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**Reviving Memory and Reinventing Selfhood  
through Architecture in W. G. SEBALD's *Austerlitz***

Dissertation Submitted to the Department of Letters and English Language in  
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**Literature and Civilisation**

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## **Declaration**

I hereby declare that this dissertation is my own work and that, it contains no materials previously published or written by another person and that it has not been submitted, in whole or in part, in any previous application for a degree except where stated otherwise by reference or acknowledgment

Mr. Wissam DAHMANI

Signature

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this modest work:

To my father, my mother, my brothers and sisters.

To my wife, for her encouragement and unlimited support.

To my dear son, Mohamed Abderrahmane.

To my dear daughter, Rana or Assal as she likes to be called.

In loving memory of my late classmates, Issam, Mohamed, and Abderrahim.

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## **ABSTRACT**

This research scrutinizes memory revival and selfhood reinvention through architecture in W.G. Sebald's *Austerlitz*. More specifically, it aims to shed light on the role of architecture in reviving the characters' memories and reconstructing Austerlitz's identity and how it might evoke emotions and feelings. It engages with Sebald's protagonist: Austerlitz in his struggle to find his origins. This study is significant in the sense it adds to existing body of literature on memory and identity new layers by providing new insights into the role of architecture in evoking memory and reinventing identity. This study, at another dimension, is important not merely for literature, but also to architecture as a tool of expressing social and cultural heritage. To achieve the research aim, the dissertation hinges upon a theoretical framework that is anchored in Gaston Bachelard's *Poetics of Space* and Pierre Nora's *Places of Memory*, entwined with psychological concepts of memory and identity, because space and place are two important architectural elements which have a strong relationship with memory and identity. The findings of this dissertation demonstrate that architecture has a great impact on characters in recalling past events, emotions, and feelings through the meaning and symbolism of architectural elements such as spaces, places of memory, building materials, and design style.

**Key words:** Memory, Identity, Architecture, Place, Space.

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# **GENERAL INTRODUCTION**

## General Introduction

Architecture and literature are some of the most important heritage tools which document and describe events. Sometimes, we discover the history, the traditions, the customs, the life style, the collective memory, and the identity of people through literature. Other times, Architecture can play these roles as either storytellers or characters in literary works. This amazing interplay between architecture and literature makes them serve each other in reviving memories and recalling past events.

Certainly, the World War Two is one of the most important events in human history. It is engraved in the minds of most of peoples and like many other societies in the world, the Jewish people are not the exception. For Jews, the war's memory is associated with the Holocaust. They use several tools, including literature and architecture, in order to make the Holocaust memory alive.

The Holocaust literature emerges to document and depict the suffering of Jews from Nazis during WWII. It portrays the persecution, the oppression, and the discrimination Jews were subjected to. Many writers, Jewish and non-Jewish, including the German writer, W.G. Sebald, tackle the theme of Holocaust in their works. They work on making people, especially Jews, aware of Nazis' crimes. W.G. Sebald's literary works are largely concerned with the themes of memory, loss of memory, and identity. Sebald's choice of writing about the Jewish people and their suffering during WWII stems from the troubled relationship with his father, a German soldier who fought in this war, in addition to his good relationship with Jewish Friends during his immigration. Moreover, Sebald tries to put the Holocaust in its European context as if he wants to say that all European countries are responsible for the Holocaust not only Germany. Sebald feels that it is his duty to write about the Jewish people and the Holocaust.

The memory of the holocaust appears in an artistic tone in Sebald's more widely read books: *Austerlitz*. It is a masterpiece where architecture is present, as a witness to the genocide,

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the torture, the forced labor, the exploitation, and the discrimination that Jews suffered, during the world war two, by Nazi Germany. Sebald tells the story of Jaques Austerlitz, a Jewish child, who is brought from Prague, before the holocaust, to England as part of Kindertransport where he is adopted by a Welsh minister and his wife. However, as soon as Austerlitz discovers that he is a Jewish child, he starts a journey looking for his origins in Europe. During his journey of study, Austerlitz, the architectural historian, meets the unnamed narrator, and he tells him his story expressing his suffering from the trauma of the Holocaust and the pain of unknown identity which has a negative impact on his life. He travels from one place to another visiting the places, where his parents spend last days of their lives, in search of his roots. Austerlitz's recovery of his memories is mostly combined with architecture of places and buildings rather than specific dates.

Being myself an architect fascinated with both architecture and literature, I soon realized that my reading to this poignantly beautiful novel gives me a unique window and feeds my passion to explore this domain through a scientific research. In addition, this amazing use of architecture by the author motivated me to delve deeper into this novel in order to explore how architecture expresses the messages the writer wants to communicate through this work of fiction. This motivation is fueled by my admiration for and love to both literature and architecture.

In this study, I will focus on the use of architecture in this novel, its relationship with memory and identity, and its role in evoking characters' feelings and emotions. It will also identify the symbolism of some architectural elements, buildings, places, and colors. The Presence of architecture in this literary work is my scope of study.

Regarding the background of this study, and in order to provide an accurate academic word, it is indispensable to underline questions that this research endeavors to answer. The central question is: in Sebald's *Austerlitz*, how does architecture contribute to memory revival

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and identity reinvention? This study also attempts to answer two sub-questions: how does architecture evoke emotions and feelings in Sebald's *Austerlitz*? How do spaces and places become symbols of the characters' memory and parts of their identities?

In addition, the aim of this study is to reveal the role of architecture in reviving memory and shaping identity in W. G. Sebald's *Austerlitz*. This study seeks to achieve a set of objectives such as understanding the suffering of Jewish people during the world war two, the Holocaust trauma and its impacts on Jews, the reasons which make Jewish people preserve their collective memory of the Holocaust, and why Jews stick on memory instead of history. Moreover, we enhance our comprehension of the role of architecture in evoking emotions and feelings, the meaning and the symbolism of some architectural elements, building materials and colors, the representation of buildings as characters in the novel, and the reasons that make writers describe buildings, places, and spaces with details. Hence, my research's readers will be familiar a little bit with architectural language.

Mostly, when we read literary works, we find that writers describe places, spaces, and buildings with the very details portraying them in wonderful images. This makes us feel as though it is the architects who write these texts. Focusing this research on W. G. Sebald's *Austerlitz* is significant in terms of exploring the impacts of architecture on our understanding of the deep meanings of the novel whether intentional or not. In addition, this study allows us to know the meaning and the symbolism of buildings, building materials, colors, spaces, and places, so we discover the power of architecture in evoking memories such as the Holocaust, feelings, and emotions. Moreover, through the application of Bachelard's *Poetics of Space* and Nora's *Places of Memory* theoretical frameworks, this study helps us to delve into the deepest meanings of this literary work linking concepts of memory, selfhood with architecture. Ergo, It illustrates

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the role of architecture in reviving the characters' memories, especially the main character, Austerlitz, in addition to the discovering of his identity.

Many studies have been conducted on W. G. Sebald's *Austerlitz* by researchers who have explored the themes of memory, identity, and the Holocaust trauma and its impact on individuals. But, despite the fact that *Austerlitz* is full with architecture and photographs, a few writers have talked about the relationship between architecture, memory, and identity.

In an online article titled " W. G. Sebald's Austerlitz: Architecture as a Bridge between the Lost Past and the Present " Handa (2018) focuses on architecture as a way to bring the past for the present. He states that buildings may commemorate events or individuals by being a monument, and they call back forgotten events by way of physical traces they carry. The writer mentions many buildings that remind Austerlitz of his past such as Liverpool Street Station. Moreover, the writer argues that the past is recalled by a person who experienced it through architecture. This study does not illustrate very well the relationship between architecture and memory and how architecture stirs memory and reinvents identity. It also focuses on the person who experienced the past not on who did not.

In another online article titled " Buildings, Time and Memory: W. G. Sebald's Austerlitz and the Revealing of a Lost Past", Kapelos concentrates on the building as an indicator of time. He describes the buildings in which Austerlitz imagines the past events. In addition, he mentioned some buildings that remind Austerlitz of his past considering them as protagonists. This study focused on the buildings in the novel without their relationship with memory or identity. Moreover, and as it is known, architecture is not only the building but also its surroundings, the built environment.

Accordingly, it seems that researchers tackled the effect of architecture on memory superficially, and they did not refer to the symbolism of architectural elements which contribute

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to identity reconstruction. They did not explain how architecture helps revive memory and restore identity. However, my research, with the application of Bachelard's *Poetics of Space* and Nora's *Places of Memory*, will focus deeply on the way architecture leads characters, in the novel, to recall their past, and mend Austerlitz's identity.

To conduct the analysis, the study will employ an interdisciplinary approach, *Poetics of Space* and *Places of Memory*. The use of the two theoretical frameworks provides the opportunity to delve deep into the novel and explain well how architecture stirs memory and shapes identity, because space and place are fundamental architectural elements, that's why these theoretical frameworks are suitable for this research. In addition, the *Places of Memory* theoretical framework is significant to demonstrate buildings that represent a collective memory. So, I will apply the suitable theoretical framework to the novel's text I want to analyze.

In terms of structure, the present study is divided along two main chapters. The first chapter is devoted to the Socio-Historical context and Theoretical background of the study. This chapter is divided into two sections, the first section deals with Socio-Historical context of the study. The socio-historical context highlights the life of Jewish people during and after WWII and their suffering from Nazis, the concept of identity and its meaning for Jews, the Holocaust Literature as a tool to make the Holocaust memory alive, and the relationship between Architecture, Place, and Space. It places W. G. Sebald's *Austerlitz* within its socio-historical context. In addition, it provides a clear idea about the Holocaust Literature. While the second section deals with the theoretical background which will discuss Bachelard's *Poetics of Space* and Nora's *Places of Memory* theoretical frameworks and its major principals.

