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Horror, Hope, and the Promise of “Never Again”

*A Cultural Analysis of Swedish Holocaust Exhibition
Narratives*

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Abstract

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This thesis is based on an applied cultural analysis of a Swedish Holocaust exhibition displaying artefacts brought to southern Sweden by survivors of a concentration camp. The thesis aims to analyse and question different, seemingly contradictory narratives connected to this exhibition in order to find out how and why museums and their educators tell Holocaust narratives and how they want those to be read by (young) visitors. This aim leads to a deeper understanding of the objective of Holocaust education in a museum and its (applied) relevance in Sweden today. The following research questions are asked: What narratives can be found in a Swedish Holocaust exhibition? How do layouts, objects, and tour guides tell their narratives? What intentions and aims for the present are transferred by those narratives? And how are visitors supposed to use the learnings of the narratives today? Drawing on theories of narratives, trauma, and objects in relation to emotions, the thesis highlights intentions of narratives like “never again” and their anticipated use in visitors’ everyday life. The analysis and its findings show in conclusion the need for telling and showing different, entangled narrative perspectives, and the necessity of critical reflection and transparency of narrative intentions.

Keywords: Holocaust Education; Ethnography; Narratives; Museum Exhibition; Objects; Heritage

Auszug

Diese Arbeit basiert auf einer angewandten Kulturanalyse einer schwedischen Holocaustausstellung, die Objekte zeigt, die von Überlebenden eines Konzentrationslagers nach Südschweden gebracht wurden. Ziel dieser Arbeit ist es verschiedene, scheinbar widersprüchliche Narrative, die in Verbindung mit dieser Ausstellung stehen, zu analysieren und zu hinterfragen, um herauszufinden wie und weshalb Museen und deren Pädagogen Holocaust Narrative erzählen und wie (junge) Besucher diese lesen sollen. Besagtes Ziel führt zu einem tiefergehenden Verständnis über die Zielsetzung von der pädagogischen Befassung mit dem Holocaust im Museumskontext und deren (angewandte) Relevanz in Schweden heute. Die folgenden Forschungsfragen wurden formuliert: Welche Narrative können in einer schwedischen Holocaust-Ausstellung gefunden werden? Wie erzählen Layout, Objekte und Museumspädagogen ihre Narrative? Welche Intentionen und Ziele für die Gegenwart werden durch diese Narrative übertragen? Und wie sollen Besucher die Lektionen der Narrative heute nutzen? Theorien über Narrative, Trauma und Objekte im Zusammenhang mit Emotionen umrahmen die Analyse, die die Intentionen von Narrativen, wie „Never Again“ und deren vorhergesehener Nutzen im Alltag von Besuchern, hervorhebt. Die Analyse und die daraus folgenden Erkenntnisse zeigen abschließend das Bedürfnis verschiedene, zusammenhängende Perspektiven von und auf Narrativen zu erzählen und die Notwendigkeit die Intentionen von Narrativen kritisch zu reflektieren und transparent aufzuzeigen.

Schlüsselwörter: Holocaust Education; Ethnografie; Narrative; Museumsausstellung; Objekte; Heritage

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To end this silly metaphor: I am ready to dive into the ocean of the job market in Sweden.

Malmö, 2021-05-21

Nanni Felten

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1 Introduction

“10:26: student eats ham baguette in the exhibition” (Fieldwork diary entry, Observation of Focus Group, 2020-10-08)

Observing a student arranging and eating an approximately fifty-centimeter-long ham baguette within a Holocaust exhibition was not a reflection of the way I expected students to emotionally react to and process the trauma of the genocide. It seemed like the student did not feel any connection with the content and narratives of the exhibition as I had already seen him yawning several times in the guided tour. A ham baguette in a Holocaust exhibition were like two opposite ends for me. Digesting the meat of a dead animal while learning about the struggle and strategies to survive the horror and atrocities in a concentration camp felt like a profane contradiction.

The exhibition visited by those observed students shows objects brought to southern Sweden by former prisoners who survived a German concentration camp. After negotiations between count Folke Bernadotte and SS Reichsführer Himmler, the release of Scandinavian prisoners in the camp in Nazi Germany was allowed. In a rescue organization supervised by the Red Cross and supported by the Swedish Defense the so-called white buses were sent to bring the former prisoners to Sweden in March 1945. The fear of contagious diseases led to the decision that all clothes and objects of arriving survivors should be destroyed. A Polish professor managed to save some clothes and objects which built up the collection used in this exhibition today.

As the thesis will highlight, the artefacts of the exhibition transfer, besides being the evidence of the genocide’s horror, a notion of hope in the context of this exhibition expressed through the narrative of Holocaust survivors. In one interview with a teacher I realized the exceptionality of this exhibition narrative when he mentioned that without a relation to today, it can become a horror story for students. The seeming contradictions of narratives – hopeful objects in a horrible concentration camp setting – and the relation of those narratives to the present were two aspects that sparked the idea for this thesis.

Holocaust narratives can be viewed as a process of integration of the event and its trauma into cultural memory (cf. Hunter, 2019, 17). When analysing this process also in the context of relevance for today one should start with an understanding and analysis of the narratives themselves. What makes a text, spoken word, or any other form of communication a

narrative is defined in various ways. For this thesis, “narrative” is the representation of a single or series of events and the people involved. It combines story – the action or event(s) – and narrative discourse – the representation of those events (cf. Abbott, 2008, 18). Beyond a chronological listing, a narrative creates coherence of events (cf. Goldie, 2003, 54). It is a way of meaning-making of our experiences as humans (cf. Lothe et al., 2012, 8), in particular of time, change, and process (cf. Herman, 2009, 2). In the case of the analysed exhibition, this meaning-making today of a traumatic event such as the Holocaust through exhibition narratives and their intentions will be of central interest in the analysis. There are different profiles of a narrative such as a communicative strategy in the form of storytelling, a type of text – written, spoken, books, movies, computer messaging, etc. –, or a cognitive way of making sense or meaning of experiences (cf. Herman, 2009, 7).

Holocaust education and its content can be conceptualized as “difficult knowledge” (Pennington, 2018, 617). A student’s belief system and sense-making of oneself and the world could be disrupted after being learning about the atrocities of the Holocaust. As a reaction, students might build up resistance to learning about it (cf. Pennington, 2018, 617; Failler, 2015, 234). There are various ways of teaching about the Holocaust today (cf. Österberg, 2020, 167-169). In Holocaust museums diverse perspectives can be highlighted. This exhibition faces the challenge of not being part of a Holocaust museum. It tells another narrative than most Holocaust museums with displaying objects of survivors. The focus lies, next to some insights on the camp life, on the Swedish narrative about the end of the Holocaust, saving prisoners, and their survival strategies.

1.1 *Problematization*

The ham baguette-eating student triggered me personally. The contradiction might not be as strong to others who would just interpret it as a hungry student. Yet, the act of not paying attention to the guided tour but focusing on arranging and eating the food points towards issues of young peoples’ interest in and meaning making of the topic of the Holocaust. In just a few years, no survivors of the Holocaust will be alive to tell their stories from first-hand experience. Today’s Holocaust education is faced with problems regarding the relevance of such narratives to a young audience today having more and more distance to the event. Additionally, Sweden is a country where on the first thought the Holocaust did not happen. As pointed out in the analysis later, Sweden has its connections to the genocide. But as the museum director of the museum that displays the analysed exhibition put it, sometimes “it’s almost a burden to know history. Life would be easier if you weren’t aware of this. They are so fundamentally unpleasant

things” (Hans, 2020-09-17). Confronting the past, also as a country like Sweden that was seemingly not involved in the atrocities, can be unsettling (cf. Salmons, 2020, 118). Still, new places of confrontation are built, like the in 2021 planned Swedish Holocaust museum in Stockholm. There is an enormous amount of previous research on Holocaust education. Yet, the discussion about the relevance and objectives of Holocaust education needs to remain active and continuously adapted to changing generations and distance in time. Therefore, my thesis and its research on current Holocaust narratives, their use, and intentions are contributing to said discussion and might inspire possible strategies, such as a narrative and intention analysis, for finding solutions to the earlier stated problem.

1.2 *Research Aim & Question*

To understand the relevance of learning about the Holocaust today there needs to be an understanding of Holocaust education in Swedish museums first and their way of narrating about the Holocaust. Museum scholar Cecilia Rodéhn also suggests focusing on museum professionals rather than just on visitors when analysing the practice of guiding (with narratives) (Rodéhn, 2018, 2) Therefore, the aim of this thesis is to analyse and question different narratives connected to a Holocaust exhibition in Sweden in order to find out how and why museums and their educators tell Holocaust narratives and how they want those to be read by (young) visitors. This aim should lead to a deeper understanding of the objective of Holocaust education in a museum and its (applied) relevance in Sweden today. Based on this aim, the following questions are asked: What narratives can be found in a Swedish Holocaust exhibition? How do layouts, objects, and tour guides tell their narratives? What intentions and aims for the present are transferred by those narratives? And how are visitors supposed to use the learnings of the narratives today?

1.3 *Previous Research*

Most research connected to Holocaust education and Holocaust exhibitions roots in pedagogy, memory, heritage, museum, or Jewish studies. The educational researcher Brenda Trofanenko (2014) highlights the pedagogical view of teaching about war and the importance of researching affect and emotions in this context. Research on the emotional responses of young visitors towards narratives of Holocaust exhibitions in recent years is rare. Laurajane Smith and Gary Campbell (2016), both heritage and museum studies scholars, agree with Trofanenko and suggest the necessity of creating an understanding of emotions in exhibitions if they aim to impact the ways visitors use past events to make sense of themselves in the present. There are various

studies on emotions in not only Holocaust exhibitions but museums generally. Museum and critical heritage studies scholar Cecilia Rodéhn (2018) puts forward that emotions are a tool for tour guides to provide orientation when visitors deal with challenging emotional content. Psychology scholars Tove Dahl, Pia Silvana Entner, Ann-Mari Johansen, and Joar Vittersø (2013) contributed to visitor studies with their research on the cognitive and emotional nature of visitor fascination. According to this article, visitors’ emotional connection to a topic, often based on previous interest and a pleasant museum experience, enhances the interest in learning about displayed knowledge in museums. The emotional side of learning about the Holocaust is not the main focus of this thesis but one pillar when trying to analyse the intentions of the narratives.

Pedagogical researcher Lisa Pennington’s study (2018) highlights the individuality of museum educators’ Holocaust teaching and the lack of connection to classroom content for students. A relevant finding when targeting young visitors with Holocaust education in a museum context. Museum tours, as a main pillar of contemporary Holocaust education, are also one part of the fieldwork material for this thesis. Katie Best (2012), management and education scholar, examines guides in practice and the degree of interactivity in their tours. Holocaust education, particularly in Sweden, is pivotal in the research anthology regarding the new Holocaust museum in Sweden and especially discussed in the article by the historian Oscar Österberg (2020). Pedagogical scholars like Monica Vitale and Rebecca Clothey (2019) analyse the relevance of Holocaust education in a growing diversity of the community in Germany. The relevance will also be of interest in this thesis. Nevertheless, the aspect of an increasingly diverse community is not a perspective I take on but rather the perspective of young visitors in general.

Research on Holocaust exhibitions in connection to its narratives and forms and challenges of representation in recent years is not particularly well represented, especially not from a cultural analytical perspective. A rare example is the study of a Parisian Holocaust exhibition by the political scientist and ethnographic sociologist Sarah Gensburger (2019). She examines this exhibition from the visitors’ perspective. According to her, the intention of remembrance comes from the objects and images of the exhibition. The content transferred by narratives is secondary for visitors. Literary scholars such as Jakob Lothe, Susan Rubin Suleiman, and James, Phelan (2012) do not reflect on Holocaust exhibition narratives but Holocaust narratives in general and their relevance in terms of ethics and aesthetics for the future, when there are no survivors left to tell those narratives. Jennifer Hansen-Glucklich, also a literary scholar, contributes with her research on Holocaust narratives to Jewish and Holocaust studies.

Her book from 2014, “Holocaust Memory Reframed: Museums and the Challenges of Representation”, questions forms of remembrance that claim a “true” and whole representation of the Holocaust and its narratives.

The historian Johan Östling (2008) presents the development of Swedish narratives about World War II in a European context. Narratives of the past are not only told but also performed as the anthology by the historians Karin Tilmans, Frank van Vree, and Jay M. Winter (2010) or the research in performance study by literary Richard Crownshaw (2000) show and criticize. The focus of my thesis is not so much on the performance aspects of the exhibition narratives.

The lessons that could be drawn from the past events of the Holocaust are discussed by various scholars, yet not in the recent years close to the present time of 2021. The most recent study I have found is given by Paul Williams’s article (2013) on ethics of memorial museums and the outcomes in reality like the imperative to intend “never again” with Holocaust education. The present is a transition time where anytime soon there will be no survivors left. More recent studies on the intentions and lessons from Holocaust education seem to be relevant. Earlier scholars from various disciplines have also contributed to the discussion. Conflict researcher Brandon Hamber (2012), scholars of memory studies like Gutman Yifat, Brown Adam, and Sodaro, Amy (2010), and political philosophy researchers Mark S. Peacock and Paul A. Roth (2004) all critically analyse the notion of “never again” and the usage of the lessons from the past in the present. Cultural anthropologist Richard Handler (1994) criticizes the lack of links and usability of the past in the present given by museums.

Research on the sense-making of trauma in connection with Holocaust tourism and education can be found from different perspectives. Debate but also accordance centres on the issue of empathy and identification with the trauma narrative of victims. Catherine Roberts (2018), memory and tourism researcher, contributes to the field with her article in the Palgrave handbook of dark tourism studies. She analyses the meaning-making of dark tourism through emotional responses and empathy evoked by personal storytelling and interpretations. Memory study scholar Silke Arnold-de Simine (2013) also reflects critically on the virtuous status of empathy as a way of meaning-making of trauma. One assumption seems to be that hope in connection with Holocaust education needs to be discussed critically just as much as a pure horror focus when aiming to evoke empathy with the narratives of victims and survivors. Angela Failler (2015), a museum scholar, and Roger I. Simon (2006), pedagogic scholar, both warn against consolatory forms of hope. Often direct narratives given by Holocaust survivors are central in the research of meaning-making. Anthropologists Clara Han and Andrew Brandel

(2020) investigate genres through which violent experiences are told to future generations from the child perspective. Marilyn Armour (2010), a researcher on victimhood and violence, analyses meaning-making in Holocaust survivorship. This perspective from the survivor testimonies, often found in previous research, is not central in this thesis, yet some direct quotes displayed in the exhibition are included in the analysis.

The field of research on museum objects is widely represented in literature. Examples of scholars are, for instance, Elizabeth Crooke (2019), a researcher in museum and heritage studies, who examines objects in the context of a memorial museum or Marita Sturken (2016), media, culture, & communication professor, who studies memory and the material transformations of objects in the 9/11 memorial and museum. Museum scholar Susan Pearce (1994) provides with her work on museum objects clues for the interpretation of objects and collections. Anthropologist Julie Cruikshank (1992) juxtaposes material culture and oral tradition analysis including aspects of context, performance, and symbol. Her work links with the analysis of this thesis in which the narratives of objects as part of material culture and of museum educators as part of oral tradition are analysed.

My work is closest to that of the Holocaust museum and survivorship scholar Zachary Albert (2013) in that it focuses on intentionally created museum tour narratives reflecting specific goals. But instead of intentions like empathy, Albert focuses on the underlying aspects in exhibition narratives that shape the American identity after the Holocaust. Swedish identity in the narratives is not central in this analysis but will also be touched on. My contribution will be a detailed analysis of underlying intentions and intended use for visitors of museum narratives in a Swedish Holocaust exhibition. This thesis might start to fill the research gap of recent years about the lessons and use of narratives presented in Holocaust education today. Some assumptions and findings of the mentioned previous researchers and others¹ are tested and questioned in the analysis by comparing them to the findings of this study.

1.4 *Structure*

The thesis is structured as follows. After giving insights on the used methods, their limits, and on the analysed materials, a theoretical framework will be given based on theories on narratives, affect and objects, and trauma and empathy. The analysis of the thesis is overall divided into four based on each other parts. In the first three chapters, a narrative analysis is undertaken. Thereby, elements of the narratives can be investigated closely, and the later deeper analysed intentions of the narratives are revealed.

The first chapter examines a horror focus of the narratives in guided tour and exhibition that is dissected in each of the two sub-chapters. The first sub-chapter shows the elements of a horror narrative given by the tour guide, whereas the second sub-chapter focuses on the design and objects that emphasize this narrative. With the same approach, the narrative of survival and hope found in the exhibition, its artefacts, and in the speech of the museum educator is analysed. In the sub-chapter on exhibition design, the artefacts declared as hopeful objects are of central interest. Those two chapters on narratives of horror and narratives of survival and hope lead to the analysis and reflection of the third chapter in which the contradictions of those narratives are seen in the bigger context of their entanglements. Here, the need for reflecting critically on the presentation of the narratives is highlighted.

The fourth and last analytical chapter examines the earlier uncovered intentions of the narratives and the intended use of those narratives for visitors more deeply. Evoking empathy through identification and narratives is analysed as the first underlying intention. The second sub-chapter questions the imperative of “never again”. Here, it is investigated how analogies and lessons from the past are supposed to help using this knowledge in the present. Lastly, the third sub-chapter looks into the possibility of finding closure to the narrative and provides glimpses on ways of telling Holocaust narratives in the future.

Finally, the last part of this thesis consists of a summary and connection of the findings, concluding thoughts, and ways to apply the gained knowledge of this thesis and its approach of using narrative analysis to gain a deeper insight on underlying intentions.

