surviving images: Holocaust photographs and the work of postmemory", in: *Visual culture and the Holocaust*, ed. Barbie Zelizer. London: The Athlone Press, 2001, pp. 215–246.

23 "The guardianship of the Holocaust is being passed on to us. The second generation is the hinge generation in which received, transferred knowledge of events is being transmuted into history, or into myth. It is also the generation in which we can think about certain questions arising from the Shoah with a sense of living connection." Eva Hoffman: *After such knowledge: Memory, history, and the legacy of the Holocaust*. New York: Public Affairs, 2004, see Marianne Hirsch: "The generation of postmemory" in: *Poetics Today*, 29, Tel Aviv: Porter Institute for Poetics and Semiotics, 2008, pp. 103–128, here p. 103.

24 Hirsch, "The generation of postmemory", p. 103.

becomes a part of the memory reconstructed in the construction of the narrative of understanding of what was seen and what happened. The other types of trauma representations work in a similar way and need not be necessarily of a documentary character. They become the replacement for the real, lived experience, since it is impossible to be lived through anyway.²⁵

The process of postmemory creation has an important role in building Jewish identity in the generations born after the Holocaust. Their attitude towards what happened to their parents, other members of the family and in general, to Jewish people, contributes to the feeling of a presence of strong collective belonging to Jewish community. The sole fact that, during the Second World War there was six millions of Jewish victims points to the significance that the Holocaust has to every single Jewish family. It is the key historical point in the recent Jewish history, so it logically becomes the common denominator for all the Jews survived. It becomes the point of connection in every talk about past and it is reactivated as a trauma in every family photograph. The hugeness of the happening which destroyed over sixty percent of the whole Jewish population in Europe speaks of its significance within Jewish memory for itself, and it also influenced the individual and collective attitude of Jews towards their religious, ethnical, cultural and familial identity.

The perception of Jewish identity and the relation towards it as towards the threatening Otherness by the dominant population that came in contact with the Jews culminated during the Second World War. However, as it was seen, even such a huge crime as the Holocaust was didn't really influence the existence of antisemitism in Europe and the world. Such a development made an influence on strengthening the ethnical identity within the individual, so a big number of those who went away from Jewish roots, tradition and culture started to turn back to it.²⁷ After the War, as a result of a long work of Zionist organizations, the state of Israel was established, with its politics of gathering of all the Jews into the territory of one state and creating a secular national concept of Jewishness into which the religious and traditional heritage should be incorporated. One of the important goals was the building of "new Jewish identity" – Hebrews/Israelis which is strongly attached to the state of Israel and to specific Jewish culture.²⁸ This new identity also meant a different attitude towards Jewish heritage – in contrast to the Jews from diaspora which mostly assimilated during the nineteenth and twentieth century, Jews from

25 Dora Apel: *Memory effects: The Holocaust and the art of secondary witnessing*. New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2002.

26 Martin Gilbert: *The dent atlas of the Holocaust*. London: The Orion Publishing Group, 2005.

27 Etinger.

28 Motti Regev and Edwin Seroussi: *Popular music and national culture in Israel*. Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2004.

Israel built a strong ethnical, national identity. The feeling of unity with the diaspora young Israelis developed a lot later, after Adolf Eichmann's trial (1961, Jerusalem). The trial was public, it was broadcasted through media and it created another, maybe the most real and direct confrontation of the second generation with the horrors of the Holocaust.²⁹ Besides, Arab-Israeli war from 1967 made Israel more deeply connected to the diaspora which responded with massive support.³⁰

Since the 1960s the interest in topics related to the Holocaust grew stronger, and in 1970s and 1980s there has been an explosion of texts dealing with this problematic. This is a period when the second generations starts to create their own narration about the Holocaust, and to thematize the way the Holocaust is imprinted in their subjectivity and their own body through memoirs, novels, movies, comics and other art and representational forms. The third generation member, the photographer Marina Vainshtein, portrayed her own attitude towards the Holocaust and Jewish identity through numerous tattoos on her body. She is the child of Jewish emigrants who moved from Ukraine to California in 1977 after the antisemitic pressures that continued in USSR even after the Second World War. After coming to USA she was first going to Jewish primary school, and then the regular state school where she first met the social diversity and the numerous possibilities of identities that people can internalize and represent.³¹ In that period she became aware of the fact that she is no different than all the other people, and that her Jewish identity can not be observed just by the look onto her body. That "invisibility" of the generation of the Holocaust survivors craved for, traumatized by all the happenings during the war and the time before, was just another failure and another haunting point for the second and the third generation. Besides that, those who survived the Holocaust and decided to live outside Israel were in such a fear that all the things that happened could happen again, so they chose to assimilate in the dominant culture not mentioning their Jewish roots.³² However, the generations born after the War, and especially the third generation wants something completely different – they want their Jewish

29 A lot of people tried to protect their children by silence. After World War II, by moving to Israel, they wanted to begin anew and to forget the fears that they went through during the war.