The second chapter is devoted to the practical side of the study, where we shall analyze the novel of W. G. Sebald's *Austerlitz* from *Poetics of Space* and *Places of Memory* perspectives. It will shed light on how architecture revives memory and reinvents identity.

**CHAPTER ONE ; THE SOCIO-HISTORICAL  
CONTEXT AND THEORETICALFRAMEWORK**

# CHAPTER ONE: THE SOCIO-HISTORICAL CONTEXT AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

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## Introduction

Despite the fact that the Holocaust is a painful memory, the Jewish people work hard to keep it alive. They recall themselves of their suffering, during WWII, from oppression, persecution, and discrimination from Nazis. The Jews used many tools, including literature, to transmit this traumatic event across their generations.

W. G. Sebald's *Austerlitz* is one of many literary works which portray the Holocaust as one of the darkest stages of the Jewish history. It was published in 2001, was Sebald's final novel. It focuses on the suffering of Austerlitz, the protagonist, who becomes an architectural historian, from his unknown identity. He travels from one European country to another looking for his roots. When he meets the narrator, who is unnamed for readers, he tells him his story recalling his past. This novel portrays the Holocaust and its impacts on Jewish people in general and Austerlitz in particular.

Accordingly, this chapter endeavors to put this literary work in its context. It allows us take a glance at the relationship between the Holocaust memory, identity, and architecture. The first section of this chapter contains four parts. The first part delves into the life of Jewish people during and after WWII. The second part explains the concept of identity. Besides this, the third part is devoted to the Holocaust literature. Finally, the fourth part explains the relationship between architecture, place, and space. In addition, the second section, "Theoretical Background", is devoted to deal with the two theoretical frameworks Bachelard's *Poetics of Space* and Nora's *Places of Memory* to apply them on this novel's texts.

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## **I-The Holocaust, a Mark of Pain for Jewish People**

### **I-I The Jews During and after WWII**

Beyond any doubt that WWII was one of the most destructive, bloody, and the deadliest event in human history. Directly or indirectly, it almost affected devastatingly all people in the world. So the Jewish people are not an exception. They were scattered in different European countries which were invaded by Nazi Germany at that time such as Albania, Austria, Belarus, France, Germany, Croatia, and Czech Republic ....etc. They were subjected to all kinds of oppression at the hands of Nazis who had the ideology of anti-Semitism which is based on discrimination and persecution of Jewish people. Levine, Karen, et al. state:

The Nazis divided humans into racial categories defined by genetics, with “Aryans” (Germanic peoples) seen as a biologically superior “Master race”, destined to rule the world. The “inferior” races included the Slavs, Roma and Sinti, and Blacks. The Jews were placed at the bottom of this racial hierarchy. To ensure “racial purity”, Jews were forbidden to marry or have sexual relations with Germans. (9)

Nazis portrayed Jews as Germany’s chief enemy, and the primary cause of its economic and social problems. Nazis isolated Jews considering them dangerous by forcing them to move from their homes into ghettos and detention centers which were established by Nazis in order to imprison and murder their enemies. The life of Jews was very cruel during the WWII.

Consequently, Jews lived in bad conditions suffering from starvation and diseases. They were deprived of employment, healthcare, food, and education, and they were victims of medical experimentation.

For the Jews, the war was not-generally-a time when they experienced a positive sense of community. Their war was not a sacred but a cursed time. Jewish society during the war

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became unbelievably atomized, fragmented into individuals or individual families, who were concentrated on one, individual goal: to survive. Isolation, hunger and many other factors led to the shaping of a new quality of war. The Jews did not die for their native land, because it was not a good enough fatherland (even if they wanted it to be). And so what did they give their lives for? In fact, they did not give their lives: their lives were taken from them. (Paulson 27)

In this war, the Jews did not have a goal to achieve, or a land to defend, but they found themselves losing their lives for nothing. In other words, they did not choose to fight, but they were victims of destructive ideology, which was based on racial purification.

Moreover, more than six million Jews have been killed by Nazis in what is called the "Holocaust. All these difficult circumstances led the Jewish people to think seriously of leaving Europe for America and Canada, but the latter did not allow them to enter their lands. So, in one of rescue operations, called "kindertransport", Britain allowed unaccompanied Jewish children from Germany, Austria, and Czechoslovakia to enter into its lands. Most of these children have not seen their families again. The Holocaust was one of the darkest stages of the Jewish history.

The WWII came to an end on May 8, 1945, but the suffering of the Holocaust survivors continued physically and emotionally. They were starved, sick, homeless, and scattered over all Europe. They felt unsafe fearing of confronting another Holocaust in the future. In addition, they could neither go back to their former homes and looking for their relatives if they were alive or not, nor did they leave Europe to other countries because of the very strict procedures of immigration applied to Jewish people at that time. Moreover, the social relations were divided. For instance, children were separated from their parents, and was the same thing for husbands and their wives, so many kids lost their parents and hence their origins. Most of Jews were with

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false names, assumed identities, and they were obliged to change their traditions, beliefs, religion, and even their religion in order to survive. Therefore, the problem of identity was so hard and painful for them that the consequences of the Holocaust were very tough and traumatic for the Jewish generations.

### **I-II The Holocaust, Collective Memory, and the Jewish Identity**

The Holocaust had different impacts on Jewish Survivors after WWII. On one hand, most of child survivors, the only ones who remained alive from their entire extended families, did not know their families and their origins, that is why their identity was fragmented. Important to note, “ among victims of persecution who were unable to flee, there were those who continued to reject a Jewish identity until their death”(Blumenthal 50). On the other hand, their common suffering from persecution and starvation during the war became a collective memory which fostered the sense of belonging for Jews, and hence it provided them a shared “Jewish Identity”. It encouraged them to live together in order to avoid sad events like the Holocaust in the future. Life in a Jewish community filled a void and was the only identity available in the immediate aftermath of the war. (60)

Notwithstanding what has already been said, the Jews struggled to keep the Holocaust memory alive, and they consider that it is their duty towards survivors and victims. They remind themselves and all peoples in the world of cruelty, persecution, and oppression they were subjected to. They remember all the Nazis victims in general and the Jewish ones in particular, who resisted and stood against inhumanity and injustice of Nazis regime, and those who helped Jewish people during the war protecting, feeding, hiding, and clothing them despite the risk they might face. That is why, although the sad feelings and emotions evoked by the Holocaust memory, Jews remember it with pain and pride at the same time.

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The Holocaust trauma was transmitted across generations. The deep wounds of genocide are still existed as if the threats of fear death are pretty much alive. "The traumas of the past remain embedded in the psychic life of victims whose emotions, memories, behaviors, and thoughts are passed on to descendant generations" (Jacobs 1). The experiences of parents had a huge impact on their children because of the conscious or unconscious transfer of emotions, terrors, and horrors which contributed in the formation of descendant identity.

The transmission of trauma occurs with different ways. First, narratives which are a cultural production that brings information about life of society. Truly, the narrator, who speaks repeatedly about the past, conveys all what they experienced and witnessed trying to attract the attention of children and enhance their understanding of the Holocaust. These narratives were told in different events such as family gathering and trips to Holocaust memorials. "In the case of the Holocaust, descendant identity is therefore informed by the "metanarratives" (cultural frameworks) that surround the memory of the Holocaust in society and the social net-works of familial memory that preserve this history among survivors" (14-15). For Jews, the memory of the Holocaust is a defining element of identity. The metanarratives contribute in forming the collective, social, and cultural memory, while the familial memory makes the survivors' children more connected with their past. The descendant generations, at young ages, learn about the suffering of their ancestors from the harsh and horrible treatment from Nazis. Jacobs states

The stories that shape a descendant's understanding of a horrific past are often conveyed through imagery and detail that are both gripping and terrifying. In this respect, descendant generations, often at young ages, are given knowledge that lays bear the harshest and most cruel realities of war and genocide, creating both a fascination with the past and a sense of

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overwhelming emotion through which the descendant navigates his or her own identity and personhood".(Jacobs 19)

The Jews transmit to their children the images of dreadful past in order to make them aware of genocide and captivated with their history considering that their understanding of the Holocaust is part of their identity.

Second, ritual practices and family traditions played a big role in transferring the Holocaust trauma. They were an important area for exchanging emotions and feelings and therefore the transmitted trauma. Third, visiting the sites of terrors reminds visitors of Nazis persecution and oppression. Jewish people, in particular, visit these places collectively including different generations in order to remember what happened to their ancestors during the war. These sites are considered as historical landmarks and interactive spaces of social remembrance and recollection of traumatic narratives. (105)

The sites of memory play the role of the storyteller. They tell a history, evoke emotions, stir feelings, and ensure a connection and interaction between the visitors and their past. Consequently, these memorials are not inanimate, but they have meanings and souls. For instance, when the Jewish victims stand before them, they feel as though they are opening the door of the past to perceive how the ancestors lived the moments of happiness and sadness, peace and war, and strength and weakness. They feel also that they are very close to reality, and there is a big difference between listening to the story and standing at the scene where its events took place. And hence, visitors feel terror and horror as the same as survivors do.

With regard to Holocaust sites in particular, these spaces of national, group, and individual memory include a wide spectrum of memorial traces through which past events can be both interpreted and deeply felt. Intended to evoke strong emotional responses [...]these

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sites provide a social framework for interaction with atrocity artifacts as well as objects of memorial culture. With regard to the former, preserved death and concentration camps, for example, contain the buildings of incarceration and torture, atrocity photographs, remnants of the victims, and technologies of death (gas chambers and crematoria). Among the latter, the camps contain memorial books, gravestones, and shrines that commemorate death and loss. (Jacobs 106)

The Holocaust sites are not just buildings, but they should contain traces of the past, as a solid evidence of genocide. For instance, the visual connection between visitors and spaces of torture and imprisonment stirs painful and fearful feelings. These sites preserve the collective memory, transmit the Holocaust trauma from one generation to another, and reinforce the sense of identity. The Holocaust trauma is deeply rooted in the memory of Jewish people, and it is transmitted across generations through several tools and ways. Certainly, literature is one of the strongest tools of self-expression.