2 Methods & Material

This chapter presents and discusses the methods used within the fieldwork and analysis and their value and limitations. Furthermore, materials and sources on which this thesis is based are mentioned, as well as the process of evaluation and categorizing of the findings. Ethical reflections on the fieldwork, its methods, and my position as a researcher in relation to the field finish the chapter.

2.1 Exploring the Field with Qualitative Methods

Most of the fieldwork for this thesis was conducted in the context of a work placement at a Swedish cultural museum that exhibits a collection of objects brought by surviving prisoners from a concentration camp in Germany. The exhibition narrative surrounds those objects and chosen quotes from testimonies based on the local history about arriving prisoners in this region. The project assigned by the client, an educator in this museum, arose from the wish to improve the workshop and guided tour connected to the exhibition. So far, she overtook the narrative and exercises from a previous educator. By enhancing the workshop and tour, the interests and needs of students, teachers and their curriculum, and museum educators were supposed to be met when educating and learning about the Holocaust in the context of this exhibition. Thereby and with my engagement with teachers throughout the project, the client hoped to strengthen the connection between local schools and the museum. For this thesis, five additional interviews with two museum educators, one creator of the exhibition, and the designer of the exhibition were conducted since the thesis focuses on the narrative's role in Holocaust education whereas in the work placement the improvement of the workshop was the focus of interest. Nevertheless, the narrative was a recurring theme in the previous interviews, too, which inspired me to look at the material from the angle of museum narratives and their relevance.

An ethnographic approach in research is an applied way of cultural analysis. It uses qualitative methods to ask questions about and find answers in everyday life based on the framework of the research. In this case, the fieldwork was conducted in a period of two months plus three weeks of additional fieldwork for the thesis (cf. Pink & Morgan, 2013, 352). Reaching beyond anthropological analyses that often remain in the realm of academia, ethnographic findings can be of great value for businesses – in this case, the museum – by creating an understanding of their visitors (cf. O'Dell & Willim, 2011, 27-29). When aiming to achieve this understanding, clarity and questioning of the own standpoint of the museum and their educational goals in comparison to the actual educational methods and narratives is crucial to

understand how these influence contemporary Holocaust education. Therefore, this thesis focuses mainly on the perspective of the museum, museum educators, and exhibition designers. Furthermore, the circumstances due to the COVID-19 pandemic limited further research on visitor interaction and effects of the narratives on museum experience and future impact in the visitor's everyday life. My personal risk assessment of observing visitors in a narrow exhibition and the feeling of responsibility to prevent the spreading of the virus lead to the decision of no more observations even when I decided to write the thesis about the exhibition and further observations might have been helpful (cf. Meza-Palmeros, 2020, 114). Yet, visitors' perspectives could still be collected during the work placement and are included in the analysis.

The chance in applied cultural analysis lies in its openness to try out and combine different approaches and concepts of various disciplines while maintaining a cultural everyday life perspective on human experiences and practices (cf. O'Dell & Willim, 2014, 791-792). When working with and analysing a museum exhibition, it is not just museology that contributes to theoretical viewpoints and methodological approaches but also heritage studies, memory studies, ethnology, pedagogy, elements from political science, or even psychology when analysing the trauma connected to dark heritage sites. Qualitative methods are the strength of cultural analysis to achieve an in-depth understanding of cultural phenomena. Throughout my work placement at the museum, I conducted 12 in-depth interviews plus the above-mentioned five interviews for the objective of this thesis. Four teachers were interviewed between half an hour and an hour. They all teach Swedish students at “Gymnasium” level (equivalent to upper secondary school) in the age of 16 to 19. These teachers have, next to their logistical role to coordinate a visit, also the visitor perspective on this exhibition. Additionally, they bring a special interest in the educational resources given by the museum in the course of Holocaust education for their students. One teacher was interviewed twice, before and after a museum visit with her history class. The students from this class were also part of a focus group interview after their visit.

Already in the course of the work placement, I realized the value of interviewing museum educators from other museums like Jewish or Holocaust museums that are working with Holocaust education daily. The museum director made it very clear that they are neither a Holocaust nor a Jewish museum and that this exhibition is not one of their main pillars of the museum's identity. Educators from Holocaust museums have experience with those narratives and their effects on visitors. Their insights can be helpful when trying to understand chosen narratives by this analysed museum exhibition and its relevance today. Most of the interviewed educators were from Poland, just a few from Sweden, since Poland has many Holocaust

heritage sites, and millions of people interested in dark tourism every year. Additionally, I used my connections to Holocaust educators which were mainly from Poland. I have worked there in a Jewish museum in the course of an internship in 2018.

Furthermore, I interviewed three staff members, the museum director and two museum educators. The direct work in the field and my involvement in the everyday work life at the museum enabled further valuable chats with staff at the museum. As Hult suggests, this enabled a closeness to the client and her work and an understanding of the museum's viewpoint on Holocaust education in a more holistic way (Hult, 2008, 43 & 47). With this insider perspective – and not only as an outside consultant – the applicability of my suggestions could be estimated more profoundly before-hand. Two additional interviews with one of the exhibition's creators and with the scenographer – done in the course of this thesis – gave further insight on the narrative and its intended meaning.

Observations of several guided tours and workshops held by the client were pivotal in understanding and identifying the problem and finding solutions for improving the tour and workshop. Here, the differences and similarities between the exhibition narrative and tour guide narrative became noticeable as well as the immediate effects of the narrative on visitors. The highlight of fieldwork experiences was a focus group interview with a class of Swedish students at Gymnasium level. Because of the number of students (32) – which could not be limited due to logistical reasons – the interactivity of the interview had to be reduced. Next to just a brief discussion between the students and me, they answered a questionnaire and fulfilled a short task asking about their feelings connected to their experiences in the guided tour and workshop.

2.2 *Limitations*

Despite the valuable insights that were possible through qualitative methods, there are limitations due to the unpredictability of context and outcome of the fieldwork. The focus group interview with the students who visited the exhibition showed some of those limitations. It was not a focus group interview in a traditional way. Usually, the data is mainly produced by the interaction of the group guided by a moderator (cf. Stewart & Williams, 2005, 396; Fallon & Brown, 2002, 199). I could not organize a moderator and the interaction was also limited to a short group discussion. It happened right after and in the same location as the workshop. The teacher decided how much time could be given for the interview and, also, that no student should be excluded and wait outside. Yet, I call it focus group since they all have been visiting

the exhibition and workshop right before the interview and still some interaction was happening. Valuable insights for my work placement and this thesis were still given.

Additionally, I expected it to be easier to interview the informants about emotions and feelings. Observing, describing, and categorizing (to be able to note down) feelings of visitors in guided tours was a challenge. I could not refrain from my own emotions connected to the situation. I sometimes caught myself thinking about how tired I was and how I was looking forward to my break soon. My own slight feeling of low energy due to hunger and repetitive information given by the tour guide that I have heard and studied many times before might have influenced my judgement of the yawn from a student as boredom. Ethnography often avoids naming emotions. Instead, responses of the body are described (cf. Parvez, 2018, 458). Yet, to be able to compare my observations with named emotions in interviews I did name some impressions from observations as boredom, for instance. Anthropologist Andrew Beatty argues that for an understanding of informants’ emotions, I, as an ethnographer, would need to spend enough time to get to know informants on a deeper level (Beatty, 2014, 555). Observing emotions from a distance did not “achieve ethnographic depth per se” (Parvez, 2018, 456). But making informants articulate their feelings in longer encounters like interviews often seemed to end in rather superficial answers. It turned out to be a balancing act between wanting to learn about their emotional experiences in this exhibition and its narrative, and yet not pushing the informants to an answer that might only be based on what they think is appropriate to feel in this context. Refining the interview questions inspired by Yeong et al. and their refinement process (Yeong et al., 2018) after conducting a few interviews did not necessarily give deeper insights on emotions. The interviewees seemed to have difficulties putting emotions into words. Nevertheless, there are still interesting findings that will be discussed in the analysis. I also wished to do go-alongs with visitors after the work placement was finished. Here, visitors’ experiences with the narrative could have been more central in the observations than it was when improving the workshop for the work placement. But as mentioned above, the pandemic changed plans, and I re-defined my focus even more on tour guides.

The language barrier was in some interviews another limitation for the method. My broken Swedish was not enough to conduct the interviews in the mother tongue of most informants. Many of them spoke fluent English, yet some struggled with putting their thoughts into spoken words which lead to a few interviews that could not go as in-depth as wanted. Additionally, observing the guided tours in Swedish was sometimes challenging, especially in the beginning when I heard the information for the first time. I could not fully focus on

translating what the tour guide said while also observing visitors’ reactions. Luckily, I could follow for the most parts and I received a written document of the tour text.

2.3 *Material & Sources*

The primary material and sources used for the following analysis are field notes from the observations, the mentioned interviews, focus group interview, and the above-mentioned document with a guided tour script received from the client. As emphasized in the analysis, the exhibition itself, its title, objects, and quotes represent narratives, too. There is a digital version of the exhibition on the website of the museum.

For the analysis of the material during the work placement, I used an online tool for project management called “Notion”. It helped organizing the material. For instance, I created a table to get an overview of the collected material. In one column, I listed significant quotes, summaries of interviews, observation notes, and other relevant information. The column next to it showed the source or person from which I retrieved or received it. A third column allowed me to code the content of the first column. I started quite intuitively with various codes; over time it became clearer which smaller themes could be clustered into bigger categories. The most relevant ones were, for instance, the themes “objects”; “narrative”; “emotions”; “identification”; “experiencing history”; and many more mentioned in the interviews. It helped with connecting information and finding patterns within those grouped quotes, eventually leading to my main findings for the client. A fourth column had room for notes, interpretations, and connections I saw. This represented an early form of the analysis not connected to previous literature and theory yet. Nevertheless, those themes are not all useful for answering the questions of this thesis. The previous focus on the curriculum in Sweden is not relevant anymore. Therefore, I went into the material again and created new themes, though many codes like “objects” stayed the same. The main categories of narratives that appeared from repeating patterns in the material for this thesis were, for instance, “identification”, “Past Present Future – Connection”, “Empathy”, “Using the Past”. They built an initial structure for the analysis of this thesis.

2.4 *Ethical Reflections*

Holocaust education focuses on education about discrimination, the persecution, and the mass killing of European Jews and non-Jewish victims to create an understanding of the Holocaust and to keep the memory alive. Qualitative sociologist Holger Knothe (2018) reflects on the ethical perspective of Holocaust education. It is based on the imperative to orient thinking and

acting in a way so that the Holocaust could not be repeated. Holocaust education is legitimized by its ethical-moral argumentation. Connections to today and the moral positioning of individuals are expected. As a pedagogical approach, Holocaust education is in various applied ways internationally established and institutionalised (Knothe, 2018, 3-4). This imperative and unquestioned legitimation of Holocaust education did also appear in the course of this research. The ethical consequences of this imperative for visitors and the future of Holocaust education are among other aspects examined and questioned in the analysis. Writing and researching about the Holocaust throughout my studies always makes me insecure initially. This is mainly based on the fear of too strong statements based on findings that would relativize the event and its meaning, especially when questioning the imperative of “never again”, and that would fail to do justice to the millions of Holocaust victims. Yet, tiptoeing around and avoiding critical questioning of applicability of the ethical imperative to remember does not add much value to the current discourse about Holocaust education. The analysis of this thesis tries to avoid generalizations but critically investigates Holocaust education in this exhibition to keep the discourse alive. Nevertheless, the aim is not to present one right way of Holocaust education or narratives.

The perspective of visitors for this research is mainly shaped by the view of teachers and students from the upper high school (Gymnasium) in Sweden since this was the focus of the work placement. Because of the limit of the diversity of this group in terms of age and different social backgrounds, I decided to not focus on the visitors’ view on narratives only. Yet, the group of students as a focus is still relevant since Holocaust education in this museum is intended for young visitors. My personal concerns about in-person meetings in the exhibition in the last few months due to the increased risk of the pandemic caused me to not reach out to more visitors for a walk-along, for instance.

All informants’ names are anonymized. They were informed about my study’s aim beforehand via email or messenger and by answering they agreed to the recording of the interview. Some interviews were conducted via video chat on zoom where they could decide whether they wanted to use their camera. One person decided against showing her face. Two informants wanted to talk faceless via phone call. I preferred the in-person interviews at the beginning of the project because I felt less distant from the informants. Especially, when talking about emotions towards narratives it was easier to interpret when perceiving the body language.

I decided to not only anonymize informants but also the museum, its exhibition, and the staff. My analysis of the tour guide narrative could unmask who the museum educator is if someone knows the museum because she is the one currently responsible for the tours of

this exhibition. As I worked in the place for eight weeks, I developed connections with staff in lunch break conversations, for instance. With my critical analysis of the exhibition and tour, I do not want to expose and possibly offend people who have created this exhibition with good conscience and intentions. I will still use titles like director of the museum or designer of the exhibition because it distinguishes the opinions between different staff members of the museum with different positions. Yet, anonymity can only be provided to a certain degree in reality (cf. Davies, 2007, 51-52). To support my findings, I decided to use a few pictures of the exhibition. People who know about the exhibition might recognize the exhibition on the pictures and also the content discussed in this thesis.

All interviewed students for the focus group under the age of 18 received a consent form that needed to be signed by their parents in order to participate in the study (cf. Davies, 2007, 50). The focus group interview challenged my professionalism at one point. I wanted the students to stay focused and interested even though they already had a guided tour and workshop beforehand and I could see more and more yawns. So, I tried to be engaging, funny, and make them feel like this is everything but a boring thing that has to do with school. While sitting in a circle on a floor and asking them questions, I was asked for my Snapchat contact by a male student. Everybody burst out in laughter and I felt quite uncomfortable. It made me realize the challenges of being a young university student myself and interviewing not so much younger school students.

The demand for objectivity – in a common understanding – in scientific research is not realistic. Haraway introduces the concept of situated knowledge in which not only the located context and the circumstances are part of the knowledge that can lead to findings but also the own pre-experiences and knowledge of the researcher (Haraway, 1988, 581). She pleads for a critical positioning of the researcher self beyond processes of clear identification. The researcher and the researched bring multiple forms of identities into the field, co-existing and often not categorizable (cf. Haraway, 1988, 586). This also intertwines with the thoughts on the researcher identity by ethnologist Angelika Sjöstedt Landén. According to her, the identity does not shape the subject but can be constituted throughout the research. Some of those identities are stickier than others (cf. Sjöstedt Landén, 2011, 547). I entered the field with my previous experience as a tour guide and through this experience acquired knowledge about museums, particularly Holocaust exhibitions. Additionally, I did cultural analysis for another museum that is part of the institution of this exhibition. So, I was familiar with some of the staff members though not with the client. The museum director connected me with this exhibition when he learned about my previous experiences in Holocaust education. My identity as a

previous tour guide was not present in every thought about my observations for this project. Still, it might have been my stickiest identity trait in the interpretation of my findings. Before starting the project, I did not even reflect on this part of my experience in connection to this project. Within the project, there were moments, for instance, when observing the guided tours, where I was reminded of my moments in guiding and became aware of this researcher identity.

3 Theoretical Framework

A theoretical framework allows the analysis to view and understand the findings of the empirical material from specific perspectives. Theories on narratives, affect and objects, and trauma and empathy provide a guideline for answering the research question. Yet, the theories are not used in an explanatory manner but rather as a testing tool and are questioned when necessary. Additional, appropriate theoretical concepts are supplemented throughout the analysis.

3.1 Theories on Narratives

As a theoretical perspective on narrative and storytelling in the Holocaust exhibition of this museum, narrative theory provides aspects and elements to consider when analysing the narratives. There is not one narrative theory. Narrative theorists have developed different approaches to analysis. Therefore, the theoretical framework for analysing the exhibition’s narratives will be a combination of various elements from different theories. This gives the possibility to not only limit the analysis to one theory but use what is most helpful from differing theoretical departures to bring the findings to a deeper level of understanding. The selectivity of narratives, protagonists, the background, events, the meaning given to experiences, flexibility, the emotional and ethical consequences are a few of many aspects that can be analysed (cf. Lothe et al., 2012, 8-9). The chosen elements for this thesis will be discussed and presented in the analysis. Repetitive elements like themes and motifs give a starting point to structuring the analysis (cf. Abbott, 2008, 95). Two major themes occurring in the narratives but also through the interviews were horror and survival/hope. Therefore, I structured the first two chapters of the analysis into those two themes. Those narratives of hope and horror overlap yet contradict often, as the analysis will show. Structural analysis based on a step-by-step manual and linguistic disassembling (cf. Barthes, 2004) is not the aim of this thesis. I am not a native Swedish speaker. Hence, I cannot provide an analysis of the linguistics of this exhibition’s narrative. The focus of this thesis is the narratives, the way they are told by tour guides, exhibition layout, and its artefacts, and the function and effect of those narratives intended by the museum and its tour guides.

Though deciding against using just one narrative theory, the basic elements of narrative by English studies scholar David Herman provide a framing guideline when analysing the narratives. Each of the four elements can be combined and compared with approaches and elements of other theories. The first element describes the situatedness of narratives. This includes the “occasions for telling” – particularly, the producer of the text is of interest here – and “discourse contexts” (Herman, 2009, 17). In the museum context, the analysis of the

occasion for telling needs to enclose the analysis of the tour guide as a producer of the text. Event-sequencing is considered as the second basic element by Herman, meaning a narrative's time-course is structured, tracing the paths of individuals who are confronted with decisions at particular points in events or time (Herman, 2009, 9 & 18-19). According to Herman's third basic element, narratives represent a kind of disruption of the story world. This world can be realistic or fictional, even dreamed or remembered (Herman, 2009, 9). The agency of characters in narratives is a focal point when analysing this story-world disruption (Herman, 2009, 20). This element seems to be particularly interesting when analysing the narrative of an exhibition thematizing the Holocaust – one of the biggest disruptive events of the 20th century. The last basic element of narratives is the attempt to represent “what it's like”. It displays the felt and lived experience of human or human-like protagonists in the story world, perhaps giving the possibility to experience it by listening to, reading, or watching the represented narrative as a reader or audience (Herman, 2009, 9, 21). This element is of special interest when discussing the possibility and necessity of experiencing the faith of Holocaust victims and survivors through their narratives. As the elements show, Herman's theory focuses on particular people and their experiences of events in specific circumstances and the consequences rather than general situations (Herman, 2009, 1-2).

