

Trauma Processing in the Digital Age

The Impact of Social Media on Trauma Processing
in Life Narratives and in Trauma Literature:
the Case of Hungary

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Trauma Studies in the Digital Age

A new field – Subthemes

- ⊗ 1) Personal trauma and digital identity in relation to social media as an online community: coping with illness, loss, grief, virtual cemeteries, the role of online support groups;
- ⊗ 2) Transcultural trauma related to migration, forced migration, cultural shock and transnational (online) writing related to literary texts, blogs and Facebook groups;
- ⊗ 3) Social media and the painful past: analyzing collective trauma processing online as well as collective memory and national identity formation; with a special – but not exclusive – focus on Post-Soviet countries, the East-Central European region and Hungary.
- ⊗ 4) Literary (printed, offline) texts and (digital) trauma processing, referring to online reading groups, reviews in personal blogs, literary websites interpreting trauma texts.

1990s, 2000s

- ⊗ Inherently indecipherable, unspeakable, unrepresentable, inaccessible, unsharable
- ⊗ Fixed in time and space
- ⊗ A frozen moment, a break in lifeline
- ⊗ Fragmented traumatic memory
- ⊗ The significance of silence
- ⊗ Secondary traumatization – tabooing and silencing by community unwilling to listen or oppression by authority
- ⊗ Coherent life narrative as cure
- ⊗ The role of speaking and writing in recovery

Cultural-Literary Trauma Studies

Trauma texts and testimonies create post-traumatic literary language ♦ Reading transmits and processes trauma

Defining Trauma

2000s, 2010s

- ⊗ Not fixed
- ⊗ Multiply configured
- ⊗ Multicultural differences
- ⊗ Diverse representations
- ⊗ Resilience theory
- ⊗ Role of local communities in recovery

Digital Trauma Studies

Digital trauma processing

Trauma shared online in social media ♦ Sharing eliminates silence ♦ Allows for parallel or multiple versions of traumatic history ♦ Clears ideologically blocked avenues to traumatic past ♦ Induces social and cultural change

Silence vs Sharing online

Sharing traumatic experiences online (in blogs, social media groups) and reacting to them (in comments and chat) eliminates the element of silence in trauma: on the one hand as its basic characteristic feature, meaning the victim is unable to speak about it, on the other hand silencing as the cause of secondary traumatization, when others do not or are not able to listen to the victim; or as an official oppressive practice by a totalitarian regime. This change in focus has the potential to redefine trauma and reassess the field of trauma studies in the digital context.

Digital Trauma-Processing

Trauma is not represented but shared in the digital space

Digital trauma processing could be the means to clear officially and ideologically blocked avenues to the traumatic past and induce social and cultural change

Sharing eliminates the element of silence that is thought to be inherent in trauma

Digitally mediated trauma processing allows the existence of parallel or multiple versions of traumatic history

Case Studies

Collective trauma processing in social media groups such as 'The Holocaust and My Family', 'The Descendants of Holocaust Victims and Survivors'

Opposing versions of the painful past and the social media: the official monument of WW2 and the Living Memorial created by civilians in Budapest's Liberty Square and a Facebook group

Cultural differences and trans-cultural trauma: analysis of individual blogs and social media groups of Hungarian migrants such as 'Crossingborders'

Transcultural writing: forms of migration in the diaries of women writers in the beginning of the 20th century

Post-Holocaust secondary traumatisation in Ida Fink's short story 'The Shelter'

Research Ethics Issues

- ⊗ Social media / Facebook research: new area
- ⊗ Types of Facebook groups determine communication and indicate research ethics guidelines
 - ⊗ Public
 - ⊗ Closed
 - ⊗ Secret
- ⊗ Facebook privacy settings
- ⊗ Protection of sensitive data in research projects
- ⊗ “Digital participant observation”
- ⊗ Informed consent, anonym citations vs copyright law



A holokauszt áldozatainak és tú...



A holokauszt áldozatainak és tú...
Closed Group · 2436 Members



Joined



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“This is tough. It took my breath away. The first Hungarian to apologise for the crimes of his grandfather.” (Comment to a post in the Facebook group ‘The Descendants of Holocaust Victims and Survivors’)

“I feel as if I was not living any more in myself, as if I was drifting in between two worlds. A kind of „waiting room-feeling.” (Diary of Anna Lesznai, after migrating, 1945)

“It hurts that I cannot write poems any more. It seems that the part of me which used to write poems has been deeply injured. (...) Perhaps it was the collective consciousness connected to Hungarian language in me that could write poems.” (Diary of Anna Lesznai)

“I am sure that they never talked about what they went through (...) you feared that a danger would break through, you will not be able to stop and will lose control (...) will not be able to speak in your usual tone, only hiccough and shout, (...) may tear off your clothes and plough your face with your own fingernails.” (Holocaust Memoir of Mária Ember)



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‘Crossingborders’ community of Hungarian migrants on Facebook. Motto: “The country crossed a border, that is why we also cross it.”

Further reading

- ⊗ **Anna Menyhért:** “Digital Trauma Processing in Social Media Groups: Transgenerational Holocaust Trauma on Facebook”. *Hungarian Historical Review*, special issue: “Processing Historical Traumas after 1945: Legacies and Representations of War and Dictatorship in Post-War Hungary and in Eastern Europe”, 6:2, 2017. 355–380.
- ⊗ Anna Menyhért: “Transcultural Trauma and Digital Homes: Blogs and Facebook Communities of Hungarian Migrants in Europe.” *Digital Icons*, special issue on Trauma Studies in the Digital Age, eds. Anna Menyhért & Mykola Makhortkyh, 2017:18.
- ⊗ **Anna Menyhért:** “The Image of ‘Maimed Hungary’ in 20th Century Cultural Memory and the 21st Century Consequences of an Unresolved Collective Trauma: the Impact of the Treaty of Trianon.” *Environment, Space, Place. A Transdisciplinary Journal*. 8:2, 2016, 69–97.