### **I-III Creative Recording of Pain from the Holocaust Womb: The Rise of Holocaust**

#### **Literature**

The institutions of literature, it goes without saying, plays a significant role in representing culture, language, and history of a given people. Given the fact that literature is a repository a society's ideologies and conflicts, it goes further than the frontiers of artistic values to bring the surface the community's suffering and struggles in such a way literature turns into an "is an invaluable resource for understanding and documenting history, offering perspectives and insights that official records and historical accounts may not always capture" ("Using literature as a lens"). It offers an original lens through which individuals can grasp how peoples lived,

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thought, and experienced the world in the past. In so doing, it enhances their perception and understanding of history beyond the mere happenings.

The Holocaust literature is concerned with Jewish minority. The Jews use literature as a powerful tool to preserve the Holocaust memory. In his online article, *The Concept of “places of Memory”* by Pierre Nora: Practices of Commemoration, Mussatayeva and Yermagambetova state,

[...], the memory heyday of minorities acted as the revenge for the “insulted history”. Many ethnic minorities were pushed out the historical arena and expelled from their homeland. More often, this happened with the Jewish community, where they did not have the right to history, but it had a strong memory capital. If the memory did not guarantee truth, it guaranteed the faithfulness [...]. The Jewish community did not have its own land, history and universal recognition. However, the memory of the Jews was able to preserve and pass traditional values to their future, to take all the necessity from the past to build a high-quality future. The present has imposed on memory the duty of succession of the past and the future.(96)

Minorities are deprived of writing their history. That’s why they turn to memory to resist the exclusion from history and preserve their past. The Jews are history-less not only because they are a minority, but also because they are landless. Therefore, they have no choices but literature as their voice of memory.

The Holocaust was an important subject of art and literature as they reflected the life of people. Spivey states,

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Holocaust literature is arguably one of the emotionally taxing genres to read. The horrendous truths that works of Holocaust literature relate are heart-breaking, soulrending, and oftentimes tragically beautiful. Holocaust fiction is particularly important because it keeps readers connected to the Holocaust—as time goes on and our firsthand connection through survivors continues to dwindle, Holocaust fiction becomes even more vital.(34)

The Holocaust literature was rich and diverse. It has a psychological impact on readers because of its content of fear, trauma, and torture. It encompasses not only belles-letters by and about victims, but it also involves life writing, including diaries, autobiography, letters, journals, journalism, and other self-referencing narratives written during or after the war (Horowitz). The Holocaust was and still the object of many writers from different generations. During WWII, many Jewish authors wrote, under the form of diaries and letters, with Jewish language and other languages, about their experiences. Mostly, they were victims of cruelty, persecution, and oppression. These texts appeared to the literary scene and were published after the war when the larger part of writers had been killed by Nazis. They effectively, express day-to-day life and the experiences of one individual throughout the WWII. The diaries' writers portrayed events as they happened. Accordingly, they are considered as historical documents. The Holocaust literature flourished after the WWII.

After the WWII, Jewish and non-Jewish authors were free to express their ideas. Correspondingly, the period between 1945 and 1960 witnessed the emergence of first generation survivors writers, who wrote about their experiences, and every one of them had his own story to narrate and share. Each piece of writing was different to the other. However, the second generation or children of Holocaust survivors were affected by the Holocaust trauma. They tried to understand and explain what happened to their parents. The inherited trauma was the most

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prominent theme in their works. Since 1980s, many authors have written about the Holocaust even they had no connection with it. The description of events was through historical fiction and allegory. The Holocaust literature is quite significant.

Owing to the fact that the Holocaust literature is effective to understand the Holocaust, it is widely read. It aims to remember the genocide and to keep its memory alive despite the fact that some literary works are fictional. Jews see that the memory of the Holocaust may disappear after the death of all survivors, hence, it is the vital responsibility of authors to continue writing about it in order to make it unforgettable. They consider that the death of the Holocaust fiction is the death of the Holocaust memory. In a case as such, they work hard to prevent this to happen. Contrary to this opinion, some authors believe that they should not create art or literature from the Holocaust, because the works might contain lies which insult the Holocaust victims and distort the memory. According to Spivey

Many works of Holocaust literature, for example, Elie Wiesel's *Night*, Cynthia Ozick's *The Shawl*, and Lois Lowry's *Number the Stars*, are recognized as fiction. These works are canonical; they are highly important texts that are commonly used to define their genre. These works of literature are widely read and studied, but their very nature of fictionality calls into question their reliability. (6)

It is not, therefore, easy if not impossible to write honest and objective Holocaust fiction without a subjective background. So, it does not replace history, but it plays a considerable role in reviving the Holocaust memory.

There are many themes of Holocaust Literature. Some of which are gender and body, identity, and the transmission of trauma across generations. It expresses how women were beaten, abused, and sexually exploited. These narratives expressed the victims could not take

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care of their children and nourish their babies. They could not help, protect, or serve their families. Authors highlight the silence around these gendered aspects of survival. In addition, trauma and memory are one of the dominant themes in Holocaust literature. Writers shed light on transmission of trauma through generations. The second generation survivors received trauma from their ancestors, and this is one of the reasons that forces them to write about the Holocaust despite the tragic and traumatic events during the genocide. They write in order to transform this trauma from their hearts and minds to the coming generations through pen and paper. They experience a guilt aspect of being raised by Holocaust survivors. They express the emotions their parents could not speak of. Third generation writers tried to transform trauma into history and find Jewish identity. Spivey states that "Third-generation Holocaust writers are different from their predecessors. Direct survivors, those who experienced the Holocaust firsthand, tend to relate their experience in a rather straightforward manner. They are more private, telling the stories of what happened to them in the Holocaust rather than the emotions and trauma aspect of the experience"(41). The first generation Holocaust writers tell their stories focusing on what happened to them while the third generation Holocaust writers shed light on the implications of the inherited trauma.

Finally, we can say that Holocaust literature is one of the important tools that keeps the memory of genocide alive. It promotes the sense of belonging, and it helps Jews to preserve their common identity which is based on religion as a guarantor of their united identity. Sacredly, Jewish authors write about the Holocaust as one of the hardest stages of Jews in history. Consequently, they work hard to make their people and all peoples in the world know and understand their suffering and hardships that arose from oppression, persecution, cruelty, intimidation, and humiliation during WWII.

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### **I-IV- The Relationship Between Architecture, Place, and Space**

No question that there is a strong relationship between architecture, place, and space. On the one hand, Architecture has the ability to shape the functionality, the beauty, and the identity of place. It creates its meaning and symbolism. In addition, it makes each place different to another through the design of buildings, the building materials, the colors, and the techniques of construction. Moreover, it makes places represent the culture, history, and identity of a given society. Architecture influences the cultural identity of place; hence it serves as a concrete representation of these cultural identities. Architecture's relationship with place begins with contextual sensitivity ("The relationship between architecture and place"). It contributes to the creation of the sense of place which reinforces its connection with people. The place does not mean only the built environment, but also it encompasses all its surroundings. Reciprocally, the place forces architects to adopt architectural style which makes the building look well integrated within its environment. On the other hand, there is an interrelated relationship between place and space.

In the simplest sense place refers to either a location somewhere or to the occupation of that location. The first sense is of having an address and the second is about living at that address. Sometimes this distinction is pushed further to separate the physical place from the phenomenal space in which the place is located. Thus place becomes a particular or lived space. Location then refers to the fact that places must be located somewhere. Place is specific and location (or space) is general. (Agnew 6)

Space has a big role in architectural design. Architecture contributes in shaping space. Architects design and manipulate space to create functional, aesthetically pleasing, and meaningful

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environments. Finally, we can say that there is an intertwined relationship between architecture, place, and space.

### **II-Theoretical Framework**

Bachelard's *Poetics of Space* and Nora's *Places of Memory* are two theoretical frameworks related to memory. They explain how space and place stir memory. The first theoretical framework focuses on the individual memory, while the second emphasizes the collective memory. They provide an importance to the concrete evidences which force individuals to recall past events.

#### **II-I- Gaston Bachelard's *Poetics of Space***

The *Poetics of Space* is a theoretical framework presented by the French philosopher, Gaston Bachelard. It focuses on the house's interior spaces and its outdoor context. It explores many concepts such as creativity, memory, and experience, the transformative power of imagination, and how imagination fills a space with spirit and meaning, and reciprocally, how the space evokes feelings, memories, and fantasies in its occupant's imagination. He is concerned primarily with the moment the poetic image appears in consciousness and how it is conjured from an unconscious space within the cosmos. In his book "*Poetics of Space*" Bachelard states,

There is no dearth of abstract, "world-conscious" philosophers who discover by means of the dialectical game of the I and the non-I. In fact, they know the universe before they know the house, the far horizon before the resting-place; whereas the real beginnings of images, if we study them phenomenologically, will give concrete evidence of the values of inhabited space, of the non-I that protects the I. (5)

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This means that a human when he is in his house, he imagines that he is safe and protected. Bachelard also talks about the beauty of the house saying “the humblest dwelling has beauty”(6). This means that the beauty of the house depends on its modesty and simplicity, because it is filled with emotions and feelings. He says: “memories are motionless, and the more securely they are fixed in space, the sounder they are”(9). He means that the inhabitant space makes us remember our ancestor house’s memories, because they are fixed on it. In other words, memory is always associated with space or place where the event took place not with time, because, simply, we cannot relive time. In addition, he states that “an entire past comes to dwell in a new house. The old saying “we bring our lares with us” has many variations (5). It means that when we move from one house to another, we bring our memories with us, and every corner in the new house reminds us of the past memories, so people are not obliged to visit their ancestor houses to recall past events, but it is sufficient to be in spaces similar to them. Bachelard does not consider the house as a physical building, but a space which is full with memories, emotions, and feelings.