Herman distinguishes the analysis of narratives into an emic and etic approach. Leaning on the linguistic definitions he defines etic as the approach to create categories by going through patterns in linguistic data from an outside perspective. Emic approaches analyse from an inside perspective whether those patterns are meaningful to language users. (Herman, 2009, 3-4) Transferred to the narrative analysis of an exhibition narrative, the emic approach means to analyse the narrative elements not only from an observer perspective (etic) but also to find out what the tour guide sees as meaningful. For that, I needed empirical investigations like interviews with tour guides to gain this perspective, as also suggested by Herman (Herman, 2009, 4).

3.2 The Promise of What? – Narratives, Affect, & Objects

To create an understanding of the museum's and tour guides' intentions when telling the narrative, the analysis aims to discover the promises that are underlying these narratives in the exhibition. They are not officially stated promises or intentions. Yet, the concept of promising objects, or in this case narratives, unmask underlying intentions that are worth investigating when questioning the relevance of Holocaust education. As the narrative theories showed above, narratives are a way of meaning-making. Sara Ahmed states in "The Promise of

Happiness" from a feminist cultural studies perspective that the human desire for happiness is an underlying wish to give our lives meaning and purpose (Ahmed, 2010, 1). The theory on happiness by Ahmed gives a frame for exploring what promises are given by different meaning-making narratives. Happiness and Holocaust seem like an inappropriate match for a theoretical framework. People might not search for happiness in the learnings of a Holocaust narrative and finding happiness in this exhibition is not promised or intended by the museum. But hope was a reoccurring theme in the interviews done for this thesis. Ahmed defines hope as anticipation for happiness (Ahmed, 2010, 181). It is a feeling in the present that can be based on anxiety rooting in the past while projected towards the future (Ahmed, 2010, 181-183). This concept and promise of hope connected with the negative feeling of anxiety will be used when analysing the narratives of horror and hope, as well as other functions and intentions that came up from the narratives' promises in the exhibition.

Ahmed's theory questions the imperative to be happy (Ahmed, 2010, 217-218) by focusing on characters like the "feminist killjoy", the "melancholic migrant", and the "unhappy queer" (Ahmed, 2010, 17). The so-called "unhappy archives" provide the materials for her analysis. Those archives are based on works that question the history of happiness by focusing on the "struggle against happiness" (Ahmed, 2010, 18). The analysis of this thesis will also discuss the promises and imperatives given by Holocaust narratives such as the imperative to feel horrible or hopeful for the sake of never again, for instance.

Since the objects of survivors are the central content of the analysed exhibition, it is especially interesting to use Ahmed's chapter on "happy objects" (Ahmed, 2010, 21) in terms of affect and emotion. "Happiness creates its objects" (Ahmed, 2010, 21), she states, because if we are happy, we are projecting this happiness onto something. The happy objects then become "happiness pointers". Happiness is something we aim for as an endpoint (Ahmed, 2010, 26). Happy objects are not necessarily material things but can also be a family, for instance (Ahmed, 2010, 45). In this thesis, the concept of happy objects is used on the material artefacts and narratives. Ahmed explains affect connected to objects as the way how we come into contact and turn towards things (Ahmed, 2010, 23-24). The analysis will discuss how narratives of this exhibition intend visitors to turn towards the artefacts in specific ways. This will show various functions for the present everyday life and different reasons for the relevance of those narratives and turning towards those objects. When turning towards objects we are also in affective connection to what surrounds those objects, including the "conditions of [...] arrival" including what is behind and close to the object (Ahmed, 2010, 25).

If the promise of happiness ever will become true is not sure since it is always focusing on the not yet present future. Ahmed sees a gap between the promise of happiness and the expectation in the way of being affected by objects that promise happiness. This gap leads to disappointment. Additionally, she states that we can end up feeling alienated when we do not feel happiness from the proximity to objects that are supposed to be good for us. A feeling of alienation also arises when we experience forms of happiness that are perceived as inappropriate by the mind. (Ahmed, 2010, 41-42). People assume that happy objects contain happiness, but they are creations of happiness and are only able to promise the feeling. (Compare Ahmed, 2010, 44) For the analysis, this raises the questions if the exhibition artefacts contain the narratives and feelings of the survivors or if tour guides and visitors need to use interpretations. Eventually, Ahmed suggests that just as objects can become happy objects, they can transform into unhappy objects over time. (Ahmed, 2010, 44-45) Ahmed’s concept about the possibility of change between ambivalent feelings gives a theoretical framework for the analysis of the ambivalence of narratives and feelings in the Holocaust exhibition.

3.3 *Trauma & Empathy*

When aiming to understand the intentions behind narratives, a theoretical framework for ways of processing the trauma and narratives of the Holocaust gives a perspective for analysing the empirical materials. Historian Dominick LaCapra’s theory on “Writing History, Writing Trauma” reflects on different emotions connected to trauma of the past in the present. According to him, plain documentation of past events could not achieve what a narrative provides. Narratives have the ability to transport a feeling of the experience and emotions of the trauma (LaCapra, 2001, 13). One intention of the narratives analysed in this thesis will be empathy. LaCapra connects ways people process trauma by feeling empathy predominantly with writing about trauma. In the analysis, I will transfer his conceptions to narratives that can also be viewed as a way of writing history and to visitors’ (possible) reactions.

The first way of processing trauma is described as “unchecked identification” by LaCapra (LaCapra, 2001, 28). Here, the reader relives the trauma imaginatively and emotionally. An almost full identification with the event leads to blurring between the experience of oneself and the Holocaust victim, in this case. Hence, present and past cannot be distinguished anymore (LaCapra, 2001, 21 & 28). A “melancholic feedback loop” (LaCapra, 2001, 21) is created leading to resistance to working through the trauma (LaCapra, 2001, 23). Others might not identify with the event but transform the experience of trauma into something extraordinary to elevate and test the self. Feelings of ecstasy are often associated with this way of processing

(LaCapra, 2001, 23). On the contrary to self-elevation, another approach to processing trauma is numbing. It protects the self by avoiding any form of identification or reliving of trauma (LaCapra, 2001, 40). LaCapra presents those forms to, eventually, propose a way that rejects all of them. What he calls “empathetic unsettlement” (LaCapra, 2001, 41) allows an emotional response to the trauma while keeping the distinction between the experience of the self and of the other. An understanding without victimization can be created while admitting that it can never be completely understood. Studying traumatic events and their narratives that happened in the past from a present perspective poses questions of representation (LaCapra, 2001, 40-42). The applicability of this theoretical concept of empathetic unsettlement to the representations of narratives in this exhibition will be tested and compared to the findings of the fieldwork material when analysing empathy as an intention of the narratives.

4 Analysis

The following analytical chapters examine the fieldwork material with the help of theoretical concepts and previous research.² The exhibition and tour guide content is analysed in terms of their narrative features in two chapters about the horror as well as two chapters about the survival and hope perspective. The third chapter draws the contradictions of those narratives together by emphasizing critical reflections on them rather than isolating the perspectives. In the last chapter, the, in previous sections outlined, intentions of those narratives are deeper investigated and put into the context of past, present, and future.

4.1 Narrative of Horror

This chapter analyses the narrative elements of horror found both in the guided tour as well as the exhibition design and content. Firstly, the content of the speech by the museum educator constitutes the main material. It is then put into context with visitors’ opinions and reactions. Thereby, possible underlying intentions of the narrative are identified. The second part of this chapter outlines the horror features found in the exhibition design and some of its artefacts.

4.1.1 Horror Narrative in the Guided Tour – “Attracted to the More Horrifying Thing”

When analysing the narrative of the museum educator guiding visitors through the exhibition, it is a narrative representation in a specific setting. This situatedness, defined as a basic element of narratives by Herman, is based on its discourse context and occasion for telling (Herman, 2009, 17). The tour guide’s narrative is placed in the discourse context of Holocaust memory & Holocaust education in a museum today. This points towards the occasion of telling. The museum educator narrates this Holocaust exhibition mainly in front of student groups between 16 and 19 years old. Next to artefacts, texts, and interpreters of the narrative, the producer of the text contributes to the narrative’s situatedness (Herman, 2009, 17). Hence, this chapter focuses on the observations of the tour guide, who wrote this narrative as a text, and then performed and told it in front of students.

Situated in the discourse context of Holocaust memory, the Holocaust can be seen as a “framing narrative” (Abbott, 2008, 29) for the exhibition narrative. Concurrently, the narrative is situated in the actual place where at least one part of the narrative happened. The exhibition is located in the area where prisoners arrived, also seen as a strength of this exhibition by the museum. The beginning, peak, and end of a story are what one is used to from

fiction. The Holocaust has no fixed beginning, peak, and ending. There is no closure of the happening and no satisfying feeling of a resolved struggle given by the closure of a narrative (cf. Abbott, 2008, 62) since the Holocaust is an ongoing discourse in the present. This will also be analysed further in a later chapter. Yet, the tour guide’s narrative starts when she introduces the exhibition and ends when the talk is over. Herman’s second basic element of narratives, event sequencing, states that narratives focus on specific events and situations (Herman, 2009, 18). The tour of the museum educator also has this selective character of particular events. Lothe et. al describe the narrative’s dependence on “detailed attention to what is selected” (Lothe et. al, 2012, 8) because they are not a listing of all the things that have happened during an event but a focus on what was perceived as important by the storyteller. Hence, it cannot be a full account or copy of the past, just a view as historian and geographer David Lowenthal defines history (Lowenthal, 1998, 106 & 112). Therefore, the following paragraph will be a (also selective) summary of the tour guide’s selected situations and events for the tour narrative.

The museum educator’s talk begins with an emphasis on the importance of this exhibition.

It is a small but extremely important exhibition that is part of the important task of posterity to document, investigate and try to understand the terrible and in all respects difficult to understand that happened around the time of World War II. (Museum educator in guided tour for Focus Group, 2020-10-08)

Hereby, she already sets a tone for her narrative focusing on the terrible happenings of the Holocaust. Afterwards, she also mentions Holocaust deniers. The exhibition’s title and theme of surviving are not mentioned yet in the beginning. After this introduction, she continues talking about the UN human rights as an invention for preventing the reoccurrence of happenings like the Holocaust. In connection to this, she uses words like barbaric and horrible in connection to the atrocities done by the Nazis when she mentions the “barbaric deeds that came with [the Holocaust]” (Museum educator in guided tour for Focus Group, 2020-10-08) making the event possible. The following part, dedicated to the parts shown in the exhibition, focuses on the area of dehumanization. The sections in the exhibition about the prisoner’s will and strategies to survive are touched upon shortly, followed by informing the visitors about the events leading to the Genocide. So far, this introductory information cannot necessarily be identified as a narrative by itself, but it leads to what could be seen as the actual narrative of the tour guide. So, before the main narrative starts, she gives background information on the Holocaust and the exhibition while setting an emotional tone for visitors’ experiences.

Her focus was up until now mainly focused on the horrible aspects of the Holocaust. Now Sweden’s role in taking former prisoners to Sweden in the so-called white buses is highlighted, leading to the background information about the creation of the exhibition’s collection. This narrative is the only clear story with actors, beginning, and end. The museum educator starts by talking about the arriving prisoners in Sweden. A Polish professor from a Swedish university is then introduced. She describes that “he had been commissioned by the Polish state to document the abuses done by the Germans” (Museum educator in guided tour for Focus Group, 2020-10-08). I suggest him being one of the main characters in this narrative. He saw the value in objects brought by prisoners, collected them, and interviewed the survivors. They are presented as a collective which makes them more or less anonymous actors in the narrative. The peak of this narrative could be the saving of those objects – otherwise, they would have been burned. The Nazis, who are mainly referred to as “the Germans”, and the Nazi sympathizers in Sweden, who were threatening the actions of the Polish professor, can be interpreted as the opposing protagonists. She ends this main narrative by pointing out that this collection is now displayed in the exhibition. Afterward follows a side story of evidence found in the camp where the prisoners came from that helped in court to sentence a commander. Hereby, she emphasizes the exceptionality of (hidden) objects in a camp and transitions to general information about the camp. Throughout the whole speech of the museum educator, there is a recurrent question that is then asked again: How could this mass execution ever be possible? As an answer, the guide turns again to the topic of the dehumanization process of prisoners, supporting it with evidence from the exhibition. Eventually, she talks about the other parts of the exhibition focused on survival by telling stories of the artefacts and their role in the survival of prisoners. They are then supposed to be explored by students afterward.

This narrative also shares the third element of Herman’s basic elements. It presents a disruption in the story world (Herman, 2009, 19-20). Just that the story world, in this case, is not a fictional one. The disruption happened in the past of reality. The narrative promoted in the observed guided tours is mainly focused on the crimes and horror of the Holocaust. The main narrative about the collection only had a short part whereas the background information and side stories are selected to show the cruelty of the Holocaust. Yet, the side stories supported the main narrative by emphasizing the importance of the collection.

When analysing the tour guide as the producer of the text, as Herman suggests, it is also pivotal that she based the text on the narrative of the exhibition. She neither came up with the story by herself nor did she live through the happenings of the narrative she presents. She rather is the narrating voice (cf. Storeide, 2012, 258-260) taking the “external perspective”

on the happenings of the Holocaust. But according to Goldie, the museum educator’s perspective still influences the narrative by including her own emotions. Hence, the audience is encouraged and influenced by this perspective (Goldie, 2003, 54-55 & 60). Lothe et al. describe a connection between the “what of representation” and how it is told (Lothe et al., 2012, 9). In my fieldwork diary I noted down that the museum educator “uses her hands and face expressions a lot [...]. Her eyebrows are constantly moving upwards” (Museum educator in guided tour for Focus Group, 2020-10-08) giving her face a shocked look. Usually, in the workplace she did not talk and move like this. The expressive body language with strong facial expressions, dramatic gesticulations, and changes in voice volume emphasized her focus on the horror of the Holocaust.

Social scientist and philosopher Peter Goldie holds the opinion that visitors can either agree to the emotions and selected narration of the museum educator or align their emotional response with the happenings of the narrative, which, in this case, are the events of the Holocaust (Goldie, 2003, 60-61). Both cases do not necessarily invite a positive emotional experience. The tour guide focused on the negative emotions. Aligning the emotions with the industrial murder of millions of people during the Holocaust is not a positive experience, either. When asking students in a focus group interview to note down their emotions after they have been given a speech by the guide, the reactions were clear. Most students mentioned anger, shock, disgust, and sadness. Gratitude for the own present situation compared to the prisoners’ suffering was the only positive emotion mentioned a few times. Museum scholar Paul Williams points out that these feelings of Holocaust exhibition visitors’ can already be formed before but also be changed during the visit (Williams, 2013, 229). Still, for most students, the narrative given by the museum educator might have left an impact on their emotional responses and interpretations of the exhibition narrative. It is nothing that she could have avoided. Literary scholar Wayne C. Booth states that the author of a text – or here the narrating voice – “cannot choose whether or not to affect his readers’ evaluations by his choice of narrative manner; [s]he can only choose whether to do it well or poorly.” (Booth, 2004, 138) If there is one well or right and one poor or wrong way of telling a narrative will be analysed later in the chapter on contradictory narratives. According to Smith and Campbell, emotions play an important role when interpreting and making meaning of such memories transported by narratives (Smith & Campbell, 2016, 452 & cf. Trofanenko, 2014, 26). Aligning it with the narrated events of the Holocaust would not lead to another result. But an alignment with the events presented in this specific exhibition might have changed the emotions. As a later chapter will analyse, the exhibition is not mainly focusing on the horror, shock, and sadness of the Holocaust.

Yet, visitors are expecting “gruesome pictures” and being shown “what they [the prisoners] were put through physically” (Focus Group, 2020-10-08), as the students stated in the focus group questionnaires. This is contradictory to Ahmed’s idea that we move away from things “we do not like” (Ahmed, 2010, 24). An interviewed tour guide from Poland here called David, also supports visitors’ expectations of a horror narrative when stating visitors “are attracted to the more horrifying thing” (David, 2021-02-18). Dahl et al.’s research on visitors’ interests in museums corroborates visitors’ attraction to horror. The study shows that authenticity, coping with challenging situations, and danger are seen as most interesting (Dahl et al., 2013, 167). Goldie calls this “a terrible fascination” (Goldie, 2003, 67) with the narrative. The tour guide’s influence when focusing on the horror narrative and negative emotions is approving what many visitors are expecting from a Holocaust exhibition. Whereas the exhibition narrative might not meet visitors’ expectations as the chapter on the survival narrative will analyse. Visitors’ emotions are not simply “controlled” or “suppressed” by the museum educator’s narrative (cf. Rodéhn, 2018, 8). They can be impacted – as stated earlier – but also meet the expectations of a Holocaust exhibition, often emotionally loaded and based on previous experience and knowledge regarding the topic (cf. Dahl et al., 2013, 171).