30 "Demonstrations of the Jews in diaspora, voluntary mobilization of the strengths and supplies for Israel which overwhelmed the whole Jewry from all over the world in that moment – deepened the feelings of unity of the whole Jewish nation and strengthened the interest in Jewish fate, history and culture." Etinger: *Istorija jevrejskog naroda*, Ginko, p. 537.

31 Dora Apel: "The tattooed Jew", in: *Visual culture and the Holocaust*. ed. Barbie Zelizer, London: The Athlone Press, 2001, pp. 300–322.

32 In the USA, after the Holocaust, it was a usual thing among Jews to go for a rhinoplasty operation so to remove that stereotypical sign of Jewish identity – the "Jewish nose". Sander Gilman: *Jewish frontiers: Essays on bodies, histories, and identities*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.

identity to be visible, they want to show themselves as the survivors born by the Holocaust survivors they want to share the message that there is no place for fear and discrimination.³³ Antisemitism in both cases functions as a very important factor in the identity building; it leads to an action – of concealing Jewish identity or the emphasis on it, and in both cases it is inscribed onto the body. In the contrast of numerous young Jews who choose to tattoo familiar Jewish symbols such as star of David or a text in Hebrew alphabet, Marina Vainshtein decided to go for the tattoos that revoke the symbolics of the Holocaust. Her body is covered in familiar images of Nazi camps – a barbed wire, crematorium, the words *Arbeit Macht Frei* (work liberates) the same as the one that stood at the gates of Auschwitz, there is the train that drives the prisoners into the camp, the camp watchtower, the can with a label Zyklon B on (the pesticide – a sort of cyanide used for killing people in gas chambers), and more of the other violent scenes characteristic for the Nazi camps. Besides the images of the Holocaust, she tattooed the English phrase *Never Again*, which is a motto of Jewish Defense League and *Never Forget* in Hebrew, as well as the verses from The Book of Job (“Earth hide not my blood”). These texts show her attitude towards what Jews went through during the Second World War, and also her wish and will to show the importance of not forgetting a crime like that. As she herself says: “To have these tattoos is equal to a performance of a political act and clear standpoint. I want people to remember what happened there. It is so important to me that I turned my own skin into a canvas dedicated to the remembrance of the Holocaust.”³⁴

One of the tattoos of Marina Vainshtein is also a number on the forearm, on the same place where Jewish prisoners were tattooed for the purpose of an identification by number. During the Holocaust, the practice of tattooing the number was another way of humiliating the person, as Primo Levi says, “its symbolic meaning was clear to everyone: this is an indelible mark, you will never leave here; this is the mark with which slaves are branded and cattle sent to the slaughter, and that is what you have become. You no longer have a name; this is your new name. The violence of the tattoo was gratuitous, an end in itself, pure offense”.³⁵ More than half a century later young Jews take on them the practice of tattooing the numbers the members of their families had or still have.³⁶ They see it as a way to save

33 Andy Abrams: *Tattoo Jew*, <http://jewishmayhem.com/jewish-mayhem/jewish-mayhem-online-magazine-issue-gimmel/tattoojew/> (10.01.2016).

34 Idem.

35 Apel: “The tattooed Jew”, p. 302

36 Jodi Rudoren: “Proudly bearing elders’ scars, their skin says ‘never forget’”, in: *New York Times*, 30 December 2012, http://www.nytimes.com/2012/10/01/world/middleeast/with-tattoos-young-israelis-bear-holocaust-scars-of-relatives.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0 (03.01.2016).

the memory of what happened to their ancestors and generally, to Jewish nation, and one of the ways to stay connected to those who got this number in the nazi camp. This number is a material proof of everything that a person that got it went through.

The phenomena of the tattooed number on the forearm is a symbol that is present a lot in all the talks and representations of the Holocaust.³⁷ Canadian artist John Scott created a mixedmedia artwork called *Selbst* which contains pieces of his own skin onto which, before it was surgically cut out and removed, he tattooed the seven digits number. This artist considers his work the act of “the inscription of the memory into the body”³⁸ and by that he refers to the memory of the crimes that took place during the Holocaust. Although he does not share Jewish roots with the victims, he was so much under the impression that his work, as he says, stands for a reaction to the passivity and indifference of most of the people to everything that happened in the camps.³⁹

The inscriptions of the number – tattooing it on the skin of *homo sacer* of the Holocaust, the numeration in order to dehumanization and desubjectification of the Jews today, seventy years after the Holocaust, have become the act of redefinition and strengthening of Jewish identity in the second and the third postholocaust generation. The tattoo of the number today symbolize the difference, through two platforms: the platform of the conscious *no* to assimilation (which is the conscious intention not to accept the minority identity as a negativity), and through the platform of the standpoint that the history has a major role in building and strengthening of the Jewish identity. Never again is thus not only something that points to the general collective historical memory, but also a specific, individual motto which connects the second and the third postholocaust generation to Jewish identity, culture and life.

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- 38 Robyn Jefiey: *Intersections: The drawings of John Scott, The semiotics of Charles Peirce, and the autobiographical theory of James Ohay*. Ontario: Carleton University, 1999, p. 102.
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