### **II-II-Pierre Nora’s *Places of Memory***

The French philosopher and historian Pierre Nora states that history cannot be correct and objective. Instead of history, he believes that the focus should be on memory, but this memory can exist only in "places of memory". He argues that meaning and sense are made by places of memory, and the collective memory, which is absent in history, is preserved in the places of memory (Nosova217).

Nora tries to find a way to preserve the right memory, the right history, in the conditions of time accelerating which destroys all the social relationships, traditions, and the collective memory itself. Consequently, " places of memory" become the basis of Nora’s doctrine, so he began work on them in 1971 in the " Library of Stories" series, which included 128 articles and

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essays. He states that "It [place of memory] is any significant phenomenon, materialized or intangible in nature, which by human will or under the influence of time has acquired the meaning of a symbol in the memorial heritage of a community" (qtd in Nosova 217). This means that memory exists due to places of memory which are manifested in material, functional, and symbolic forms including monuments, monuments to the dead, memorials, and images on banknotes. In his article "Pierre Nora's Concept of Contrasting Memory and History", Nosova comments "The power of memory is in its material remains, which form the space where history and memory accumulate"(217). This means that Nora wants to materialize memory in order to make it preserved and alive.

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### Conclusion

After WWII, the Jewish survivors, found themselves facing many challenges and issues such as the Holocaust trauma and the loss of identity. Jewish and non-Jewish authors wrote, and still are writing about the implications of the Holocaust. In context, this chapter delved into the life of Jews during the war and their suffering from the German regime. The Jewish people were confused about the identity they have to embrace in post-war period. The outcome is that they relied on memory instead of history. In addition, this chapter also shed light on the relationship between architecture, space, and place because of their impact on memory in W. G. Sebald's *Austerlitz*. Finally, the two theoretical frameworks of Bachelard's *Poetics of Space* and Nora's *Places of Memory* have been discussed from the perspective of the relationship between architecture and memory which serves as a foundation of identity.

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### Introduction

“You forget what you want to remember, and you remember what you want to forget”

.Cormac McCarthy, *The Road*.

Sebald's *Austerlitz* is one of the most representative works of the WWII trauma and its aftermaths on the Jewish memory and identity. Sebald's reader will not fail to notice that the protagonist, Austerlitz, repeatedly stresses his refusal to remember his traumatic past, but, in his journey, searching for his family, he finds himself recalling what he does not want to. One of the factors that makes him do so is architecture. This chapter in essence aims to analyze *Austerlitz*, applying the two theoretical frameworks, Bachelard's *Poetics of Space* and Nora's *Places of Memory*, to track the architectural influence on memory and identity. Accordingly, this chapter is going to be divided into five sections. First, it begins with the meeting, for the first time, of the narrator and Austerlitz, in The Antwerp Central Station. The second section focuses on the narrator's visit to Fort Breendonk which refers to the suffering of Jewish people during WWII. The third section is devoted to Austerlitz's visit to his parents' house, The House of Emyr Elias in Bala, Wales. In addition, the fourth deals with Liverpool Street Station, the starting point of Austerlitz's journey to search for his origins. The fifth section contains four key elements. The first part is devoted to Austerlitz's visit to The State Archives in Karmelitská. The second item focuses on Austerlitz's visit to his parents' apartment, Number 12. The third discusses Austerlitz's visit to The Estates Theater imagining his mother on the stage. The last part is devoted to the ending point of Austerlitz's Journey, Terezín.

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### I- Architectural Eclecticism and *Poetics of Space* in The Antwerp Central Station

The events of W. G. Sebald's *Austerlitz* begin in Antwerp Zoo before moving to Antwerp Central Station which is adjacent to it. The unnamed narrator depicts the two spaces, and he makes a comparison between them. He meets Austerlitz, the architectural historian and the protagonist, in the station for the first time. The Antwerp Central Station witnesses the first appearance of Austerlitz. The narrator's depiction of the interior spaces brings us to what Bachelard states in his book *Poetics of Spaces*,

There is no dearth of abstract, "world-conscious" philosophers who discover by means of the dialectical game of the I and the non-I. In fact, they know the universe before they know the house, the far horizon before the resting-place; whereas the real beginnings of images, if we study them phenomenologically, will give concrete evidence of the values of inhabited space, of the non-I that protects the I.(5)

This means that people's focus is on the inhabited space not the outside world. That's why whenever human beings find a shelter, they start imagining the limits of this shelter with the illusion that they are protected or not. In addition, in terms of architecture and design, phenomenology is the study and exploration of the physical experience of buildings, building material, and their sensory properties. Phenomenology concerns with experience, memory and, in particular, the articulation of spaces and aesthetic characters with specificity to site and space. Certain spaces are designed to enhance our senses immediately once we enter the space. ("Coming back to our senses: What is Phenomenology in Architecture?"). In the novel, the narrator associates the image of the interior of the Nocturama, the building in a zoo where nocturnal animals are viewable by visitors, with the memories of the Salles des pas perdus, in

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Antwerp Centraal Station, because he finds many similarities between interior spaces in each one of them. “If I try to conjure up a picture of that waiting room today I immediately see the Nocturama, and if I think of the Nocturama the waiting room springs to my mind,[...]” (Sebald 18-19). So, the Nocturama image is the same as the waiting room but in a small scale. The very high ceiling of the great hall of the Centraal Station makes the railway passengers, who are silent and motionless, look miniaturized as the same as the creatures of the Nocturama “Like the nocturnal environment for presenting caged animals, the waiting room of the station becomes a place of lost souls, in which travelers appeared as “a diminutive race which had perished or been expelled from its homeland”(Kapelos. 87). The dark space and the mirrors on the walls in the waiting room remind the narrator of the Nocturama. In addition, the architecture of the great hall of the Centraal Station, which is covered by a dome, as a phenomenon, of sixty meters high, plays a significant role in creating large and open space without the need for extensive pillars, and hence it forms the sense of grandeur, wonder, freedom, and openness. Moreover, the narrator, describes the place of the clock in the great hall of the Centraal Station saying

The clock is placed above the only baroque element in the entire ensemble, the cruciform stairway which leads from the foyer to the platforms, just where the image of the emperor stood in the Pantheon in a line directly prolonged from the portal; as governor of a new omnipotence it was set even above the royal coat of arms and the motto *Endracht maakt macht*”.(Sebald 23-24)

Then he touches upon the function of this clock in space and its relationship with the passengers “The movements of all travelers could be surveyed from the central position occupied by the clock in Antwerp Station, and conversely all travelers had to look up at the clock and were

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obliged to adjust their activities to its demands” (Sebald 24). The narrator does not only depict the inhabited space, but he also explains how space functions. So, architecture brings to the narrator the memories of Antwerp railway station, the Nocturama, and his first meeting with Austerlitz, the architectural historian and the novel’s protagonist, at once. He does not recollect the building, a physical place, but he recalls the inhabited spaces in which his memories are fixed.

When I entered the great hall of the Centraal Station with its dome arching sixty meters high above it, my first thought, perhaps triggered by my visit to the zoo and the sight of the dromedary, was that this magnificent although then severely dilapidated foyer ought to have cages for lions and leopards let into its marble niches, and aquaria for sharks, octopuses, and crocodiles, just as some zoos, conversely, have little railway trains in which you can, so to speak, travel to the farthest corners of the earth.(19)

The narrator’s first impression of the station in its ruined condition does not reflect its function, as a railway station, therefore he starts imagining that it is supposed to contain animals as well as the Nocturama. His imagination stems from the similarities between the two interior spaces.

The Antwerp Centraal Station is considered as a place of memory, so this concept aligns with Nora's claim that “Collective memory exists due to places of memory. The latter are manifested in material, functional and symbolic forms”(qtd in Nosova). This means that places of memory may take several forms such as monuments, images on banknotes, streets or places with names of historical figures, ...etc. In this novel, The Antwerp Central Station reminds the Belgian people of the king Leopold, who, ordered the construction of public buildings, because, at that

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time, the authorities desire to leave a trace was considered a policy to demonstrate power (Baba et al.23). Its design was inspired by the Pantheon in Rome, because the king was fascinated by the concept of dome, so the model of the new railway station of Lucerne was preferable for him. During the WWII, the train hall was damaged by a rocket, and its impact still existed until 1986 when the restoration work of the roof began. So, unconsciously, whenever the passengers see the effects of this damage, they remember the Nazis' crimes. The Antwerp Central Station was and still one of the witnesses to Nazis' violence and destruction. In addition, the eclectic design of Delacenserie, the Italian architect, shows that Belgium share some architectural styles with other European nations, and these facts boost the sense of belonging of Belgian people to their continent, so architecture contributes to unify Europeans providing them a common architectural identity (Tuckey).

### **II- The Memory of Hard Times: Suffering and Torture in Fort Breendonk**

Fort Breendonk is one of the fortresses built, to star shape, in Belgium in order to protect the port of Antwerp. During WWII, the fort was controlled by Germans and used as a reception and penal camp where Jews and others were subjected to torture, violence, and genocide. Breendonk is one of the Holocaust sites mentioned in Sebald's *Austerlitz*.