This emphasis on the horror narrative is a clear intention stated by several members of the museum staff in interviews. The visitors are supposed to learn about the terrible events of the Holocaust at first before a hopeful narrative – as later analysed – can be presented as well. Regarding the emotions one other museum educator, Rosa, who was not the direct client I worked with, stated: “Some students are emotionally touched, of course. That’s the meaning also.” (Rosa, 2020-10-06) The above-mentioned ways the tour guide emotionally engages visitors in the narrative could also be called “strategies of applied theatrics” (Arnold-de Simine, 2013, 12) as suggested by Arnold-de Simine. They are used to make visitors empathize and identify with the narratives of people. This also addresses the fourth basic element of narratives by Herman. The narrative of the tour guide intends to make visitors feel what it is like to live through the horror of the Holocaust. When answering her repetitive question of “how the hell could that happen?” she mainly adds more and more horrible aspects of the Holocaust to her narrative, like the strategies of dehumanization. Literary scholar Roland Barthes states that narratives are always functional (Barthes, 2004, 70). The main function of this narrative is to evoke empathy in the visitors for creating an emotional connection between present and past. Homogenously, all interviewees mentioned that a deeper understanding and learning of the Holocaust happens through an emotional connection with the personal stories of prisoners. Feeling empathy with Holocaust victims through narratives of war and genocide is often

perceived as an ethically responsible reaction (cf. Arnold-de Simine, 2013, 45-46). Herman’s “what it’s like” element of narratives connects with the definition of empathy by educational studies scholars Michalinos Zembylas, Loizos Loukaides, and Petroula Antoniou (2020). Here, empathy is “generally understood as the ability to reconstruct the other’s perspective [...] and sense how the other might feel [...]” (Zembylas et al., 2020, 1).

The intention of creating empathy in visitors can be implemented through the narratives of individuals. So, actors in narratives could be possible providers of such personal stories. The element of “world disruption” by Herman also focuses on the agency of characters in a narrative. Anna, a museum educator from a Jewish museum, stated in an interview that the best learning outcomes for visitors are achieved when showing “the individuals who are not just a mass. It’s not only a huge group of people because then we are losing that feeling of the closeness.” (Anna, 2020-09-18) Closeness creates emotions. Emma – a teacher interviewed about her experience in the exhibition – expected her students to get “a closer feeling about the people. The things that they’re not normally getting in the normal history education, so the emotional part of it.” (Emma, 2020-09-14) She also clearly makes a connection between closeness to individuals and evoking feelings about the Holocaust. The main actors of the tour guide’s narrative are the Nazis, with whom the visitors certainly should not empathize to create an understanding of the Holocaust, and the Polish professor. He was the collector of those objects, but he does not transport a feeling of “what it’s like”. There are no possibilities of connecting with the Holocaust victims through his story. The actual prisoners stay anonymous in the museum educator’s narrative. She did not mention names or personal details when talking about the objects connected to prisoners.

The museum director, too, emphasized in an interview the importance of the personal level and relatable points in the exhibition narrative. At the same time, the guide had no relatable individuals presented in the exhibition. This will be further analysed in the following chapter. Changing her voice and pretending to speak as the prisoners could be seen as an attempt to create this closeness. This is described as a way of collapsing the distance between narrative characters and visitors in Jewish studies scholar Irit Dekel’s analysis of tour guide’s quoting techniques. The authenticity of the exhibition and its narrative can be given through quotes and stories when objects cannot be used (Dekel, 2018, 83&86). Nevertheless, an imitation of prisoners that might have never said the words the tour guide uses, is not an authentic way of creating this closeness. As the chapter on the survival narrative will show, if the visitors would have connected with the actual actors of the exhibition narrative, the emotions would not only be horror, sadness, and anger. The visitors connected more with the actors of the horror

narrative given by the museum educator. Therefore, they felt the relatable feelings of what it was like to experience the horror caused by the Nazis – connecting it to the fourth element of narrative by Herman. Further analysis and discussion on different views on creating empathy through identification, for instance, will follow in a later chapter.

What I referred to as a ‘guided tour’ is, in reality, a non-interactive “monologic lecture” which should be avoided when trying to keep the attention of visitors (cf. Best, 2012, 36). The restrictions due to COVID-19 and the narrowness of the exhibition layout were given as an excuse. The “duration and pace” (Abbott, 2008, 120) of the narrative was approximately half an hour. The lengthiness of the talk was criticized both by teachers and students in the focus group interview. Museum educators from other museums agreed on the importance of activity. Visitor’s engagement with the topic is depended on how much you let them engage with the exhibition. Felix, a student, admitted in an interview, that “it's very tiring to listen because you're quite excited from the beginning and then they just talk a lot and you kind of get bored about the subject” (Felix, 2020-09-20). After the talk, the visitors had five to seven minutes in the exhibition to look and reflect on the objects by themselves. This is not enough time to see the whole exhibition, to connect with objects of individuals emotionally, and to compare the educator’s narrative with the exhibition’s narrative and the own values of visitors (cf. Goldie, 2003, 61). Rosa, another museum educator from this museum, stated that they want the visitors “to think and make reflections by themselves” (Rosa, 2020-10-06). That is why the museum provides a workshop after the guided tour. From observations, it became clear that the reflective workshop focusing on general concepts of humanity, bravery, human rights, and the worth of a human being, had no clear connection to the exhibition. The intended reflectiveness is therefore not dedicated to the narratives of the tour guide, the exhibition, and the artefacts.

By focusing on the horror of the Holocaust happenings and empathy with prisoners the museum educator’s narrative points toward the commonly used mantra of “we must not let the past be repeated” (Simon, 2006, 189) or “never again” as I will refer to it in this thesis. This could be seen as the intention behind the intention of showing the horror and emphasizing with the victims. Another educator from this museum, Rosa, saw Holocaust education as teaching a lesson for today. “I think it's very important because there are still thoughts about anti-semitism. So, it's growing in some students' heads. I think it's very important to learn about what's really happened to make them reflect. Yeah. So, we don't do it again” (Rosa, 2020-10-06). Simon sees the significance of the Holocaust reduced to the warning of “never again” which “has resulted in a symptomatic repetition in which the imperative to remember is acted out in the anxious replay of images and narratives justified as a necessary caution and

preventive reiteration given the demonstrable evils of racism and intolerance” (Simon, 2006, 189). Connecting the horrible happenings of the Holocaust to the present by repeating the narrative of horror over and over again for visitors can be seen as a way of meaning-making and giving it relevance for today. Without claiming that “never again” is a “wrong” or “improper” intention behind a Holocaust narrative, the imperative of “never again”, transferred through narratives of horror, in today’s Holocaust education will be further discussed in a later chapter.

The museum educator’s narrative located in the framing narrative of Holocaust and Holocaust education was all in all more focused on the horror aspects. Thereby, she might have influenced the feelings of visitors. Simultaneously, visitors enter the exhibition with pre-knowledge and experiences from other Holocaust sites or books and movies. The dominance of this narrative was intended to create empathy in visitors. The fieldwork showed that for my informants, closeness and empathy with prisoners in these horrible conditions of Genocide could mainly be achieved through the stories of individuals. This could not be provided since the exhibition is not based on survivors’ individual fates. The monologic lecture and the little time and space of visitors in the exhibition, additionally prevent emotional connection with the fates and reflection on the narratives.

4.1.2 Horror Narrative in Exhibition Design and Objects – Artefacts in Jewellery Boxes or Coffins?

The narrative of the exhibition and its artefacts differs partly from the narrative given by the tour guide. Before entering the room, there is introductory information on four big posters in the lobby. Visitors get informed about the Polish professor, the camp, and the arrival of prisoners in Sweden. Two pictures create a contrast between the camp life and the arrival of prisoners. The first picture shows miserable-looking prisoners in the camp, whereas the other one shows people hugging happily in front of the white buses. It could be a subliminal emphasis on the hero narrative of Sweden as analysed in the chapter on the survival narrative. Based on this introduction, the visitor expects the story world of this narrative (cf. Herman, 2009, 20) alternating between the camp world and the world of arriving prisoners. The basic element of world disruption by Herman is – due to the framing narrative of the Holocaust – also part of this narrative.

Figure 1 shows that when entering the exhibition, the first impression is given by a big wooden fence with a barbed wire on top, like in the concentration camp. It divides the small room into two parts. Albert describes a similar setting in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum that is “set[ting] the tone for the exhibition narrative” (Albert, 2013, 52).

Hansen-Glucklich interprets this as evoking “a sense of the sacred” often felt at Holocaust sites. The visitor becomes a witness beyond mere observation (Hansen-Glucklich, 2014, 11). Here, the fourth element of narratives giving the feeling of “what it’s like” is not only told by a tour guide but is supposed to be perceived by visitors to some extent. In my first observation of the exhibition, this first impression given by the fence leads to an oppressive feeling for me. This was what the exhibition’s designer, Pontus, intended the visitor to feel: “When the audience is coming to this room, I would like to have them a sort of feeling [...] like this was the concentration camp they came to. And they should have that feeling in their body.” (Pontus, 2021-03-17) Ahmed agrees that we feel an atmosphere when entering a room, but visitors arrive from a specific angle (Ahmed, 2010, 41). The basic elements of narratives by Herman sees the narrative situated in a context. I suggest adding that visitors bring a context in the form of previous experiences or knowledge to their perception of the narrative. A certain familiarity to the feeling I knew from visits to other Holocaust sites like Auschwitz, for instance, made me expect a rather horrible narrative like in the tour.



Fig. 1 Fence in the middle of the exhibition – A wooden fence with barbed wire divides the room. A picture of female former prisoners arriving in Sweden are printed on a glass pane. Yet, it is unclear who those women are, individually, and what connection they have to the artefacts in the exhibi-

The objects brought by survivors of the camp are divided into different categories. To make the representation logical and understandable for visitors in a short time, the selection and organization of displayed objects are necessary. This leads to a detachment from the owner and their natural context (cf. Pearce, 1994, 10). Herewith, the prisoners are anonymized in the narrative. It gives less opportunity to empathize with the prisoners on a personal level (cf. Hansen-Glucklich, 2014, 100). The first two categories are dehumanization and the camp. They are placed at the very beginning of the exhibition and follow the narrative of horror expected from the first impression by seeing the fence. A poster shows the dehumanizing triangles used to categorize prisoners. Prisoners' clothes and drawings of horrible situations give impressions of the camp life, emphasized by quotes like:

When we came to the barrack, we had to take off all our clothes and fold them. Then we had to go to another barrack and there we were forced to our knees. We were shaved all over. Then to the next barrack. Prisoner clothes on. After an hour, we looked like everybody else at the camp: no dignity, humiliated, ridiculed. (Alice, Quote from exhibition)

Yet, approximately 80 percent of the objects are put into other, more positive-sounding categories. Treasures, religious objects, food for the soul, memorabilia, gifts, etc., are categories that are more connected to the narrative of surviving analysed in the following chapter. In an interview with Birgitta, one of the creators of this exhibition, I wanted to know how she decided for those categories and not others. The exhibition's quotes are not from the testimonies by the Polish professor but collected in interviews with former prisoners and survivors of this camp when the exhibition was created. Birgitta informed me that she did not create those categories “They just came naturally [...]. Because in my discussions with the women they were just there, they popped up.” (Birgitta, 2021-03-02) The underlying narrative of this exhibition is based on those interviews. The horror did not seem to be the main feeling underlying the narrative of survivors. They also created 80 percent of this narrative, pointing towards another narrative.

According to Hansen-Glucklich, artefacts can only have an aura and be meaningful if they are presented, experienced, and perceived by visitors (Hansen-Glucklich, 2014, 120). Most of the objects are placed in drawers that need to be actively drawn out to show the content. Both exhibition designer Pontus and one of the curators Birgitta told me that it was a smart solution for the limited space of the room. Additionally, some objects cannot be exposed to light constantly. In my fieldwork diary, I noted down that those drawers reminded me of

coffins. This metaphorical image is a very personal perception since none of the informants mentioned anything like this. Yet, for me, it emphasized the narrative of horror. At the same time, it is contradictory to the actual meaning of the objects given to the collection by survivors. For me, it did not support a narrative of surviving. Additionally, the absence of the objects in the speech by the tour guide and the narrow room limit the space for opening and seeing the drawers. Ahmed puts forward that emotions like happiness are given through proximity to objects (Ahmed, 2008, 11). Ethnologist Jon Thor Pétursson describes this proximity in his study as emotional intimacy between customers and food in a store (Pétursson, 2018, 587). I suggest that positive emotions generally – like the feeling of hope connected to survival – need this closeness or intimacy with the objects. There is limited possibility for proximity to the objects for visitors. The rather hopeful objects – as suggested in a following chapter – can become hopeless, even meaningless objects or horror items because of the dominating horror narrative, just as happy objects become unhappy sometimes (Ahmed, 2010, 44-45).

Grouped objects, often juxtaposed with similar artefacts, produce meaning. In this exhibition, they are not grouped the same way as objects in the museum of the concentration camp in Auschwitz, for instance. Memorial and Museum Auschwitz-Birkenau groups massive amounts of shoes or hair to emphasize the scale of the industrial murder. Here, objects are grouped because they belong to the same theme as they were given as a gift, for instance. They still appear as separate and completely different objects seemingly transferring individual stories. Hansen-Glucklich suggests that this individuality of isolated or elevated artefacts makes them sacred objects because they bear the traces of their owners who touched them (Hansen-Glucklich, 2014, 90 & Hansen-Glucklich, 2010, 222-223). In this exhibition, their individuality is not emphasized. A few objects are presented in glass boxes, though. Neither the tour guide gives further information about those separate objects nor can descriptive text be found. The exhibition designer decided against much text. A personal preference based on his experience as a stage designer for theatre makes him appreciate if objects stand for themselves. He uttered in an interview, “I like it to feel like theatre when going into this exhibition” (Pontus, 2021-03-17). There are no personal stories of individuals in direct connection to individual artefacts. They are treated as part of the theme or category. Furthermore, the division of the categories was unclear for me when I visited the exhibition first. Tiny stickers on the top drawer of each category are indicating the theme. Yet, some of them are starting to peel off as it is visible in figure 2. A bigger group of visitors might not notice the stickers if someone else has already opened the drawer. The intended meaning and underlying narrative of these categories are lost if the themes are not visible.



Fig. 2 Peeled off drawer labels – I needed to hold the sticker with my finger to be able to read the artifact theme “Avhumanisering” (Swedish for dehumanisation).

The risk of not having enough descriptive text in the exhibition and a tour guide mentioning the survival narrative but dwelling on the horror narrative can lead to interpretations differing from the intentions of the designer and curator (cf. Cruikshank, 1992, 5). Pontus, the exhibition designer, described his intentions of the exhibition design as follows: “I like to show them as a jewellery shop. If you went to see a beautiful necklace and beautiful things because they were so— things are so strong. And I wanted to show them as beautiful small things. Not boring things, but beautiful jewelleries” (Pontus, 2021-03-17). The drawers and few glass boxes with objects remind of the “‘boutique’ style” (Hansen-Glucklich, 2014, 88) of presenting Jewellery as figure 3 shows. He further explained in the interview that the feeling a visitor should get from the exhibition “should be something positive too and that was the small things you find in this concentration camp” (Pontus, 2021-03-17). So, with the way of presenting the objects, he intended to strengthen the treasurable meaning of the objects and their narrative not only about horror but about finding hope in this horror, as analysed later on. Gensburger describes from a Holocaust exhibition in Paris that “the intended effect of this remembrance was expected to come from the images and objects of the exhibition rather than from the narrative content” (Gensburger, 2019, 633). In this exhibition, the creators also saw the objects as self-explanatory telling the story of hope in the camp, not depending on much descriptive text or the narrative of a tour guide. Nevertheless, the presentation could evoke the image of coffins in me and become horror items or meaningless for visitors when there is no explanation and interaction.



Fig. 3 Artefacts in drawers – The picture shows the objects and quotes of survivors in the theme “Memorabilia”. When leaning over the drawer to see the objects closer and read the quotes I created a strong disturbing shadow.

As this group, or as this category, they appear as cultural evidence (cf. Hansen-Glucklich, 2014, 90). In the case of this exhibition, they become evidence for the happenings of the Holocaust and the experiences and survival of prisoners. The narrative comes to life. Visitors can relate to concrete examples, as one teacher put it, “otherwise it is just a horror story they can’t relate to” (Martin, 2020-09-21). In almost all interviews, informants talked about how the objects make the terrible happenings of the Holocaust appear more real. In one interview with a student, he emphasized that with this evidence, “you realize it has happened for real. You get bad anxiety when you think of it” (Felix, 2020-09-20). Even though the objects were created as a surviving strategy, connected to the feeling of hope as analysed later, they still are evidence for the atrocity of the Holocaust. Hans, the museum director, sees the main value of this exhibition in providing this evidence with those artefacts. Tom, a teacher, explained in an interview that they once had the nephew of a survivor at his school talking about the experiences of his uncle in the camp. “I mean he did a great job and I believe students loved it, too, but it isn’t the same as actually seeing the things. And we talked a lot about it afterwards when we were here [in this exhibition].” (Tom, 2020-09-24) He felt it was inspiring to listen to the nephew of a survivor. Yet, he does not classify it as authentic as the objects of this exhibition. Authenticity resulting in feelings of sadness is an expectation and motivation often found in dark tourism contexts (cf. Roberts, 2018, 619-620). The artefacts give the exhibition narrative the expected authenticity. The exhibition’s creator’s intention was to give this ‘real’

authentic Holocaust site experience through the design of this exhibition. And even though the proximity to the objects was missing for most visitors, some still felt they were transferring the horror narrative, probably supported by the horror-focused narrative of the tour guide. Again, the narrative of the exhibition and objects gave a sense of “what it’s like” as the basic element by Herman suggests.

Despite the missing individuals to identify and empathize with, some informants mentioned particular objects that have moved their feelings. Tom, an interviewed teacher, also gave insights from his perspective as a visitor, not only a teacher. He mentioned the bread recipes, written by survivors, he could not forget. Gensburger also describes how visitors, if they mentioned an object in the interviews, chose those connected to their contemporary daily life (Gensburger, 2019, 638). Everyday objects, like those recipes, and their “mundane nature” (Hansen-Glucklich, 2014, 126) resonate with most people and make the creation of empathy easier (cf. Crooke, 2019, 624-625). Tom uttered in awe: “I mean, you’re talking about the Holocaust. People are dying every day and people are sharing recipes” (Tom, 2020-09-24). For him, the recipes transfer both narratives: the horror of dying people during the Holocaust in contrast to the narrative of hope where prisoners are sharing mundane things such as recipes. He empathized with the humaneness in these terrible conditions. Yet, Lowenthal warns that even if proximity to artefacts is provided, it cannot deliver the same meaning as they once had when used as tools, for instance (Lowenthal, 1998, 114). Visitors are unable to ever fully understand and empathize with the meaning of the objects as survival tools from today’s perspectives.

Emma, another interviewed teacher, liked that the objects brought the history closer to her students than a school lesson could do so. Objects and their narratives are building bridges from the authentic site of this camp from where the survivors brought them to the artificial site in the museum (cf. Hansen-Glucklich, 2014, 127). In the analysis of the role of objects in the narrative of Bloody Sunday, Crooke also sees a bridge between the owner and the visitor provided by the object. This bridge is supposed to enable further connection with the story (Crooke, 2019, 626 & cf. Trofanenko, 2014, 27). As analysed earlier, this connection cannot always be established, though, is intended by the museum and the exhibition’s creators. Pearce states that objects as signs of the past bear “an ‘eternal’ relationship to the receding past, and it is this that we experience as the power of ‘the actual object’” (Pearce, 1994, 25). One informant described the objects as an anchor in the past. Arnold-de Simine also describes them as material anchors (Arnold-de Simine, 2013, 10). Yet, the site and objects of the museum are not only artificial bridges or anchors. The narrative of this exhibition is embedded in the

narrative of the town where it is located. It is the actual place where survivors arrived in Sweden. As the following chapter shows, most of the objects do not bridge a horror narrative but rather a hopeful one. Only the artefacts from the first two categories, like prisoners' uniforms, can be seen as an obvious connection to the horror narrative. Crooke claims that clothes have a strong personal link because of their closeness to the skin. The way a worn item shapes over time to fit the person makes them unique (Crooke, 2019, 620). Millions of prisoners wore those uniforms. It does not make a uniform appear as a unique item preventing identification with the horror narrative.

The background of the horror narrative connected to the objects can be found in the “[...] conditions under which they were collected as well as the conditions under which they were produced” (Cruikshank, 1992, 6). In a loose interpretation of Herman's basic elements of narratives, this intertwines with the situatedness of a narrative. Not only the occasion of telling those narratives needs to be considered. In the case of the exhibition's objects, the creation of the objects situates the narrative and gives it partly this horrible meaning. As the term ‘artefacts’ implies, they were made by skill or art (Pearce, 1994, 10-11) but under the conditions of a concentration camp, always opposed to the risk to be punished or killed when caught in the creation and hiding of those objects. It further emphasizes the horror narrative. These conditions were mainly presented to visitors, whereas their meaning as hopeful objects moves into the background.

As earlier mentioned, the creators of the exhibition intended the objects to stand for themselves without lengthy textual descriptions. This raises the question if and how narratives can tell a story on their own or if they are just actors in another narrative. The objects are mentioned shortly in the tour guide's narrative. There, they point towards the prisoners as actors, as their belongings. Both museum educators and the creators of this exhibition assume that the objects tell their own narrative and therefore, do not need much further explanation. Pontus, the designer, later stressed that the exhibition is not only to be perceived as a jewelry shop, as above-mentioned, but also it should stimulate further reflection on the meaning of the objects and their owners. He acknowledges the value of additional information given by tour guides but at the same time

[...] we also thought so that the things should tell the story. So, from the things you can have the story. And as a visitor, you can see something and then you can get your own ideas. [...] If you [the visitor] see these very, very simple things, I think you can start your own imagination what it is. Yeah, I think so. I hope so. [...] Because the things

are so strong in a way. [...] So, when you see these small things, maybe you can see the man, woman, or child behind it, who made this. (Pontus, 2021-03-17)

He cannot say with certainty if the ‘strongness’ he sees in those objects is enough to start the imagination in visitors that would make a narrative about individuals play in their mind. Emma, the teacher who visited the exhibition with the students interviewed in a focus group setting, disagreed. She wished for more guidance around the objects, so the students could make sense of them, instead of just sending them into the exhibition for five minutes. The questionnaires from the students pointed to the same wish. They wanted more background stories about the artefacts. Just giving facts and leaving the visitor alone with the interpretation of the narrative, as Handler warns not to do (Handler, 1994, 677), is not the museum’s intention. But they seem to see the object’s narrative as self-acting. It might be a way of making up for the missing individual faces and stories in the exhibition. The museum still wants visitors to create empathy, indicated by the wish of Pontus that people could imagine the person behind the object. The visitors wish for more guidance to understand the objects beyond a narrative of horror.

Another museum educator who guides visitors at Holocaust sites pointed out that in his opinion, it depends on the object. With some artefacts “you don’t really need a tour guide to tell you this is sad, right?” (David, 2021-02-18), he asked rhetorically. According to Pearce, objects can work as signs for a whole, as the jacket in her example stands for the events of Waterloo (Pearce, 1994, 23). The striped uniforms in the exhibition are signs of the Holocaust. Hansen-Glucklich speaks of the aura of artefacts. So, objects might not tell a narrative by themselves, but they have a certain aura surrounding them, felt by the visitor. But even this aura only emerges from “concrete conditions of presentation and spectatorship” (Hansen-Glucklich, 2014, 120). Just as happiness does not reside in objects, as stated by Ahmed (Ahmed, 2010, 44), I suggest that the horror and its supportive narrative does not reside in the objects of this exhibition but needs to be interpreted as horrible by tour guide and visitors (cf. Herman, 2009, 8). The objects pointing towards the horror narrative at the beginning of the exhibition do not need a further introduction like the uniforms. Based on pre-knowledge most visitors are familiar with the narrative surrounding those objects and already enter with a pre-shaped interpretation and expectation. Ahmed also sees these expectations when we arrive at objects. How we wish to be affected by an object is how it will affect us (Ahmed, 2010, 28-29). The interpretation and pre-shaped expectations of those objects as horrible affect visitors’ feelings towards the whole exhibition and support the horror narrative. The unique survival narrative and aura

of the objects in the other categories, suggested in the following chapter, would have needed more support by the tour guide’s narrative to enable this interpretation for visitors.

In summary, the exhibition’s design and its objects analysed in the context of the horror narrative provided the tone and props for the narrative. Situated between camp life and arriving prisoners, the atmosphere given by the fence in the middle of the exhibition aimed to put visitors into the position of being in a real camp. This bridging between the actual campsite and the museum room meets the visitors’ expectation of authenticity. At the same time, the narrative of this exhibition is also embedded in the actual history of the town. The displayed objects are categorized in themes, detached from owners and their individual fates. The intention of creating empathy in visitors is challenged through this anonymization of victims. Still, some visitors were moved by particular artefacts. But they were empathizing more with the humaneness in times of the Holocaust than with the horror items like uniforms. The narrowness of the exhibition, the objects being in drawers, and the limit of time in the exhibition prevented visitors to create proximity to the objects rather connected to a hopeful narrative. Tiny, partly peeled-off stickers and a lack of descriptions in the exhibition further lead to the domination of the horror narrative. The intention of showing them as jewels of hope in the horrible camp mainly failed with the informants interviewed for this study. Additionally, the conditions under which those objects were produced also strengthen the narrative of horror. The creators of the exhibition intended the objects to be storytellers by themselves so visitors could connect with them. Yet, visitors seemed to be uncertain about their possible meanings or were not able to assign a meaning without further guidance unless they based their interpretations on previously acquired knowledge. The analysis here points toward the finding that objects do not tell a horror narrative by themselves, but they need to be interpreted that way by tour guides and visitors.

4.2 Narrative of Survival and Hope

In the same structure as the previous chapter, this one focuses on the survival and hope perspective of the narratives of the guided tour and the exhibition design and objects. Yet, this chapter is not isolated from the previous one as it draws many connections and comparisons between the narrative elements, functions, and intentions. Visitors’ voices supplement the survival and hope focus assigned to the objects of this exhibition.

4.2.1 *Hope Narrative in Guided Tour – “Positivity Even in Some Very Dark Places”*

The narrative of survival and hope is not as common in Holocaust museums and exhibitions. In Gensburger’s study about an exhibition in Paris, his informants all claimed that the common narratives surrounding the Holocaust were not new for them (Gensburger, 2019, 637). A teacher interviewed for this project described it as followed:

When I think about the Holocaust, the main thoughts go to the crematorium and the gas chambers, you know everything. This is more– I found it has more a human touch, more of being able to at least partially understand what it was like to be there and to survive. (Tom, 2020-09-24)

The exhibition analysed here provides a perspective on the Holocaust that is rather special. Generally, a narrative of survival – the exhibition title already holds the word surviving – can be perceived as more positive. There is also a connection with its opposite: dying. If the threat of death for the prisoners was not existing, surviving would not be special. Their will to survive in the terrible conditions of camp life must have included feelings of hope to keep on living. In Ahmed’s concept of happiness, you can find this feeling even when it is missing (Ahmed, 2010, 204). In the survival narrative, prisoners find hope even if it is missing in the connected horror narrative about the camp. The narrative of this exhibition shows the ways and strategies of prisoners to survive, despite the horror, with help of the displayed objects.

The guided tour only touched upon the survival narrative, always basing it on the horror narrative. The hopeful character of the objects could not always be noticed by visitors. Goldie claims that a “good” narrative reader, or, in this case, watcher or listener, responds in a narratively appropriate way (Goldie, 2003, 64). Connecting it to the earlier analysed expectations and pre-knowledge of visitors, decades of horror-focused Holocaust education might have impacted the way museum visitors react in terms of ethical appropriateness. Karolina, former museum educator from a Polish Jewish museum, described similar experiences with visitors.

Often people have this expectation that when we’re talking about war, talking about these tragic stories, we need to be so sad. We need to sit now and cry. And so, if someone is not doing that, sometimes, that person can have this feeling like ‘I don’t behave as I should. Maybe it’s inappropriate’. (Karolina, 2020-09-25)

Intaking the horror narrative presented by the tour guide could cause the least resistance in visitors compared to seemingly controversial hope feelings (cf. Arnold-de Simine, 2013, 2 & 8). Ahmed states that it can lead to a feeling of alienation if we turn towards feelings – in her case happiness – that feel inappropriate. Hans, the museum director, saw a danger of

relativizing the Holocaust and its teachings when Holocaust education just focuses on “teach[ing] students that you have to be nice to each other” (Hans, 2020-09-17). This fear is what LaCapra defines as numbing to avoid deeper emotional reflecting of the horror resulting in no possibility of creating empathy (LaCapra, 2001, 40). The museum staff generally gave the impression in interviews that a too big focus on hope cannot transfer their intentions of ‘never again’ strongly enough and impact the students persistently. This will be further discussed in the chapter on the intention of ‘never again’.

The basic elements of narratives by Herman do not apply as clearly with this narrative as with the horror narrative. The hope is entangled in the narrative of the horror and cannot be separated easily. As described above, the need for survival is based on the existing horrible conditions. So, this narrative is also situated in the framing narrative of the Holocaust. The events are sequenced through the division into categories, though not structured into a time-course. The narrative has no clear beginning or end. The element of world disruption can, in this case, be seen as the root of the narrative (cf. Herman, 2009, 9). Simultaneously, the survival narrative, mainly represented in the objects, is based on survivors’ testimonies. As English and American studies scholar Anna C. Hunter describes it, this testimony-based narrative is the metanarrative of the Holocaust in many cases. The only way we can access the Holocaust narrative is through the memories of survivors. It shows, again, the selective character of narratives (Hunter, 2019, 20). Hence, the survival narrative is at the same time rooted in the Holocaust narrative and represents the metanarrative of the exhibition.

Earlier, I have sufficiently pointed out the reasons why the survival narrative is not as present in the guided tour as the horror narrative. A few teachers expressed worries that their students would get too depressed with the topic when they learned about it in class. They appreciated the focus of the exhibition and wanted this narrative to be more accessible to their students. Visitors were aware of the entanglement of both narratives. In Emma’s view, it was relevant for young visitors today to learn about the surviving showing hope and “positivity even in some very dark places” (Emma, 2020-10-13). One of the objects mentioned by the tour guide from the categories pointing towards a hopeful narrative was a gift given for the name’s day of a prisoner. David, a tour guide working in Poland, is “always very moved by these really small acts of kindness, that in normal life don’t really mean very much, but in the circumstances of the Holocaust, are like the difference between life and death” (David, 2021-02-18). He was rather talking about acts of help. Yet, the tour guide mentions those objects to explain how visitors survived mentally, emphasizing that the Nazis aimed to break the prisoners mentally. Hence, a gift created and handed over in those circumstances could also make a difference

between surviving and dying. Again, this narrative is connected to the narrative of horror where Nazis are one of the main actors. Still, in the hopeful narrative the survivors are – despite their anonymity – main actors as people with an agency giving each other presents.

Another part, where a less horror-focused narrative is told, is when the tour guide talks about the white buses bringing prisoners to Sweden. The Swedish historian Johan Östling describes that the patriotic hero narrative of Sweden’s role during the Second World War was in the forefront until the 1980s. Since then, the Holocaust and its traumatic experiences became the starting point and center of the new universalistic narrative (Östling, 2008, 201-202). I am not suggesting that this exhibition wallows in the hero narrative. On the contrary, the dominance of the horror narrative supports the universalistic narrative. Simultaneously, the hero narrative is the only perspective this exhibition gives on Sweden’s role during the Holocaust. It might lead to a relieved sigh in visitors thinking that at least Swedes had nothing to do with the atrocities of the Holocaust and evoke hope that this could therefore definitely not happen again here because it seemingly never happened here. Yet, it is only one part of the complex, “culture-specific” (Hansen-Glucklich, 2014, 10) narratives from the Swedish perspective. The Jewish Museum in Stockholm highlights the contrary site, too. Anna, a museum educator from this museum stressed that

Sweden hasn’t always been this humanitarian state with wanting to help refugees. It’s quite the opposite when you look at the first years of the war. And even with [...] saving the danish Jews in 1943, it’s still a very small amount of refugees that were rescued in time. (Anna, 2020-09-18)

Sweden’s role is not highlighted from different sites in this exhibition and tour guide narrative. The hero narrative is even strengthened by emphasizing the horror narrative from the German side. As a narrative of heritage – this will be further explained in a later chapter –, it somewhat claims superiority (Lowenthal, 1998, 128) in contrast to the German actors in the narrative. Yet, it includes the narrative of hope. Sweden’s role will be further analysed in the chapters on the intentions of the narratives.

Overall, this unusual survival narrative that evokes hope in visitors cannot be understood separately from the horror narrative. It is rooted in the atrocities of the Holocaust but also based on the testimonies of the survivors, interviewed for this exhibition, making it into a metanarrative. The guided tour is focused on the horror narrative. Its impact on the visitors’ feelings is perceived as stronger by the museum. Visitors, on the other hand, saw the survival narrative’s strength in finding hope in horrible places. Sweden’s culture-specific hero

narrative can also evoke hope in a future-oriented form, where an event like the Holocaust will never happen here. Yet, the horror narrative focused on the enemy supports the hero role of Sweden that needs to be critically questioned.

4.2.2 Hope Narrative in Exhibition Design and Objects – Hopeful Objects

In an earlier chapter, I defined approximately 80 percent of the artefacts in this exhibition as hopeful objects. As a tool for prisoners to survive and as a reminder of better times, they transfer a hopeful feeling. Elements of the narrative surrounding them have been partly pointed out in previous chapters since they are part of both horror and survival narrative. I found out that the artefacts are simultaneously evidence of the Holocaust crimes and prisoners’ will and hope to survive. The latter narrative will be analysed deeper in the following analysis.

‘Chunking’ in categories connected to the narrative of surviving the themes help “to make sense of things characters are doing” (Herman, 2009, 7- 8). As mentioned, the categories naturally came up in interviews with former prisoners, according to Birgitta. Based on this, the survivors must have already formed those themes to make sense of their surviving strategies. The category of food for the soul, for instance, features objects like maps of Germany, notebooks with self-written poetry, and a Latin textbook written from memory. The following quote from the exhibition exemplifies how poems helped prisoners to survive mentally.

A lot of poetry was written in the camp. In general, a lot was written. Poems from school were written, recipes, poems on the current situation. To write was to communicate. When you wrote down something you thought that someone else would have an interest in, you felt like you had a mission. It helped when hopelessness felt most and you were about to give up. As soon as you got a piece of paper, which was almost always miraculously available, you wrote. We had pens because we were allowed to send letters once a month. (Apolonia, Quote from exhibition)

Here, the strategy for survival mentally was to find a mission and a way of communicating and processing the experiences from the camp by being creative. Some themes exist in one object simultaneously. Scissors that were put in the category of treasures could at the same time be with the utilities. The themes sequence the narratives of many people into one, beginning with the objects showing the misery in the camps and peaking and ending with objects leading to the survival and eventual arrival in Sweden.