Interestingly enough, Pierre Nora makes a distinction between history and memory. In his article, Pierre Nora's Concept of Contrasting Memory and History, Nosova states that

The French historian P. Nora studies history and its components, first collective, social memory, trying to determine what real history. He concludes that history is opposed to memory. Where history begins, true, correct memory ends,- the researcher considers. A history changes the past into an agreement of someone's interests. (219)

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In this novel, Austerlitz tells the narrator the history of some fortifications where the fortress of Breendonk is one of them. Next morning the narrator glances through the newspapers, and he comes upon an article about the fortress of Breendonk which is a national memorial and museum of the Belgian Resistance. This article, as a historical text, does not have a great impact on him. He says "If the name of Breendonk had not come up in my conversation with Austerlitz the previous evening, this mention of it in the paper, even supposing I had noticed it at all, would hardly have made me go to see the fort that very day" (Sebald 29). This means that history cannot preserve memory, because without Austerlitz's speaking, the narrator is not interested with the fort. Next, the narrator visits the fort having an image in his head about it. He starts describing it from outside to inside. He looks for the architectural plan Austerlitz talks about, but he does not find any connection between that image and reality. He says

From whatever viewpoint I tried to form a picture of the complex I could make out no architectural plan, for its projections and indentations kept shifting, so far exceeding my comprehension that in the end I found myself unable to connect it with anything shaped by human civilization, or even with the silent relics of our prehistory and early history. (29)

The historical text, sometimes, does not reflect facts, so we have to stick on memory which is fixed in places of memory. As Pierre Nora notes, "memory is life, therefore it is in the process of constant evolution, and at the same time it is rooted in the concrete, in space, gesture, image and object"(qtd in Mussatayeva, F, and K. S. Yermagambetova. 95).

The narrator's first impression of the fort, after his walking around it, is that it is a symbol of blind violence, because it looks destructed, dilapidated, and fearful losing its main landmarks because of the Nazis attacks during WWII. He narrates, "Covered in places by open ulcers

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with the raw crushed stone erupting from them, encrusted by guano-like droppings and calcareous streaks, the fort was a monolithic, monstrous incarnation of ugliness and blind violence” (Sebald 30). The narrator depicts the path around the fort, which passes through black columns leading to posts of execution ground, and the labor site where prisoners suffer from exploitation and dehumanization. The tools he finds at this site such as shovels and wheelbarrows remind him of the suffering of prisoners, so he imagines how they do a hard physical labor in very hard conditions. He says, “it was impossible to picture them bracing themselves against the weight until their hearts nearly burst, or think of the overseer beating them about the head with the handle of a shovel when they could not move forward” (31). When he enters the fort itself, he finds himself in dark spaces imagining how fathers and their dutiful sons, from different European countries, spend time, playing cards, or writing letters to their loved ones, after finishing their hard works. The dark inside becomes heavier when he penetrates further in the building. It symbolizes the suffering of people, from oppression and torture, within this place. The narrator states,

My memory of the fourteen stations which the visitor to Breendonk passes between the entrance and the exit has clouded over in the course of time, or perhaps I could say it was clouding over even on the day when I was in the fort, whether because I did not really want to see what it had to show or because all the outlines seemed to merge in a world illuminated only by a few dim electric bulbs, and cut off for ever from the light of nature.

(32)

He does not want to recall the memories of Breendonk. However, he remembers the darkness of fourteen spaces he enters which symbolizes the suffering of the prisoners. To see this more

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clearly from psychology perspective, places with less or poor lighting tend to cause stress and tiredness, affecting mental activities and energy levels negatively(Nasir). Therefore, the narrator recalls and feels the prisoners' pain. The narrator goes on saying,

I hardly dared to go on to the point where, at the end of a second-long tunnel, a corridor not much more than the height of a man, and (as I think I remember) somewhat sloping, leads down to one of the casemates. This casemate, in which you sense immediately that there is a layer of concrete several meters thick overhead, is a narrow room with walls converging at a sharp angle on one side, rounded on the other, and with its floor at least a foot lower than the passage giving access to it, so that it is less like an oubliette than a pit. (Sebald 33)

He has to resist the feelings that accompany him inside the tunnel which is the fort's backbone, the corridor, the narrow room, casemates with nauseating smell, and spaces of torture. These feelings come over him in all horrible places. To situate what has been stated within psychological argument, these kind of places cause what is called "claustrophobia" which has an effect on people's brain and their subconscious. People have thoughts of remaining trapped in these places, and as a consequence, of losing their lives by suffocating, because, simply, it is the instinct of conservation ("How Architecture can cause Fear"). That's why; the narrator does not want to recollect his visit to the fort, because he spends time of fear and horror in its interior spaces.

So, in this novel, the fort of Breendonk is not just a building, a physical place, which was a military installation and transformed into a prison camp controlled by Nazis during the Second World War, but it plays the role of a character who tells stories of prisoners' horror, the forced labor sites, the torture chamber, and the execution ground. It does not only push the narrator to

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remember the past unconsciously but also to feel the pain of all those people, who suffered there, as if he lives with them , because the place evokes his feelings and revives his memory. In an online article, Marks of pain: Architecture as Witness to Trauma, the writer states, “reaction to Breendonk is not therefore, personnel, not related in any way to his own experiences or even to things he had read, but intrinsic to the place, as if its issue, has changed its very nature, violence become part of its fabric ”.

This building represents very clearly the concept of “places of memory”; it becomes The National Memorial of Fort Breendonk which symbolizes the collective memory and the common identity of Europeans in general and Belgian people in particular. Obviously, It shows the difference between the narrator’s reaction when he reads an article about the fort in newspapers and his sentiments when he visits it. So, we deduce that the place of memory is more expressive and influential than the historical texts. In addition, the reputation of a place, which can make one imagine things that might not never happen (Ghisleni). That’s why the narrator is influenced by the bad reputation of Fort Breendonk.

Moreover, the concept of Gaston Bachelard concerning the memories fixed in the inhabited spaces is very clear in this building, because all the memories, related to this place, the narrator talks about, are associated with specific spaces such as tunnels, casemates, and the torture chamber. “ But I do remember that there in the casemate at Breendonk a nauseating smell of soft soap rose to my nostrils, and that this smell, in some strange place in my head, was linked to the bizarre German word for scrubbing brush, Wurzelbürste, which was a favorite of my father’s and which I had always disliked” (Sebald 33-34). Each building has its own smell which

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is a powerful trigger for memory. It is connected to the brain part that processes emotions and memory. Hence, this part is so powerful in evoking past experiences or emotions (Ghisleni).

The narrator's memory of the odor of soft soap, he smells in the casemate at Breendonk, is associated with the word for scrubbing brush, so, unconsciously, whenever he hears this word, he imagines himself in the fort smelling the nauseating smell. Therefore, despite the fact that the odor of soft soap is not bad, the narrator hates it, because it reminds him of the darkness and the horror of the casemate space. The narrator does not remember the fort as a building, but he recalls its spaces in which his memories are fixed.

The fort of breendonk is one of the Holocaust sites. It becomes a symbol of collective memory of WWII for Europeans in general and Jews in particular. It is very scary, because it is the place of horror, torture, oppression, and dehumanization.

### **III- *The Poetics of Space* in *The House of Emyr Elias in Bala, Wales.***

Austerlitz grew up in the house of Emyr Elias, the preacher, and his wife Gwendolyn, in the country town of Bala, Wales, because he was adopted by them. He describes the situation of this house which looks humble, because it is situated outside the town. Not far from this idea, Bachelard states, "the humblest dwelling has beauty" (6). It means that despite the simple features of any house, it still has the characteristics which make it look beautiful without the necessity of being well constructed, decorated, or situated in the town center. In this novel, Austerlitz says: "I have never liked looking back at the time I spent in that unhappy house, which stood in isolation on a hill just outside the town and was much too large for two people and an only child" (Sebald 47). Although Austerlitz's bad memory about the house of Emyr Elias, he mentions its good features that it is situated in calm space with pure air, away from city noise,

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large, and composed with several rooms. This description of the house proves that the hard moments he spends in this house do not deprive him to remember its advantages, and he brings his memory with him when he moves to his current place. Austerlitz hates to recall this house, perhaps, because it is his first dwell after leaving his family, or because his bad memories of the gloomy spaces in which he lives. In this context, Bachelard states, “memories are motionless, and the more securely they are fixed in space, the sounder they are” (9). This means that house memory depends on spaces inside the dwelling not on the building itself or on a specific duration of time. He argues that we cannot localize a memory in time, because we are not able to relive duration that has been destroyed. We can only think of it (9). In this work of fiction, Austerlitz says :

even today I still sometimes dream that one of those locked doors opens and I step through it, into a friendlier, more familiar world. Several of the rooms that were not locked were unused too. Furnished sparsely with a bed or chest of drawers, curtains drawn even during the day, they drowsed in that soon extinguished every sense of self-awareness in me. (Sebald 45)

Austerlitz starts imagining the spaces of his ancestor house. He considers that his ancestor house is supposed to be his corner in the world. The incompatibility between space and the nature of the activities that take place there can raise the level of stress and cause phobias (Ghisleni). The house Austerlitz depicts is too large in comparison to the number of its inhabitants, therefore Austerlitz feels himself uncomfortable whenever he reminds it. In addition, the spaces are dark, because curtains are drawn even during the day, and it is known that the large dark space is the more fearful. The image of darkness reminds him of fear, suffering, and

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nights he spends thinking of his parents, so it is a kind of trauma for him. He remembers this image of gloom which is fixed inside the house spaces and caused mostly by the drawn curtains. In architecture, window is a medium between inside and outside (“What is door and window in architecture?”). So, when the curtains are drawn, Austerlitz cannot take a look on the world outside, and he cannot know what happens there as though he does not belong to it. He feels that he is alone between the walls of the house. This image, in his mind, reminds him of his unknown identity, and how much he is separated from society, so he interacts neither with his new family nor with the world outside. Moreover, the door, as a transitional element, facilitates the movement between spaces and provides privacy (“What is door and window in architecture?”). So, when doors are locked, spaces are separated from each other as the same as he is separated from his parents, his family, and his society. This image of locked doors makes him recollect this unknown identity when he knocks all the doors looking for his origins, but to no avail.

I know that I often lay awake for hours in my narrow bed in the manse, trying to conjure up the faces of those whom I had left, I feared through my own fault, but not until I was numb with weariness and my eyelids sank in the darkness did I see my mother bending down to me just for a fleeting moment, or my father smiling as he put on his hat. Such comfort made it all the worse to wake up early in the morning and have to face the knowledge, new every day, that I was not at home now but very far away, in some kind of captivity”. (Sebald 48)

The protagonist recalls the nights he spends in his narrow bed in the manse thinking of his parents. He remembers that he is not at home which is supposed to be filled with emotions and feelings, but he is in prison instead. He is not comfortable in this space which is dark, cold, and

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full with silence “The manse was always freezing, Austerlitz continued, not just in winter, when the only fire was often in the kitchen stove and the stone floor in the hallway was frequently covered with hoarfrost, but in autumn too, and well into spring and the infallibly wet summers” (Sebald 48). Austerlitz goes on depicting the house as freezing not only in winter but even in autumn, because there is only one fire in the kitchen stove, and the rest of the house is with no heating source. In this regard, The Romanian architect and theorician, Dama Pop, explains that temperature is one of the factors that can enhance levels of stress or cause phobias. The excessive heat or cold can provoke the nervous system (Ghisleni). As a result, the stone floor reminds Austerlitz of coldness, and hence his bad feelings and emotion. In addition, as it is known in architecture, the stone is a material with high thermal masse and long lag times. Thermal mass is the ability of a material to absorb, store and release heat; Thermal lag is the rate at which a material releases stored heat. For most common building materials, the higher the thermal mass, the longer the thermal lag (“Thermal mass”). Consequently, the stone floor requires a hot temperatures and long time to be warm. For this reason, it keeps its coldness even in autumn. The memory of coldness is related to the kitchen stove and the stone floor, the building material which is characterized by its durability and beauty. So, unconsciously, the character mentions another good feature of Elias house. And therefore, on one hand, the protagonist’s memory of coldness reflects the ugliness of the house, the cold relationship with his new family, and his unchangeable life in every season of the year as well as the stone floor. On the other hand, it reflects the simplicity, elegance and the natural beauty of the stone floor which refers to primitiveness and hence the beauty of the dwelling. The character imagines the

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space with its furniture first, then he recalls his memory which is associated with space, and after that, he expresses his emotions and feelings.

### IV- Liverpool Street Station, the Starting Point of Austerlitz's Journey

Liverpool street station is a major central London railway terminus which opened in 1874, during the Victorian era. its design was approximately Gothic, built using stock bricks and bath stone dressing. Thousands of Jewish refugee children arrived at Liverpool Street in the late 1930s as part of the Kindertransport rescue mission to save them in the run up to the Second World War, and because Parents could not accompany their children, Londoners welcomed them with open arms. During the war, the station's structure sustained damage from a nearby bomb, particularly the Gothic tower at the main entrance on Liverpool Street and its glass roof. It is considered one of the places of memory. In this sense, Pierre Nora states that collective memory exists due to places of memory. So, Liverpool street station recalls Jewish people of their suffering during the war .In Sebald's *Austerlitz*, the protagonist says,

I had several such experiences in Liverpool Street Station, to which I was always irresistibly drawn back on my night journeys. Before work began to rebuild it at the end of the 1980s this station, with its main concourse fifteen to twenty feet below street level, was one of the darkest and most sinister places in London, a kind of entrance to the underworld, as it has often been described. (Sebald 106-107)

The building reminds Austerlitz of his bad memories about the place to which he is brought alone, without his parents, from Czech as a Jewish refugee child. For him and all the Jewish people, this station symbolizes the history of Kindertransport, the children's unknown destiny, the crimes of Nazis, and all the dark past related to the war. In addition, during the war, the

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station's structure sustained damage from a nearby bomb, particularly the Gothic tower at the main entrance on Liverpool Street and its glass roof. The protagonist mentions that the station's main concourse contains brick walls. Bricks symbolize loss of identity, because every brick in the wall refers to being another ubiquitous person ("Liverpool Street station"). Bricks are characterized by their sturdiness and strength, so the brick wall is considered as a metaphor for a challenging obstacle or obstruction as well as Austerlitz, who faces barriers to know his origins. He states also that all building materials are covered with greasy black layer formed which refers to the hidden truth about Austerlitz's identity. The protagonist continues stating,

Even on sunny days only a faint grayness, scarcely illuminated at all by the globes of the station lights, came through the glass roof over the main hall, and in this eternal dusk, which was full of a muffled babble of voices, a quiet scraping and trampling of feet, innumerable people passed in great tides, disembarking from the trains or boarding them, coming together, moving apart, and being held up at barriers and bottlenecks like water against a weir. (Sebald 107)

The image of people, in the main hall leaving the trains, reminds him of his arriving to the station with other children. Through Kindertransport, children came to station then each child goes to his destination away from others as the same as passengers who come together and move apart. In this novel, the main character adds saying,

Whenever I was in the station, said Austerlitz, I kept almost obsessively trying to imagine—through the ever-changing maze of walls—the location in that huge space of the rooms where the asylum inmates were confined, and I often wondered whether the pain and suffering accumulated on this site over the centuries had ever really ebbed

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away, or whether they might not still, as I sometimes thought when I felt a cold breath of air on my forehead, be sensed as we passed through them. (Sebald 107)

This means that although the change of walls which refers to the change of buildings and the functionality of spaces, the station still makes Austerlitz recall all the pain and suffering of people, who were in this site. When Austerlitz enters, by chance, the disused ladies' Waiting Room of Liverpool street station, he remembers the day he comes to this station for the first time, and he sees himself in the past. He goes on saying,

In fact I felt, said Austerlitz, that the waiting room where I stood as if dazzled contained all the hours of my past life, all the suppressed and extinguished fears and wishes I had ever entertained, as if the black and white diamond pattern of the stone slabs beneath my feet were the board on which the endgame would be played, and it covered the entire plane of time (114).

The black and white diamond pattern of the stone slabs evokes in Austerlitz two different feelings. The black color makes him recollect his past, unknown origins, and gloomy life, however the white one reminds him of hope, to find his origins, which comes to him at that moment, so his emotions and feelings were divided between his dark past and optimistic future. He forgets how long he stands in the waiting room and the way he seeks to go back to his home, because the place is remindful of fearful and dark past. He, immediately, falls asleep when he enters home, and he does not wake until the middle of the night after the next day having in his sleep nightmares about buildings and landscapes. Therefore, after this visit to the station, he does not read newspapers, because he fears unwelcome revelations. This means that places of memory contribute in the transition of trauma through generations, because the experience is deeply

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traumatic. Austerlitz is too young, therefore he cannot understand why he is brought to this ugly place, which witnesses the separation of thousands of Jewish children from their families, and they never reunite with them again.

For Austerlitz, the interior image of Liverpool Street Station reminds him of the Church of Salle. In this context Bachelard states that “An entire past comes to dwell in a new house. The old saying “we bring our lares with us” has many variations” (5), and he adds saying, “And after we are in the new house, when memories of other places we have lived in come back to us, we travel to the land of motionless childhood”(5). This means that when we move from one place to another, we bring our memories with us. Thus, it is not necessary for people to be in the same place, where events happened, to recall their memories, but being in a new space, similar to the old one, is sufficient to do so. Austerlitz remembers that:

[...]In the middle of this vision of imprisonment and liberation I could not stop wondering whether it was a ruin or a building in the process of construction that I had entered. Both ideas were right in a way at the time, since the new station was literally rising from the ruins of the old Liverpool Street; in any case, the crucial point was hardly this speculation in itself, which was really only a distraction, but the scraps of memory beginning to drift through the outlying regions of my mind: images, for instance, like the recollection of a late November afternoon in 1968 when I stood with Marie de Verneuil—whom I had met in Paris, and of whom I shall have more to say—when we stood in the nave of the wonderful church of Salle in Norfolk, which towers in isolation above the wide fields, and I could not bring out the words I should have spoken then. (Sebald 114)

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While Austerlitz is in Liverpool Street Station, he recalls the lady, Marie de Verneuil, he meets in Paris, because he stands with her in the Church of Salle, built in 15th century, in Norfolk, a ceremonial county in England. The church is designed with Gothic architecture, an architectural style in Europe that lasted from the mid-12th century to the 16th century, characterized by cavernous spaces with the expanse of walls broken up by overlaid tracery (“Gothic architecture”). However, Liverpool Street Station is designed with eclectic architectural styles, including Gothic. The large spaces, the high of ceilings, the shape of roofs, and the building materials in both buildings make Austerlitz feel that he is in the same space, so the place stirs his memory, and he brings the memories of the Church of Salle to Liverpool Street Station. The following two pictures illustrate the similarities between the spaces of the two buildings.



Picture of the interior spaces in Church of Salle.

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Picture of the interior spaces in Liverpool Street Station.