Earlier mentioned conditions of collecting are called “conditions of arrival” (Ahmed, 2010, 25) by Ahmed. Because of the survival of prisoners, the objects arrived in Sweden. Hope is often based on an unwanted situation or circumstances. Then, we hope for a better

situation. The happy objects described by Ahmed fill a gap between the lack of happiness and its arrival (Ahmed, 2010, 32). I suggest that hope fills the gap between dying (the absence of hope) and survival (the fulfillment of hope). The objects are not a manifestation of hope but hope pointers in the narrative of survival like Ahmed’s happiness pointers (Ahmed, 2010, 26). In times of horror, the prisoners looked for hope in objects to receive emotional and mental support. Gifts for each other and objects from the life before the camp point towards better times of the past and future. Birgitta, who interviewed former prisoners for this exhibition, talked about how these gifts, for instance, helped the victims to keep a sense of individual identity beyond being a prisoner. “So, she said: when somebody gives me a gift for my name day, I suddenly become a person who was a human being, again, I was not just a number I was somebody”, (Birgitta, 2021-03-02) Birgitta quoted. Visitors were moved by this narrative and meaning of the objects and wished they had more time to reflect on them. A student from the focus group put his feelings into words and said, “it showed their thoughts and the things you don’t often hear about. I liked that it showed how they survived mentally and supported each other. This was much more gripping and left a mark” (Focus Group, 2020-10-08). So, even though most students from this group were left with a feeling of horror and sadness, a few realized the narrative of these objects.

The creators of this exhibition intended to transport the message today of finding hope also in dark moments by showing these objects as jewels in the camp. The designer stated that “it’s not only what’s happened during the Second World War that was terrible. You find terrible things today, too. So, you need to show people hopeful things in these terrible camps like that” (Pontus, 2021-03-17). Connections and analogies to today came up in almost all interviews, especially in the connection to preventing it from happening again today through Holocaust education. The differing opinions of interviewees on the intention of “never again” will be further discussed in a later chapter. An understanding of “what it’s like” (Herman, 2009, 21) through the narrative of those objects created in the struggle for survival can neither be fully achieved nor one to one compared to our own situation. As passed on “living memory” the objects still only transfer fragments of the actual feelings – connected to both hope and horror – the prisoners experienced (Simon, 2006, 195).

Ahmed’s happy objects promise happiness, starting the imagination of good things following those objects (Ahmed, 2010, 30); the hopeful objects promise hope. Here, I suggest that the objects were not only hope-pointers for prisoners but still seem to point towards hope today and the future in the form of the hope and promise of “never again”. Ahmed’s happy objects are passed on to those who should experience the feeling of happiness (Ahmed,

2010, 33). With the objects and our interpretation of them in this exhibition, survivors can pass the learnings from the Holocaust and the hope they put into those objects onto visitors today. Yet, we cannot know if this ever was the intention of the survivors and the artefacts might “achieve a new significance, one that could have been imagined in the owner’s lifetime” (Crooke, 2019, 625). They take on significance when the visitor “carries out his realization” (Pearce, 1994, 26) as stated by Pearce. This realization depends on the experiences of the visitor and how the content of the object affects one (Pearce, 1994, 26). Hence, the hope narrative does not stick to them it must be interpreted and assigned. But they become “sticky signs” as Ahmed describes it. We feel as if it was their inherent truth to tell the story of hope or horror – or both at the same time–, but they become sticky by constant repetition of the narrative (Ahmed, 2014, 91 & cf. Rodéhn, 2018, 4). Since there was not much repetition of the hopeful narrative, it was less sticky for visitors.

In the reflections on writing history – the narrative here can also be interpreted as a written history – by ethnologist Lars-Eric Jönsson this process of writing history gives not only an understanding of the past but also of the present and a possible desired future (Jönsson, 2013, 113). In this narrative surrounding the objects, hope is a connection between the past (the conditions of horror where the need for hope arose, the present (the continued belief in and promise of this hope), and the future (the possible fulfillment of hope). This finding of the connection in the hope-pointing objects was also important for the client when improving the guided tour and workshop. Ahmed defines hope as a feeling that is in the present. It is also oriented “toward an object that is not yet present” (Ahmed, 2010, 181). In the prisoners’ narrative, hope existed in the present of camp life. The object where hope was directed towards was survival. Today, the hope is directed toward the object of it never happening again in the future and by that keeping the past alive. So, the objects combine and bridge the metanarrative of survivors’ hope with the hope and learnings visitors are intended (by the exhibition creators) to get for their own future. In Ahmed’s reflection on happiness, she sees hope as a happiness “that paradoxically allows us to be happy with unhappiness” (Ahmed, 2010, 181). Hence, it gave me the idea to describe the objects here as hopeful objects. They allowed feelings of happiness in the unhappy/horrible situation of the camp and therefore combine both narratives.

Also, the happy narrative can become real for some visitors – as analysed in the horror narrative – through those objects. For Martin, a teacher, the most important part for realizing the struggle for survival was real is

when these objects come alive. You see this doll, you see this spoon, you see this small deck of cards or whatever it is, and when somebody can tell them what this meant for the person sitting in this camp, how this was their little ray of light in the complete darkness, for example, if you can get that story into them. Everyone that hears these stories [...] never forgets that part. (Martin, 2020-09-21)

The aliveness makes the happenings real and rememberable. Coming back to the metaphor of objects seen as jewels by the exhibition creators, this does not necessarily contribute to making the hopeful narrative of objects and the person behind them come alive. Again, individual stories would support seeing the objects as evidence of the realness of those survival strategies. Sturken argues that objects become stand-ins for those who died in the attacks of 9/11 (cf. Sturken, 2016, 19) In this exhibition, the dead are not directly part of the narrative, though most of the survivors must be dead by now. Yet, the deceased could be in the back of the head when the struggle of survival is meant to avoid following their fate. But the concept of seeing the objects as stand-ins and not actors might be a more accurate explanation of their role in the narrative. In many interviews, visitors uttered the wish to hear more about the person behind the objects, which strengthens their role as stand-ins, not actors with agency.

Summarily, the survival narrative, mainly themed by the survivors’ survival strategies, is particularly found in the analysis of the exhibitions’ artefacts. The objects were hope pointers for survivors but also pointing towards hope in difficult situations today. Further, I suggested that they also could evoke hope for the future when considering the intention of the exhibition creators to teach the lesson of “never again”. Hence, the objects and their hopeful narrative connect past, present, and future. It is unclear if the survivors intended this interpretation of hope. It needs to be assigned and made sticky on the objects by museum educators’ repetitions and visitors’ reflections. A few interviewed visitors who took time to reflect on the survival narrative were touched. Yet, the story can never fully transfer how it was like to feel horror and hope in the camps. Hopeful objects originating from this miserable situation in the camps can be understood as stand-ins in the narrative for the individuals whose fates are anonymized in the exhibition.

4.3 Mixed Emotions & Contradictory Narratives? – A Need for Critical Reflections

A narrative of horror compared to a hopeful/surviving one seems to be contradictory. As analysed earlier, hope arose through horror intertwining both narratives. Samuel, a Jewish guide from Poland, talked about these contradictions of his tour in the interview. His family story

both shows the horror of the Holocaust and how people could help each other and save lives. "A story is not black and white, you know. There are parallel things" (Samuel, 2021-02-18), he emphasized. One narrative of an exhibition would not be a whole true narrative of the Holocaust. "Museum visitors should never lose sight of the fact that all narratives surround, compliment, and contradict each other, none of them being the definite account of history." (Albert, 2013, 49) The chance of the contradictions in this exhibition's narratives lies in their possibility to provoke more critical thinking about the representation of the Holocaust (cf. Simon, 2006, 189) than a one-sided horror narrative, for instance. Karolina, a former museum educator from a Jewish Museum in Poland, stressed that the Holocaust is a more and more distant event. By provoking critical thought as an ongoing process, the memory can be kept alive. The museum educator's role in this could be to guide in different directions, also emotionally and emphasizing the contradictions (cf. Cruikshank, 1992, 7).

There is not one right narrative. The project at this museum showed that the narrative could even be adapted to the needs and interests of visitors. Connecting to existing interests could increase the information that is remembered for a long time after a visit. In this case, the narrative adaption was especially interesting for teachers and school classes. Recognizing differences between school classes' needs and curriculum requirements by clear communication with teachers before a guided tour is key to improving the museum experience for students (cf. Best, 2012, 40). In the course of improvement suggestions to the client, I invented the so-called reflection cards inspired by the idea of a teacher who wanted more interaction with the object. Different questions about the objects are asked on these cards. They require students to actively search for the artifact and reflect on the answer. The questions point both towards a narrative of survival and hope and a narrative of horror. It cannot be expected that the students reflect on a narrative of hope within five minutes in the exhibition as it was previously handled (cf. Endacott, 2010, 12). But they can fill this narrative with their reflections. The cards also allow individualization of the museum visit. If a class comes in connection to their religious education, for example, the questions could ask for reflections on the religious objects and their narrative. A clear relevance given by this could motivate students to be more active in the exhibition (cf. Kelly & Fitzgerald, 2011, 80).

Reflections with the cards on those opposite narratives enable the experience of different narratives with individual emotional responses. Ahmed states that being in a group does not presuppose everyone is directing their feelings in the same way (Ahmed, 2010, 43). Not all students experienced only feelings of horror. Simultaneously, Ahmed's view on negative feelings allows them to be felt. They are not simply "a feeling that should be overcome"

(Ahmed, 2010, 217). Rather, they hold a pedagogical lesson. Students’ emotional reactions – as analysed above – were possibly influenced by the horror focus of the tour guide. But I do not suggest eliminating these feelings and only focus on the survival narrative to send the students home with a feeling of hope. Failler warns that “consolatory hope” is a way of smoothing over painful pasts to replace the “bad affect” with good feelings (Failler, 2015, 235-236). Various angles on different narratives could open up a possibility of different feelings, not only the negative ones being appropriate in connection to the Holocaust. All feelings might contain a pedagogical lesson if discussed and reflected upon.

Karolina, the museum educator from a Jewish museum, emphasizes that she tried to be open to any kind of reaction. I remember preparing a whole workshop – in this museum where I met Karolina – about appropriate behaviors and feelings when visiting Auschwitz. A big part was discussing different reactions. For instance, why there was a trend of people posting planking pictures on the train rails in Auschwitz on social media platforms. Failler discusses the concern of having expectations that museums should “get it right” with managing to close the gap between negative and positive feelings. Visitors and society will have differing opinions on this (Failler, 2015, 230). I am not suggesting the museum should force both ends of the feeling spectrum onto their visitors. Ahmed even proposes that feelings cannot be measured or separated into good and bad ones. It can be a confusing ambivalence (Ahmed, 2010, 6 & 10). Addressing ambivalent reactions and possibilities of connecting with the narratives emotionally, for instance, with those reflection cards or an open discussion, could encourage visitors to reflect critically.

The students wanted more interaction with the artefacts and background information about the individuals. Taking time with a specific personal object – as suggested by the reflection cards – like the amber necklace of a survivor, might bring students closer to prisoners’ fate and allows for as much emotional connection as is felt to be “healthy” for oneself. By answering various questions of cards, students could be confronted with the narrative of hope and horror and their entanglements. The last two reflection cards I created address visitors’ emotions connected to the objects. One asks about what object was most touching for them leaving room for any kind of feeling that appears. The exhibition would be a “safe” space to even explore the emotions, gaining insights and engaging with the past, also concerning today’s feelings (cf. Smith & Campbell, 2016, 445). The other one emphasizes the hopeful character of the narrative of surviving particularly by asking which object was most hopeful and why. These cards are so far just a suggestion. It has not been tested yet. For visitors, who do not book

a workshop or even a guided tour, the narratives might not become clear due to the minimal amount of text. This would need further research.

As analysed earlier, the objects are not telling these narratives by themselves. The exhibition design, museum educator, and visitors “interpret their multidimensional meanings” (Hansen-Glucklich, 2014, 122 & cf. Failler, 2015, 233). Simon defines words, images, and materials remaining from past events of violence as terrible gifts. As an inheritance, the terrible gift demands to not be indifferent, to start questioning, and to reconsider the conventions of our lives today and in the future. Public history cannot have one common meaning and understanding. Terrible gifts are of help when re-seeing and rethinking historical events by provoking critical thinking on their representations today (Simon, 2006, 188-189 & 196). Failler adds to the concept of terrible gifts that “feelings of horror or depression need not be disavowed or smoothed over but are seen, instead, as integral to appreciating the gravity of historical traumas and violent pasts for our ability to imagine change” (Failler, 2015, 237). Viewing the artefacts of this exhibition as terrible gifts, they must be interpreted and represented under different narratives to start a reflection process, also in connection to our lives today. A later chapter will further discuss connections to the present. Simultaneously, showing separate hope and horror narratives as the true representation is not much better than a unilateral focus. The exhibition that Simon introduces in his article begins with a premise that there is no full understanding, yet, of “how to face the realities of a genocidal fascism in a way that [...] a hopeful articulation of the past and future that bears possibilities for social and self- transformation [is possible]” (Simon, 2006, 189). Openly and publicly discussing these challenges of Holocaust representations and narratives in an exhibition could provoke the most versatile view on the past events and avoid generalizations (cf. Albert, 2013, 56). Hansen-Glucklich reflects on the Jewish Museum in Berlin. Its fragmented style deconstructs the belief of a “comprehensive Holocaust narrative” (Hansen-Glucklich, 2010, 210). In the case of this exhibition, it could mean to show the entanglement of narratives, never claiming to present a full picture of one or several narratives. Additionally, by including different views on Sweden’s role during the second world war, the hero narrative could be critically questioned.

The intentions of the narratives have been mentioned at different places throughout the analysis. Herman quotes Sternberg (Herman, 2009, 14) to explain that the situated element of narratives also includes that one form can have several functions in a range of contexts, but also various forms can have the same function. Hereby, he wants to outline how different texts can have narrative function in various contexts. The analysis so far has identified the intended functions or intentions of the narratives in this exhibition. Different forms of the

presented narratives – in the exhibition, by the tour guide, and surrounding the artefacts – showed similar functions or intentions. The intention to empathize with the victims could be found both in horror and hope narrative, wanted by museum educators and exhibition designers as well as teachers for their students. I will present empathy more as a means to an end. The intentions behind the intention of empathy are pointing towards the well-known theme of “never again” and how we can use the past for today and the future. The analysis of the different narratives and their elements found in the speech of the museum educator, the exhibition design, and its artefacts ends here. Now, the narratives’ intentions that were mentioned and discussed with interviewees will be deeper analysed theoretically and compared with different opinions in the following chapters.

4.4 Empathy, “Never Again”, & How to Use the Past – Intentions, Relevance, & “the Promise” of Holocaust Narratives

The intentions of the previously analysed narratives try to give the past relevance today and will be further discussed in the following chapters. It is helpful to mention a distinction between history and heritage here, as defined by Lowenthal. His concepts have been mentioned in earlier chapters. But in the following analysis, it becomes clearer how heritage differs from history when it aims to use the past in today’s everyday life (Lowenthal, 1998, 139). According to Lowenthal, “[h]istory explores and explains pasts grown ever more opaque over time; heritage clarifies pasts so as to infuse them with present purposes” (Lowenthal, 1998, XV). The narratives of tour guide and exhibition might seem like history with the analysed basic elements by Herman (2009). For Lowenthal history also has selective character in terms of its ability to only show fragments of all events. It sequences the happenings by bringing chaos into order. History is therefore not the past but an interpretation of it. The element of narratives that Herman calls “what it’s like” to live in this story world (Herman, 2009, 9), ties in with history’s character of not simply presenting events of the past but feelings and thoughts about it in retrospect (Lowenthal, 1998, 112-115). But the intentions behind those narratives are what un-masks them from history to being heritage, partly masked as history in the terms of Lowenthal (Lowenthal, 1998, 121 & 124). I suggest classifying them as heritage because they are not told to explore and explain the past only but to charge it with relevance for the present (Lowenthal, 1998, 142). The following analysis of the intentions will further support my suggestion.

4.4.1 *Evoking Empathy through Identification & Narratives*

As the analysis of different narratives in the exhibition showed, creating empathy with prisoners/survivors was one of the main intentions. Arnold-de Simine describes empathy as seen as a virtue in museal contexts. It is perceived to create reactions to representations of genocide “in an ethically responsible way” (Arnold-de Simine, 2013, 45-46). Samuel, a tour guide from Cracow, saw the strength of empathy in its ability to make visitors remember what they learned for a longer time and create further interest. He defined it as a good tour if it “doesn’t start and end in a museum but it’s something that stays in the person’s mind” (Samuel, 2021-02-18).