### V- Austerlitz's Visit to Prague Leads Him to Know His Origins

#### V.I- Austerlitz in The State Archives in Karmelitská

The State Archives in Karmelitská is a building situated in Prague. It contains registers with lists of those living in Prague before and during the WWII. Austerlitz goes to this building in looking for his surname in the registers in order to discover his identity. As it is believed that

“memories are motionless, and the more securely they are fixed in space, the sounder they are” (Bachelard 9). This means that Austerlitz's memories are connected with the State Archives' spaces. In this novel, the protagonist says “[...]. I took a taxi to the Karmelitská in the Lesser Quarter, where the state archives are housed in a very peculiar building going far back in time if not even, like so much in the city of Prague, standing outside time altogether” (Sebald 119). The protagonist recalls the building, which seems very old. His point of view, perhaps, reflects his attitude towards the building due its function, because it contains very old records, rather than

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its reality as if he wants to say that the building's appearance mirrors its function as a place of registering and storing information and documents. The protagonist enters the building, and when he talks about the porter he passes by him without noticing his presence, he recollects the lodge and its window which is in a low level. Austerlitz says "If you wanted to speak to this porter you had to lean a long way down to his window, which was so low that he appeared to be kneeling on the floor of his lodge" (Sebald 119). The architectural image of the lodge reminds Austerlitz of his story with the porter and his meeting with Tereza Ambrosova, one of the archive's officials he meets after the porter phones to request assistance from her. He remembers that they walk down one of the galleries encircling the courtyard, which is roofed by a glazed dome, to reach Mrs. Ambrosova's office. The circular gallery symbolizes that Austerlitz's path, the one he seeks in order to find his origins, is not straight. And, it reminds him of all the setbacks he has to overcome. The protagonist continues telling his story,

Mrs Ambrosová, who had very courteously pulled out a chair for me beside her desk, listened attentively with her head tilted slightly to one side as, for the first time in my life, I began explaining to someone else that because of certain circumstances my origins had been unknown to me, and that for other reasons I had never inquired into them, but now felt compelled, because of a series of coincidental events, to conclude or at least to conjecture that I had left Prague at the age of four and a half, in the months just before the war broke out, on one of the so-called children's transports departing from the city at the time, and I had therefore come to consult the archives in the hope that people of my surname living here between 1934 and 1939, who could not have been very numerous, might be found in the registers, with details of their addresses. (123)

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He starts explaining, for the first time in his life, to someone else, that he does not know his origins, and before that, he remembers even the position of the chair and the desk in the office. This important moment in Austerlitz's life is connected with Mrs. Ambrosova's office, in The State Archives building. He says also " All at once I felt the heat from the stout radiator , which was encrusted with several layers of lumpy oil paint and stood under the wide-open window;[...]" (Sebald 119). He describes that he feels the heat from the stout radiator, but it is not true for two reasons. First, the window is wide-opened that allows cold air to enter through it. Second, he is panicked and embarrassed, because he speaks for the first time about a crucial matter which is his unknown identity. Austerlitz associates his feeling of heat with the stout radiator which is fixed on the wall under the wide-open window, because high temperature can enhance the level of stress (Ghisleni). This means that his memory is fixed on that inhabited space, Mrs. Ambrosova's office. He goes on saying "I cannot remember, said Austerlitz, with what words I said goodbye to Mrs. Ambrosova, how I got out of the archives building or where I went after that[...]" (124). He is in great embarrassment and panic either when he is inside the building, or when he leaves it. Austerlitz goes back to his room in a small hotel on Kampa Island, situated in the center of Prague, where he spends his night with fearful dreams. He states

I spent the whole night either lying awake or tormented by fearful dreams in which I had to climb up and down flights of steps ringing hundreds of doorbells in vain, until, in the outermost suburbs, I came upon a darkly looming building, from the dungeon-like basement of which there emerged a caretaker called Bartoloměj Smečka, a veteran, it seemed, of long-lost campaigns, clad in a crumpled redingote and a flowered fancy waistcoat with a gold watch chain draped over it, who having studied the note I handed

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him shrugged his shoulders, saying that unfortunately the tribe of the Aztecs had died out years ago, and that at best an ancient perroquet which still remembered a few words of their language might survive here and there. (Sebald 124)

After his visit to The State Archives building, Austerlitz has a fearful dream, one of the aspects of trauma, because he thinks of the results of his search about his identity. He dreams of darkly looming building which symbolizes The State Archives building, and the death of the tribe of the Aztecs represents the death of Austerlitz's family. This means that fear is rooted in his heart, and every dark space reminds him of his unhappy experiences. In psychology, as we have seen before in this research, places with less or poor lighting tend to cause stress and tiredness (Nasir). Consequently, Austerlitz's memory of dream is connected with The State Archives building and its dark spaces he dreams of.

Austerlitz is in Prague now, in The State Archives building, but he remembers the parks and gardens of English noblemen. In the same vein, Bachelard states that "An entire past comes to dwell in a new house. The old saying " we bring our lares with us " has many variations" (5).

In this work of fiction, Austerlitz extends,

Next day, Austerlitz continued, I went back to the state archives building in the Karmelitská, where, in order to compose myself a little, I first took some photographs of the great inner court and the stairway leading up to the galleries, which in its a symmetrical construction reminded me of the follies built by so many English noblemen in their parks and gardens. (125)

The similarities between the two spaces, represented in architectural design and symmetrical style, stir Austerlitz memory, that's why he remembers the images of parks and gardens.

**V.II- Austerlitz At Number 12 in His Parents' Apartment**

Mrs. Ambrosova hands Austerlitz a sheet of paper containing a list of six inhabitants, with the surname "Austerlitz", for 1938. The names of people are followed by their professions, and the last name is Agáta Austerlitzová, an opera singer, who, according to the register, had been living at Number 12, Jaques Austerlitz's childhood home in Prague, in that year, so Austerlitz moves immediately to this place, because it is the closest address in the list. Austerlitz's memory of the interior spaces of Number 12 aligns with Bachelard's statement concerning the memories fixed on the inhabitant spaces. The protagonist says:

Then there was the cool air as I entered the front hall of Number 12 šporkova, the metal box for the electrics built into the wall beside the entrance with its lightning symbol, the octofoil mosaic flower in shades of dove gray and snow white set in the flecked artificial-stone floor of the hall, the smell of damp limewash, the gently rising flight of stairs, with hazelnut-shaped iron knobs placed at intervals in the handrail of the banisters—all of them signs and characters from the type case of forgotten things, I thought, and was overcome by such a state of blissful yet anxious confusion that more than once I had to sit down on the steps in the quiet stairwell and lean my head against the wall. (Sebald 126)

Austerlitz knows intuitively that there is something hidden behind the door of this building. Contrary to The State Archives building, He feels the cool air when he enters the front hall which refers to the comfortable space. He remembers the octofoil mosaic flower set in the flecked artificial-stone floor of the hall. In architecture, mosaics are considered as works of art, so primarily used for decorative purposes, because they add beauty to interior and exterior spaces. They are a way to preserve cultural heritage, and they provide ideas about the values,

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beliefs, and lifestyles of old societies (Zhuang). Moreover, the smell of limewash makes him feel as if he has come there before. It is scientifically proved that each house has its own smell, which we do not perceive when we are in it, but immediately recognize upon returning. This smell evokes memories of childhood and brings memories of family gathering or even of a specific person (Ghisleni). Austerlitz recalls the smell of damp limewash which is associated with nothing but the hall space. The mosaic and the hazelnut-shaped iron knobs, placed at intervals in the handrail of the banisters, are architectural elements represent the culture and identity of Austerlitz and their parents, and for this reason, he is very attracted to them. He sits down on the steps many times; he leans his head against the wall. He feels as if he misses, and he wants to embrace them.

Austerlitz enters the apartment finding himself facing Vera Ryšanová, his nanny in Prague before the outbreak of the war, and he recalls the room in which he stays with her. He states

The furniture she had inherited in May 1933 together with her great-aunt's flat, the display cabinet with a masked Meissen china Pulcinello on the left and his beloved Columbine on the right, the glass-fronted bookcase with the fifty-five small volumes of the *Comédie humaine* bound in carmine red, the writing desk, the long ottoman, the camel-hair rug lying folded at one end of it, the blue-tinged aquatint of the Bohemian mountains—throughout my entire life, which was now unraveling headlong before me, all this had stayed in the same place because as Vera told me, said Austerlitz, once she had lost me and my mother, who was almost a sister to her, she could not bear to alter anything. (Sebald 128)

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The furniture of the room remains as it is, kept unchangeable. It reminds Austerlitz of his parents' life imagining them how they used to have seat, read, and write. Being in the room of his parents makes him feel as if he is with them especially when Vera tells stories of his father or mother. She tells him also what he used to do when he was a child. For instance, he says:

As she told me about my curious love of such observation, Vera had risen and opened both the inner and the outer windows to let me look down into the garden next door, where the lilac happened to be in flower, its blossoms so thick and white that in the gathering dusk it looked as if there had been a snowstorm in the middle of spring. (Sebald 130)

Austerlitz recalls this beautiful image of the lilac and its blossoms due to space in which he seats, the true image of his ancestor apartment, the concrete and vivid story, and the tangible details such as the windows, the doors, and the garden. without a doubt, Austerlitz's reaction, when hearing Vera talking about his favorite place, the window seat, is not the same when she opens the windows to let him look down into the garden, because in the latter case, he feels that he travels through time living his lost childhood, recognizing his parents, who are unknown for him, and discovering his identity. From this short detailed narrative, we can understand clearly the difference between history and the place of memory. Austerlitz adds saying,

It was the same when Vera, without a word, opened the door to the room where the little couch on which I always slept when my parents were away still stood in its place, at the foot of the four-poster bed with its barley-sugar uprights and pillows piled high which, together with the rest of the furniture, she had inherited from her great-aunt. (130)

Austerlitz feels as if their parents were alive, and he imagines himself with them laughing, talking, eating, and playing. The space in the room and the furniture remind him of his

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childhood. Unconsciously, these images and others come to him from the past as parts of his life and identity. Austerlitz does not mention the year, the month, or the day he goes to his parents' apartment, but he recalls the memories which are fixed on the inhabitant space.