Emotional responses and connections with the narratives and individuals’ fates were desired by museum educators, exhibition designer and creators, and teachers for their students. Some informants perceived putting visitors into the shoes of victims as the most effective way to create empathy by experiencing the trauma from their own perspective. It could be interpreted as a way of making the ‘what it’s like’ narrative element by Herman into a real-life experience. When I asked a staff member of the closest Jewish community how a museum can engage young visitors for the best learning experience, he summarized his opinion as follows:

Get people informed, get them involved and engaged in the story, and let them experience and you can do that in different ways. Tell the story, let them study themselves, make them reflect on the story, ‘how would you react if you were in the situation like this’, using workshops and also to use their creative abilities, to retell the stories to dramatize them, use media. [...] Make it relevant, put them in the person’s shoes as much as it is possible. I think that’s very important. (Emil, 2020-09-24)

He follows the assumption that the closer the experience to the reality of camp life gets, the better the learning outcome. In Lowenthal’s definition, heritage makes the past come alive. Active engagement (of visitors) and even attempting to relive the past makes the difference between heritage and history (Lowenthal, 1998, 124-125 & 142-143). Being involved should create a lasting memory from which visitors will start to act differently (cf. Hamber, 2012, 271). The analysed exhibition tries to put visitors at least in the place with the exhibition design where visitors are supposed to feel like entering the camp. “A sense of physically being in place” (Smith & Campbell, 2016, 446) can trigger empathy. Yet, neither the exhibition nor the museum educator tried to make the visitors into prisoners for the time of their visit. Other Holocaust museums or exhibitions, like the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, take it further by giving identification cards to visitors. A person who lived during the Holocaust is represented on this card with a picture, name, place, and date of birth. Following the fate of

this person during their stay, visitors could psychologically identify with them (Handler, 1994, 675). Failler states that with this approach of role-playing or immersion like in the exhibition design, the traumatic experience is only imagined to be available (Failler, 2015, 235). This could lead to what LaCapra defines as “unchecked identification (LaCapra, 2001, 28). The focus of this study was not so much on how much empathy is felt by the visitors. It is not clear if they identified with the event and almost relived the trauma emotionally without distinction between oneself and the camp prisoners (cf. LaCapra, 2001, 21 & 28). A reflection of the intentions by the museum and its educators is still valuable to understand where there could be a risk of over-identification. Other studies, like Hunter’s, are convinced that an identification is impossible since there is “no basis in shared experience” (Hunter, 2019,16). Lowenthal adds to this argument by pointing out that even if told about first-hand experiences from the past it can mean something completely different to the listener than to the one who experienced it (Lowenthal, 1998, 113). Most visitors have, obviously, never experienced the Holocaust or any other genocide, so they cannot fully identify.

In Ahmed’s reflection on the promise of happiness the happy objects that point towards happiness create paths. And it seems that by following them we might arrive at happiness at some point (Ahmed, 2010, 160). This concept of paths towards a feeling or promise of a feeling could be transferred to the promise of empathy or identification with victims. What is wished by following the path of empathy? As earlier analysed, especially teachers, museum educators from this investigated exhibition, and the exhibition designer and creator saw in learning about the Holocaust the potential of spreading the wish that it should never happen again. So, the path of empathy and identification should lead to the fulfilment of “never again”. This intention will be further discussed in the following chapter.

The opinions on this ‘putting into shoes’ and identification approach differed tremendously among informants. Some pleaded to make the experience as authentic as possible, or to make visitors “[...] feel that this is also their story” (Karolina, 2020-09-25) by making connections between the exhibition narrative to the impact on today’s life, like the tour guide did with explaining the human rights development. Whereas others felt this approach was rather ridiculous. David, a tour guide from Poland, was critical of these “authentic” experiences. “[A]nd then you go home to your hotel room. You haven’t spent three years starving in the ghetto, you haven’t lost your whole family. It’s so... like what does it mean to try to experience that?” (David, 2021-02-23) Even when focusing on the horror narrative in an exhibition tour, the real experience cannot be re-lived. David suggests putting visitors into another mindset instead of the shoes of victims. A mindset of critical reflection, as I suggested earlier in the

connection with different narratives, also needs to be present when trying or being asked to empathize with the fates of Holocaust victims and survivors.

LaCapra suggests that for empathy visitors do not need to identify or relive the horrible experiences. He proposes empathetic unsettlement as a way to avoid over-identification, numbing strategies, or superficial learning about the Holocaust, also called passive empathy (cf. Zembylas, et al., 2020, 3; Failler, 2015, 235). Visitors can emotionally respond to trauma while they do not perceive it as their own experience. This is what Arnold-de Simone calls “self-other-differentiation” preventing a merge of self and other (Arnold-de Simone, 2013, 46). It allows relation to the past and separation simultaneously (cf. Simon, 2006, 188). Hence, putting visitors into the shoes of prisoners or survivors is not desirable when empathetically unsettled (Zembylas, et al., 2020, 3-4). The acceptance of never achieving full understanding avoids (self) victimization (LaCapra, 2001, 40-42). David also emphasized the importance of not victimizing prisoners in a narrative:

It’s hard to feel empathy if you see people just purely as victims with no agency of their own. Or it’s just like bad things happen to them. That’s sad. But then I think you can maybe feel empathy with them if you see the choices they had to make, or the horrible situations or put in and how they had to make decisions. (David, 2021-02-18)

This agency that David wishes to be strengthened in Holocaust education is also part of the concept of “historical empathy”. Here, the “context of time in which others have acted and the possible motives, beliefs, and emotions that guided their actions or decisions” needs to be considered (Zembylas et al., 2020, 1). The here analysed exhibition provides perspectives on this agency of prisoners by showing their survival strategies against the crimes where they decided to at least mentally survive the horrors of the Holocaust. This could be further emphasized also in the tour guide narrative, preventing victimization and still having the possibility for empathy. Including different angles on narratives – reflections on horror, hope, and other narratives surrounding the genocide – could be a way of encouraging visitors to create feelings of empathetic unsettlement. This concept of empathy is theoretically desirable. Yet, it is unclear if all visitors are aware of the risks of over-identification or superficial learning. The interviewed teachers did realize that they needed to engage their students emotionally in the topic to enhance the learning outcome. Further research would be needed to conclude if students would respond emotionally differently when encouraged to empathetic unsettlement through exhibition narratives. Zembylas et al. suggest a flexible, unpredictable, and creative way of including this kind of empathy in Holocaust education, beyond a fixed routine and method (Zembylas, 2020, 4).

It is uncertain how to apply this theoretical conception in practice other than avoiding the victimization of prisoners in the narrative.

The differentiation between oneself and the other, as suggested by empathetic unsettlement, implies someone else being involved in the feeling. Being empathic is always pointing to another entity. The earlier mentioned individual stories could provide this empathic connection between the visitor and one person who survived the camp life. The objects as stand-ins do not – as analysed above – tell their own narratives and do not inherit their own trauma. So, a projection of empathy towards the artefacts is unlikely. This exhibition is missing these individual stories mostly. The artefacts are very different and have been owned by individuals, but it is not presented who particularly made or brought this object to Sweden. A few quotes with names still do not show which personality was behind the narrative. How they individually went through the Holocaust, from the beginnings in the camp to their survival and arrival in Sweden, is blurry. Empathy with the collector of these artefacts – the only individual story that is told – would not be connected to the traumas of the Holocaust and miss the educational aims. One of the exhibition creators told me that it was never of question to show individuals. The objects were supposed to be in focus.

Even though the personal narratives are mostly missing, all informants agreed on their importance. The museum director also agreed that this personal level is the best way to teach about the Holocaust. As earlier analysed, the objects seem to transfer this level. For some visitors, it was touching, but for many, this connection and the individual narratives were not clear or non-existent. The students from the focus group interview, for instance, wished they could have received more background stories about the survivors. It is a common narrative of presenting individuals in exhibitions (cf. Williams, 2013, 222). I do not claim it to be a groundbreaking finding of this thesis. But just as the event becomes more and more distant, it seems to be even more relevant to have persons to connect with. Not to identify with them or to fully understand but to have individual experiences that are perceived as more realizable than high numbers of victims, or small numbers of survivors. Tom, an interviewed teacher, did not “think anybody can really grasp 6 million people died. How much is 6 million people. That’s half of Sweden. I don’t think you can grasp that number but if you can make the feel for one family, [...] I think it goes a long way” (Tom, 2020-09-24). The exhibition does not necessarily only have the macro perspective, though the tour guide’s narrative was more focused on that. But the objects are not individuals who have lived through the Holocaust.

Samuel, a tour guide from Krakow, supported this view and added that we need to see actual faces.

Once we think about a topic and we have a face or in our mind or a name, better even face, then we can feel more related, right? Because then you can hear something horrible in the news, okay, horrible, but you will move on to your daily things. But once you will see a person, then it will probably stick to your mind. And then it will make more impact on your thoughts. (Samuel, 2021-02-18)

The act of relating the narrative to the own life to create empathy was mentioned several times in the interviews. The mundane objects of this exhibition might be a starting point, where we can see connections to our own lives like giving each other gifts, for instance. Yet, as Samuel describes it, actual faces might have a stronger influence on visitors’ ability to remember the story. A face would also align with the empathetic unsettlement by LaCapra. We could see that this experience is not ours but of this person. If visitors are put into the shoes of prisoners, the risk of over-identification is higher than “meeting” an individual through a narrative.

As much as David, the tour guide, thought narratives of individuals are important, he also worried about sentimentalizing or exploiting these stories. The exploiting of or different ways of using narratives as visitors will be further discussed in a later chapter. Williams also warned that intimacy or closeness with individuals in exhibition narratives might be “allowing us to draw away from comprehending the terrible dimensions of mass killing” (Williams, 2013, 222). So, next to the risk of over-identifying with individual narratives, it could also point towards strategies of numbing, as LaCapra put it. By focusing on individuals, visitors would not need to deal with the scale of horror. Karolina, a former museum educator from Poland, agreed that narratives should not only remain on a personal level but also show the mechanisms behind the industrial killing during the Holocaust. Presenting both perspectives in an exhibition visit – macro and micro – would also enable the inclusion of different narratives like the horror or survival narrative on a personal and general scale.

Overall, empathy as an intention of the exhibitions’ narratives is supposed to help visitors remember the learnings and to fulfill and promise the hopes of “never again”. Putting visitors into the shoes of prisoners was proposed as an effective way by informants to create empathy. Informants opinions on this approach were split. One side pleaded for authentic experiences, whereas the other thought it was not possible to achieve this level of authenticity to relive the experiences. The analysed exhibition rather puts into the place of the camp with the exhibition design. Scholars warn that this could lead to over-identification. But this exhibition does not present individual fates. Those personal stories could be beneficial when creating empathy since it is always directed towards another person. All informants agreed that learning from individual stories is important in Holocaust education. Hereby, the agency, motives, and

decision-making of prisoners need to be included to avoid victimization and create empathy beyond feelings of sadness. Connecting with objects that might point towards individuals but are not replacing them can be challenging. Showing even faces would also prevent over-identification but create a “meeting” between visitor and prisoner where their experiences are acknowledged as theirs. Simultaneously, only focusing on individual fates could exclude learning about the massive scale of the killing. Both levels – individual and general – could include various narratives with different emotions. Empathy that creates an emotional connection without interchanging the own with the prisoners’ experience – called empathetic unsettlement – sounds promising. Yet, the applicability in practice remains unclear. It would need further research if showing faces to visitors would create the above-mentioned effect of separating experiences. Transparency of this intention of empathy given by the museum towards visitors could inspire discussions and a critical mindset on forms of empathy in the museum context.

4.4.2 Intention of “Never again” – Using Analogies & Lessons from the Past in Present and Future

The previous chapters highlighted “never again”, the mantra that hopes for a prevention of the Holocaust happening again, as an underlying intention of the narratives in this exhibition. As part of the earlier described heritage aims defined by Lowenthal – using the past for today’s purposes – “never again” is a way of sense making today to reduce the anxiety of recurrence (cf. Armour, 2010, 442). Also, in all interviews “never again” was a reoccurring theme when asking about the relevance of Holocaust education. It roots in the believe that a genocide on the scale of the Holocaust can happen again. Tom, one of the interviewed teachers, was concerned that many of his students believe it is impossible to happen again today. “I mean we know so much about it, we read about it, so yeah probably. But people weren’t stupid in Germany in the 30s. [...] I don’t want them to be naive and think that you’re enlightened today, that it can’t happen again” (Tom, 2020-09-24). As the previous analysis showed and as political science scholar Bickford and genocide studies scholar Sodaro summarize it, education, experience, and empathy are viewed as the means to lead to prevention of another genocide like the Holocaust. Education about the past should change visitors in the present to act in ways that prevents atrocities in the future. Experience, like putting visitors into the place, is perceived as the most emotionally impactful way to strengthen the educational effect. And empathy growing from this education and experiencing is supposed to evoke identification that helps to “internalize the imperative of never again” (Bickford & Sodaro, 2010, 77-81). The risks of the latter have been analysed before.

In the case of this exhibition located in Sweden, the question arises what “never again” could mean for Holocaust education in a country like Sweden, where the Holocaust seemingly did not happen. The Second World War did not take place in Sweden. The country claimed to be neutral but cooperated with Germany by selling iron and letting troops pass, for instance. Anna called this “Sweden’s attempt to keep Germany happy, [...] which now, in retrospect, doesn’t look very good, collaborating with the Nazis. But that was also a survivor’s strategy of course for Sweden as a country. It’s tricky” (Anna, 2020-09-18). On the other hand, as the exhibition shows, the white buses saved survivors and refugees from Denmark were welcomed. So, historically, the country has connections to the past to create their own meanings of the heritage for today. They create their own, partly self-conscious, narratives (cf. Levy, 2010, 19). Additionally, the closest city to the exhibition is struggling with growing antisemitism as the Jewish Community confirmed. Sweden’s educational system and society puts high expectations on Holocaust education “as a cure against racism, prejudice and intolerance” (Österberg, 2020, 163). The approach of “never again” is a common way in Swedish Holocaust education engaging students emotionally by emphasizing the atrocities and horrors of the crimes by the Nazis (Österberg, 2020, 167-168).

Mainly growing from the hope narrative based on the past, I suggest that “never again” is mostly future-oriented. If it was only focused on the present, we could call it “not happening again now”. Ahmed analyses the feeling of happiness being in the present. In the present moment, it can turn our feelings of hope towards anxiety of losing it. There are both possibilities. The promise of “never again” might be fulfilled or it might not be fulfilled (Ahmed, 2010, 161 & 183). When “never again” is present as “not happening again now” we are also anxious about losing the peace of the present. Holocaust narratives intend “never again” as a wish towards the future because in the present we have either failed to maintain it or are anxious of losing it. Samuel, the tour guide from Krakow, at first saw never again as a conclusion of what we can learn from the Holocaust but then, after reflecting on it, he corrected himself: “This is not the conclusion. I would take it back. I would say it’s the what we wish for the future. It will never happen again” (Samuel, 2021-02-18). According to Ahmed, a promise turns the future into “something that can be declared in advance of its arrival” (Ahmed, 2010, 29). As Samuel described it, we wish to promise, and thereby declare, a peaceful future. Just as happiness is about following and not about finding (Ahmed, 2010, 32), the hope of “never again” is about following it and not about ever arriving if we focus on the future. The future is never in the now.

Bickford and Sodaro question if this imperative of prevention, put on the visitors through narratives, can work out in reality (Bickford & Sodaro, 2010, 82). I would add to this question if it can work out in the reality of the present. Ahmed mentions Durkheim who describes the attachment to the future as a rushing and hastening, avoiding the experience of the present or past (Ahmed, 2010, 160). When interviewing David, the tour guide, he was one of few being critical towards the phrase. In his opinion it

[...]is sort of ridiculous, because it's, like, we say never again, never again, never again. Well, you know, Bill Clinton grew up hearing never again, did he intervene in the Rwandan genocide? [...] All of the American leaders and German leaders, in the last half century, who have not intervened in genocides elsewhere, all grew up hearing the phrase, never again. So, what does it actually mean? When we're like, objectively, letting these things happen again? Um, yeah, I shy away. I don't use the phrase very much. (David, 2021-02-18)

He outlines the ignorance of the present when “it is happening again”. The Holocaust is not the last genocide that happened. It happened in former Yugoslavia, in Rwanda, in Darfur. The killing of Christians, Yazidis, and Shea Muslims by IS in Syria and Iraq was just recently, in 2016, declared as a genocide (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2021). Ahmed quotes Adam Smith and his way of placing happiness. It should not lie in the hope to win “but in playing the game well” (Ahmed, 2010, 207-208). Placing our hope of “never again” in the future will never have an end point where it could be said “we have achieved ‘never again’”. It needs to be “played” in the present to have an impact. If “never again” is mainly future-oriented and based on learning about the past through past narratives, we miss out on reflecting about quite present happenings of atrocities and crimes against humanity. The workshop following the guided tour of this exhibition addresses general questions about human rights but fails to include current issues and feeds, therefore, also the future-oriented and past-based way of “never again”, excluding the present.

Most of the informants, also the museum staff of this exhibition, seem to assume that visitors can contribute to the prevention by implementing “never again” on an individual level. Anna, museum educator from the Jewish Museum in Stockholm, doubted the impact of individual actions. “Of course, we don't want it to happen again. We don't have that power, unfortunately, to— It's not thanks to us that it won't happen again. But it's of course important to educate people” (Anna, 2020-09-18). Hamber states that it is possible for individuals to create social change in conflicts to some degree. Simultaneously, the complexity of social dynamics should not be masked by seeing solutions only as the matter of individuals. Choices in

situations of extreme violence are limited (Hamber, 2012, 273). It is unclear how much impact a visit at this exhibition has on visitors in the long-term, if the intention of “never again” is transmitted and actively used in everyday life. After all, the museums intentions can only go as far as educating about the Holocaust and human rights. The responsibility of preventing further genocides is not in the ability of an exhibition like this (cf. Hamber, 2012, 273).

Analogies between events and circumstances of the past and the present seem like a way of applying “never again” to the now. “The Holocaust defined how we experience Europe today” (Christer, 2020-09-30), as Christer, an interviewed university professor, put it. The exhibition and tour guide narratives did not make those analogies. Yet, they reoccurred as a theme of Holocaust education and the use and intentions of narratives in many interviews. Analysing their function and risks will show if including them into exhibition narratives could be valuable for Holocaust education. They are a further sign of past used as heritage “stressing the likeness of past and present” (Lowenthal, 1998, 139). If we can learn from the past and see “the warning signs along the way that led eventually to the Holocaust” (Samuel, 2021-02-18) early, as Samuel put it, we might prevent another genocide. Especially teachers mentioned connections to today’s politics and growing radical tendencies in society. At the same time, one to one analogies were seen as dangerous by many informants. Emil from the Jewish Community criticized that “teachers sometimes talk about the Holocaust and then suddenly they draw these Swedish politics of today in and talk about like the Swedish democrats and I think that’s really not serving. [...] We should be very careful about that” (Emil, 2020-09-24). Particularly, politicizing Holocaust education was rejected by all Jewish informants – two tour guides and one representative from the Jewish community – I interviewed. Anna from the Jewish Museum in Stockholm also excludes any political comparisons from her guided tours and workshops. On the contrary, Hamber sees a necessity in engaging in today’s politics if “never again” is supposed to lead to social change. Otherwise, our concept of the future remains in an idealized imagination when it lacks political context in reality (Hamber, 2012, 273).

One interesting phenomenon happened in a few interviews. While rejecting analogies and comparisons initially, some informants then did those comparisons themselves.

I don’t compare but as we had in the 90s, right, in Yugoslavia. There was the murder of Muslims, etc. So, of course, I don’t compare between the two horrible events, but it’s something that if we don’t pay attention, you know, it can happen in different scales. (Samuel, 2021-02-18)

Samuel ensured two times that he was not comparing, yet he drew parallels by emphasizing the warning signs that we should be aware of. David also saw analogies as dangerous and then compared Trump's way of undermining the media to events happening before the Holocaust. He then was aware of his contradiction. In his opinion, clear examples can be useful. So, parallels of general tendencies seem to be more accepted in Holocaust education than one to one analogies. He concluded “they oversimplify things, but sometimes, like, what are we to do with history if not connect it to the present?” (David, 2021-02-18) He suggested that humans can find solutions by studying history that can put the present into context. The usage of the past will be further analysed in the following chapters, but it points again towards the aim of heritage to make the past relevant in the present.

Analogies are a controversial way of transferring the intention of never again. This analysed exhibition narrative kept distance to this approach. Overall, they can serve a purpose of leading to a connection between past and present. Peacock and Roth describe it as a “two-way relation”. On the one side is the Holocaust, on the other familiar aspects from our current society. According to Peacock & Roth, only through a confrontation of these parallels we can gain insights and learn for today (Peacock & Roth, 2004, 11). For agreeing to this, it would need further research on the effects of analogies. But “never again” becomes more tangible if there are parallels to today that could function as warning signs of dangerous political tendencies, for example. When introduced in the context of an exhibition, they must be handled carefully and in a transparent manner towards the visitors. Analogies also have the risk of decontextualizing memories, making the Holocaust remembrance abstract and turning away from individual concrete experiences (cf. Levy, 2010, 23). Staying away from analogies and parallels in a narrative is the “safe” way to avoid oversimplified and abstract conclusions of the Holocaust's happenings.

As the analogies already imply, there are lessons visitors are supposed to learn from the narratives – both horror and hope narratives – and use in the present. The main lesson is, as analysed, based on the atrocities of the Holocaust and has the function of “never again”. According to Ahmed, the promise of happiness is “that happiness is what follows if we do this or that” (Ahmed, 2010, 14). With using the past in the present actively we keep on promising and hoping that it never happens again in the present and future. Otherwise, we might call it an unusable past if it cannot promise a prevention of another genocide (cf. Handler, 1994, 677). Many informants emphasized the necessity to learn from warning signs that can be observed and to be aware of them. Martin, an interviewed teacher, summarized his opinion as follows:

That’s something that we as human beings must take a lesson from and we must never ever forget this under any circumstances. That’s why I think we have to remember it, and we have to make sure that these mechanisms– if we take step one, we shouldn’t take step two. (Martin, 2020-09-21)

Hamber analyses the educational aims of conflict museums and also sees a tendency towards generalizable lessons that are intended for visitors to learn. He states that, “instead of simply being sites that might demonstrate the horrors of a particular atrocity [...] the hope is lessons can be drawn and applied to contemporary problems [...]” (Hamber, 2012, 271). If we use the past for today as heritage, we become more familiar with it, whereas history – exploring and explaining the past – keeps it in distance (Lowenthal, 1998, 139). This exhibition’s narrative intends visitors to take the lesson of “never again” as interviews with the staff and the analysis of the narrative showed. However, the exhibition or museum educator do not mention concrete ideas of applying these lessons and responding not only to the past but to visitors’ everyday life (cf. Handler, 1994, 677). I do not necessarily suggest that it is the task of the museum to do so. But the following paragraphs will show what it can lead to when visitors are left without reflections on lessons drawn from the Holocaust.

What it could mean to apply the learnings from the narratives was discussed with several informants. It can be an aim of heritage and exhibitions to educate or influence visitors using the past to create, shape, and transform an understanding of themselves (cf. Smith & Campbell, 2016, 454; Gutman et al., 2010, 2; Hamber, 2012, 271-272). Failler classifies it as vital to use remembrance for inspiring visitors to thought and action by connecting the past with present circumstances. For her, this is a hope one could take as a lesson from remembrance (Failler, 2015, 237), in the case of this exhibition, from the various narratives. Where an exploration of the past in terms of history would be for all, according to Lowenthal, heritage finds its use for oneself alone. Here, the use of the narratives as heritage is for some visitors found in self-improvement (Lowenthal, 1998, 128). For Marie, a teacher, preventing another genocide was not the main lesson. “Even if this is a huge atrocity among society or humanity. [...] It’s important to reflect on ‘how do I want to live my life?’ Even in small situations. ‘What do I believe is the right thing to do?’” (Marie, 2020-09-16). She wants to take the lessons on an individual level where visitors are encouraged to self-reflect in the present. This goes beyond learning about unchanged historical facts but leads to a recreation of the past in the present for our own purposes abolishing the view of a unidirectional temporality (Gutman, et al., 2010, 2). Drawing on LaCapra’s theory, there is a tendency to use and transvalue trauma as a “test of the self” (LaCapra, 2001, 23). In his theoretical concept it can lead to ecstasy and the sublime. I

would analyse this tendency of trauma as a “test of the self” not in the context of elation but as a way of using trauma for self-improvement. As much as some informants held the view that self-improvement can and should result from learning about the Holocaust through those narratives, others were strongly critical. David remembered a time he was at a Holocaust site – a mass grave of children – where students noted down actions they wanted to change in their life after visiting this site.

Like ‘respect your parents because these kids were murdered’. It’s like, are you kidding me? It just felt so disrespectful to the memory of the kids who were killed, to the memory of any of the victims. It’s like using this as a sort of cheap life coaching kind of thing. (David, 2021-02-23)

Using Holocaust education for behaving differently in everyday life situations that are completely out of the context of genocide, racism, and violence against human rights, is questionable. He would rather see actions like telling other people about the site after the visit and reflecting on what has been seen to challenge our perceptions of history. He further rhetorically asked, “Can’t we just, like, recall someone’s memory or respect someone’s death without it needing to like drive us to do something?” (David, 2021-02-23). The need of heritage and its narratives to lead to a usefulness of the past in the present can cover up the function of Holocaust sites and exhibitions to show and keep the memory of victims and survivors alive.

In summary, the intentions of Holocaust education and its narratives today are complex. Their aim of usefulness for the present, rather than the exploration and explanation of the past as history, unmask them as heritage. If “never again” remains future oriented, it bypasses the relevance for the present. There is no one right way of transferring the message of “never again”, drawing analogies, and using lessons for self-reflections while also let the sites and objects be a memory of the atrocity, struggles, and survival. The here analysed exhibition avoided analogies and parallels mostly. Though, Sweden was not directly involved in the Second World War and the Holocaust, it has connections both to the crimes of the Holocaust and the saving of refugees and prisoners. Drawing no connections between past and present questions the relevance of Holocaust education today. But making analogies between today’s political tendencies and the ones of the past can lead to oversimplifications and relativization of the atrocities. How much of an impact the narrative intentions had on visitors’ actions in their everyday life after leaving this studied exhibition is unclear and would need further research. Again, transparency of the intentions of an exhibition and their risks, as well as open

discussions with visitors are fundamental starting points for a present and future way of educating about the Holocaust.

4.4.3 Closure to the Narrative? – Glimpses on Future Ways of Telling the Narrative

This short chapter constitutes not a closure but rather an end to the analysis of these exhibition narratives and their intentions. There is no simple closure to the narratives of the Holocaust. One could think that there will be an end to the discourse surrounding the Holocaust and Holocaust education when the last survivor passes. This point will be reached soon. There will be an end of narratives that direct survivors can tell. Abbott suggests distinguishing between the two concepts of ending and closure. Closure is not mandatory for all narratives (Abbott, 2008, 62). Samuel, the tour guide from Krakow, saw closure as a contradiction to the aims of museums. “Once you have a closure with a topic in life, then I’m done with this topic, I’m moving on. So, this is in a way a contradiction to what museums or any other places try to achieve” (Samuel, 2021-02-18). And also, the previous analysis of “never again” as an intention and creating empathy in visitors would be meaningless if there already was or soon would be a closure. “Never again” has no clear endpoint; it always lies ahead of us in the future. As heritage, its constant connection to the present cannot find an end (Lowenthal, 1998, 126). Sweden just recently decided to build a new Holocaust Museum in Stockholm (Swedish Government, 2021). One of their first actions is to collect testimonies from the few remaining survivors. So, up until today, there is the realization of a lack of knowledge. Endless interpretations and narratives from all kinds of perspectives oppose closure (cf. Lothe et al., 2012, 10). Avoiding closure keeps the remembrance active and continuously reminds of the happenings of the Holocaust in the context of now, in contrast to “not-forgetting” perceived as more passive by informants.

The analysis of this exhibition’s and tour guide’s narrative also could only open up more perspectives and interpretations. The artefacts of this exhibition remain even after the last survivor passed and keep their role as stand-ins. Their “life histories [...] do not stop when they enter museum” (Cruikshank, 1992, 7). They can always be interpreted in new contexts from new perspectives of up-growing generations for whom the event becomes more and more distant. If the empathetic unsettlement by LaCapra would be the new way of learning about trauma – emotionally connecting while separating the own experience from those of the victims – the narratives could be continuously discussed also in the future without closure (LaCapra, 2001, 40-42). No-closure, so keeping the discourse about Holocaust narratives going, embraces different narratives that can be entangled, contradict, provoke, confront, and develop (cf.

Hunter, 2019, 23-24). The here analysed exhibition with its special survival focus provides various angles on such narratives.

As the Holocaust is becoming more and more distant for current and future young visitors and survivors soon cannot speak for themselves anymore, there need to be new ways of Holocaust education. Second and third generations of survivor children and grandchildren are stepping in to tell the stories of their parents and grandparents who survived. There are already exhibitions where visitors can “speak to” and “ask” survivors indirectly on a hologram-like screen. The survivors have recorded hours of testimonies and answers to common questions (cf. USC Shoah Foundation, 2020). With artificial intelligence, there can be an interaction between both entities, even if the survivor might have passed by now. One informant even mentioned attempts of combining these “holograms” insofar with AI that they can also recreate answers that have never been recorded. This will open up new questions on the ethics of dealing with testimonies. One interviewed tour guide offered COVID-19 adapted tours of Holocaust sites online. 2021, they are currently relevant since tourism is limited due to the restrictions. Here, the closeness to artefacts is given only digitally. Further research on digital proximity with Holocaust sites and their narratives and the impact on visitors’ emotions would be interesting. The designer of the analysed exhibition also saw a possibility in updating the content. He found it necessary to include connections to current genocides since the Holocaust moves to a further distance. This would need further investigation on how to connect it with the current narratives and make it relevant for a mainly young Swedish audience.

The development of Holocaust education is an ongoing process that neither seeks closure nor finds an end in the near future. Therefore, a thesis like this might not be groundbreaking after decades of research. But the findings of the latest narratives and intentions told in a Swedish Holocaust exhibition and the perceptions of visitors about those are relevant as a starting point to keep on developing applicable new ways of Holocaust education.

5 Conclusion & Applicability

To answer the question formulated in the introduction, about what and how narratives were told in the Holocaust exhibition and by a museum educator, the analysis showed a differentiation in their focus. The museum educator emphasized the horror intending to create empathy in visitors. Yet, empathy depends on the proximity to individuals. The exhibition displays objects detached from individual stories of survivors. The fence in the middle of the exhibition also supports the horror focus, giving the place a feeling of authenticity expected by visitors. The artefacts mainly represent survival strategies pointing towards a hopeful narrative. Intended as jewelry boxes, the drawers hide the artefacts and prevent a closeness, necessary to meet the intention of creating empathy in visitors, in the narrow exhibition. While a few visitors were touched by certain objects, connected to mundane everyday life situations, others wished for more guidance and background information to be able to assign meaning to the artefacts. Therefore, objects do not tell their own narrative; they need interpretation from tour guide and visitors. Even if visitors could create a connection with and interpretation of the objects, they could only be stand-ins in the narrative and hope-pointers but not transport the narrative of an individual's experience. The hope narrative was perceived as less dominant. The horror focus strengthened the hero role of Sweden in saving prisoners, excluding other, not so hero-like, actions of Sweden during the Holocaust.

I divided the analysis of the narratives into two because there were two tendencies. This is not the only way to analyse an exhibition and its narratives. They were not two distinct narratives. They were entangled and dependent. The hope arose from the horrible situation. Using those entanglements and contradictions of different perspectives on the narratives and pointing out the fact that there can never be a representation of a full picture of narratives, is a chance for Holocaust education to provoke more critical thinking about the challenges when representing Holocaust in a museum context. The presented reflection cards could be a starting point to make visitors engage with the narratives from a present perspective while questioning their meanings. Ambivalent emotional connections could also be reflected upon and discussed openly between visitors and the museum.

The question of what intentions and aims for the present were transported by those narratives was answered by highlighting two widely accepted and repeated intentions, empathy and “never again” and their implementation and anticipated use for visitors in the present. Empathy with the prisoners was identified as an underlying intention of the narratives, both from the horror and hope perspective, wanted by the museum to be evoked in visitors. Putting visitors into the place with the exhibition design could cause a risk of over-

identification. Yet, the exhibition missing the individual stories and faces makes empathizing with prisoners challenging. Both levels of narratives, the individual and the massive scale of industrial killing of humans, combined open up different perspectives and emotions towards the past. Ideally, the creation of empathy could be intended with narratives that allow an emotional connection without interchanging the experiences of victims with oneself and hereby avoiding a reliving of trauma. In praxis, the impact of empathy on visitors needs further research. The intention of empathy leads to the overall intention of preventing a recurrence of the Holocaust under the mantra of “never again”. To make use of the learnings “never again” needs to be focused on the present and not only remain future-oriented. Yet, drawing analogies and applying lessons in the present is complex. Politicizing parallels, for instance, can overshadow and relativize the memory of the atrocities of the Holocaust. Simultaneously, it is unclear how to apply “never again” in the praxis of the everyday life of individuals. The analysed exhibition avoids those connections mainly. No present usage questions the current relevance of Holocaust education beyond the function of remembrance. Exhibitions like this, in general, need to clarify their intentions transported by narratives for themselves. Their objective of Holocaust education needs to be transparent for visitors and contestable.

Narrative analysis for museum narratives proved to be insightful when analysing the content, representation, and (emotional) reaction of visitors in an exhibition. The narrative is what invites visitors to gain background information, interpretations, and reflections on the displayed. Especially, objects proved to be not storytellers, so in need of a surrounding narrative. This can be applied to any artifact-focused exhibition. Widening the narrative surrounding those objects to various perspectives – even if a specific focus, like prisoners, is central – while allowing open discussions gives visitors the opportunity for multidimensional, critical reflections. Furthermore, any museum can consider the level of empathy and connection visitors are supposed to feel. Surely, not all museums, not even all Holocaust exhibitions, need to show individual faces and their fates but it is a considerable way of creating a long-lasting memory of the learnings.

The newly planned Holocaust museum in Stockholm, for instance, needs to make decisions regarding the narratives of their exhibitions. They cannot show a full picture of the Holocaust in connection to Sweden. It will be interesting to see what objective and intentions of Holocaust education this museum might try to transfer to visitors. How will they try to make this drastic event of the past, slipping into further distance, relevant for the present? Will they stick to “traditional” ways of Holocaust education or might they use qualitative methods to include reasons of relevance for young visitors, for instance? I hope for an open concept,

allowing exhibitions and their narratives to change and be experienced from various perspectives, transparency about the selectiveness and incompleteness of narratives, clarity about their aims and intentions, workshops that invite for critical reflections, and discussions between the museum and the public.

Museums should not be self-contained institutions that present the past as heritage in fixed narratives. As places of open discussion and dialogue with the public, they could create real connections between past and present while keeping it a place of memory. Not only Holocaust exhibitions and their narratives but all that aim to have relevance and intentions for the present cannot stay the same for decades. Holocaust education and any heritage education need to develop in dialogue with up-growing generations as there is no foreseeable closure or end to the discourse. So, students might see in it more than another place to have a ham baguette picnic.

6 References

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6.2 Web Pages

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6.3 Interviews

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Karolina (2020-09-25). Interviewer Nadja Felten.
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Martin (2020-09-21). Interviewer Nadja Felten.
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Rosa (2020-10-06). Interviewer Nadja Felten.
Samuel (2021-02-18). Interviewer Nadja Felten.
Tom (2020-09-24). Interviewer Nadja Felten.

7 Footnotes

¹ The previous research chapter addresses the main scholars used and referred to in the analysis. Yet, the full extent of my literature research can be viewed in the reference list.

² The findings of the chapters and sub-chapters about the narrative of horror and the narrative of survival and hope are partly based on a previously written unpublished article (Felten, 2021). They were reconsidered in the context of a differing research aim and supplemented with further previous research literature and partly new theoretical conceptions.