Moreover, Bachelard states "memories of the outside world will never have the same tonality as those of home and, by recalling these memories, we add to our store of dreams; we are never real, but always near poets, and our emotions is perhaps nothing but an expression of a poetry that was lost" (6). This to say that memories differ from one space to another, from the exterior to interior space. For instance, memories of actions that happen outside the house are less influential than others which take place in home where feelings are strong, because the inside space stirs the imagination in the form of dream. This idea appears clearly in this novel when Austerlitz states,

Vera said that I had been deeply affected by the dress rehearsal in the Estates Theater, first and foremost, she suspected, because I was afraid Agáta had genuinely changed into someone who, though she might now be a magical figure, was also a complete stranger to me, and I myself, Austerlitz continued, suddenly remembered that I had been filled by a grief previously unknown to me when, long past my usual bedtime, I lay with my eyes wide open in the dark on the divan in Vera's room, listening to the church clocks strike the quarter-hours and waiting for Agáta to come home, waiting to hear the car bringing her back from that other world stop outside the gate, waiting for her to come into the room at last and sit down beside me, enveloped by a strange theatrical odor in which dust and drifts of perfume mingled. (Sebald 134)

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Austerlitz in Vera's room, in his parents' apartment, thinking of his mother; he is between conscious and unconscious. He imagines that his mother is alive, but she changes into magical person, so he cannot recognize her. And, consciously, he remembers that he is in grief which means that he thinks that she is dead. After that he returns to his unconsciousness dreaming of her coming to his room, which is filled with the odor of her perfume, and sitting beside him. He adds " I see her wearing an ashen-gray silk bodice laced up in front, but I cannot make out her face, only an iridescent veil of pale, cloudy milkiness wafting close to her skin, and then, said Austerlitz, I see the scarf slip from her right shoulder as she lays her hand on my forehead " (Sebald 134). Austerlitz continues his dream saying that he cannot see his mother's face which is looks pale, and then he sees that she puts her hand on his forehead. This dream is the result of the impact of space which make Austerlitz recall the memories of his mother, who lived in this apartment, then he starts dreaming as if he is asleep, but, in fact, he is not.

### **V.III Austerlitz in The Estates Theater Imagining His Mother on the Stage**

The Estates Theater in Prague is one of the most beautiful historical theater buildings in Europe. In W.G.Sebald's *Austerlitz*, the protagonist goes to the theater, because Vera tells him that his mother is an opera singer, and she plays many role in its stage .He decides to visit this place hoping to find something new about his mother. The memories of Agáta, a Jewish opera singer and Austerlitz's birth mother, are fixed in this theater. In this case, Austerlitz wants to see the place where his mother spends times performing on its stage. He narrates, "Around me the tiers of seats with their gilded adornments shining through the dim light rose to the roof; before me the proscenium arch of the stage on which Agáta had once stood was like a blind eye"(Sebald 133). Unconsciously, Austerlitz starts imagining that his mother stands on the proscenium arch

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of the stage as though he sees her, because her memory, as an opera singer, is associated with this space, the stage. Austerlitz does not only visit the theater to recall his mother, but also to discover his identity, because theater is a tool of amusement, and it reflects the values, struggles, and aspirations of the societies that create it (“The History of Theater and its Impact on Society”).

### **V.4- Terezín, the Ending Point of Austerlitz’s Journey**

Terezin is a Jewish ghetto and concentration camp situated in the north of Prague in the Czech Republic during WW II, and it is one of the Holocaust sites. It was designed for deported Jews from Czechoslovakia and other European countries such as Germany, Austria, Netherlands, and Denmark. More than 150,000 Jews were sent there, including 15,000 children before sending them by rail transport to their deaths at extermination camps in occupied Poland (“The History of Terezin”). According to Nora, it is considered one of places of memory for Jewish people. He states “the sense of continuity finds its refuge in places of memory” (qtd in Mussatayeva, F, and K. S. Yermagambetova. 95). That being said, memory is alive due to places of memory which play the role of storytellers. This concept appears clearly in W.G. Sebald’s *Austerlitz*. When Vera tells Austerlitz that his mother is deported to Terezin, he decides to visit this place. And during his way to Terezin Concentration Camp, he narrates “There was no taxi in sight, so I set off on foot from Lovosice in the direction of Terezín” (Sebald 151). Terezin Concentration Camp is situated in isolated place, away of the city, where there is no taxi to be taken by Austerlitz to reach Terezin. The isolated situation reminds the place’s visitors of the isolation of Jewish people and how they were separated from the outside world during the world war two. In architecture, the deep understanding of the construction site is important to comprehend the building’s

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function and its relation with the surroundings, so the situation of Terezin provides us significant ideas about the Concentration Camp. Austerlitz adds

The idea I had formed in my mind was of a mighty complex rising high above the level country, but in fact Terezín lies so far down in the damp lowlands around the confluence of the Eger and the Elbe that, as I read late , there is nothing to be seen of the town, even from the hills around Leitmeritz or indeed from its immediate vicinity, except the chimney of the brewery and the church tower. (Sebald 151)

That is to say, this place reminds its visitor of the complete disconnection of Jewish people there from the outside world, because neither they can see their surroundings, nor they are seen by anyone. In addition, Austerlitz continues describing Terezin town saying: “Although the sense of abandonment in this fortified town, laid out like Campanella’s ideal sun state to a strictly geometrical grid, was extraordinarily oppressive, yet more so was the forbidding aspect of the silent façades. Not a single curtain moved behind their blind windows, however often I glanced up at them”(153). Austerlitz notices that the town is abandoned. That is why buildings are not habitable. This refers to the suffering of Jewish people, who spent hard times in these inadequate houses. Moreover, the silent facades represent the disconnection between the interior and the exterior of buildings as well as the abandonment and isolation. Also, Austerlitz states “As far as I could see, said Austerlitz, the Antikos Bazar is the only shop of any kind in Terezín apart from a tiny grocery store. It occupies the entire façade of one of the largest buildings, and I think its vaults reach back a long way as well”(153). The Jewish people in Terezin were deprived of trading activities, and they were obliged to shop at the ANTIKOS BAZAR, the only shop in

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Terezín, so they did not have any freedom of choice. Then, Austerlitz goes to Ghetto Museum, and he recalls what he finds inside it. He states,

I was confronted with incontrovertible proof of the setting up of a forced labor system throughout Central Europe, and learned of the deliberate wastage and discarding of the work slaves themselves, of the origins and places of death of the victims, the routes by which they were taken to what destinations, what names they had borne in life and what they and their guards looked like. (Sebald 161-162)

During his tour in the Ghetto Museum, Austerlitz recollects the suffering of his ancestors. He recalls the crimes Nazis. He knows the names, the origins, and the way of death of victims, so the Ghetto Museum is a place of memory which makes him feel the pain of Jewish people who were in Terezin. Austerlitz adds,

I saw pieces of luggage brought to Terezín by the internees from Prague and Pilsen, Würzburg and Vienna, Kufstein and Karlsbad and countless other places; the items such as handbags, belt buckles, clothes brushes, and combs which they had made in the various workshops; meticulously worked out projects and production plans for the agricultural exploitation of the open areas behind the ramparts and on the glacis, where oats and hemp, hops and pumpkins and maize were to be grown on plots of land meticulously parceled out. (162)

When Austerlitz sees the pieces which are brought by the prisoners, from different places, to Terezín, he remembers the suffering of Jewish people from difficult works, deprivation, and exploitation. They worked hard in favor of Nazis.

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Finally, we can say that Terezín is a place of memory which stands as witness of a Nazis' crimes towards Jews. For Austerlitz, it represents an individual memory where his mother spent last days of her life. As for Jewish people, it refers to a collective memory of Nazis' persecution, cruelty, and oppression. It is one of the Holocaust sites which portray the darkest stages of history of Jewish people.

## CHAPTER TWO: THE POWER OF ARCHITECTURE IN MEMORY REVIVAL AND IDENTITY REINVENTION in *AUSTERLITZ*

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### Conclusion

Throughout the analysis that has been conducted in this chapter, it is revealed that Sebald highlights the suffering of Jews from the traumatic implications of the Holocaust where the story of Austerlitz is part of genocide's consequences. The role of architecture in stirring feelings and emotions, through the recall of past events, is explored through the analysis of this literary work.

In addition, architecture has contributed in reconstructing identity through the reviving of the memories of past experiences which allow characters to know who they are, and where they come from. The meanings and symbolism of architectural elements, such as building materials and motifs, are considered as social and cultural heritage. That is why architecture enhances the sense of belonging and places itself as part of people's identity.

In addition to Sebald's extraordinary description of buildings, the application of Bachelard's *Poetics of Space* and Nora's *Places of Memory* theoretical frameworks helped us to demonstrate the power and ability of architecture in bringing individual and collective memories from the past to present and illustrate how architecture transmits the fearful Holocaust memory from one generation to another.

## **General Conclusion**

## General Conclusion

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No question that the Holocaust is the subject of many literary works. Many authors wrote about the implications of the genocide on Jewish people. The Holocaust memory contributes to the creation of the social and cultural coherence of Jewish society by reliving the memories, values, and traditions of ancestors. Consequently, it reinforces the sense of belonging for Jews.

*Austerlitz* is one of Winfried George Sebald's masterpieces in which he portrays the dreadful effect of the Holocaust on Jewish people in general and Austerlitz, the protagonist, in particular. He depicts the role of architecture in remembering the past and reconstruction identity through his detailed and extraordinary description of buildings, spaces, places, feelings, and emotions. In an incredible way, he portrays buildings as characters and storytellers by giving meanings to each architectural piece.

The first chapter of this dissertation begun with the contextualization of the novel through taking a look at the suffering of Jewish people, during and after WWII. It explained the implications of the Holocaust on the identity of Jewish people. In addition, it explored the birth of Holocaust literature as one of the tools used to preserve the Holocaust memory alive, and why Jews rely greatly on memory instead of history. Next, it dealt with the relationship between architecture, space, and place in order to pave the way for better understanding of the theoretical framework. This chapter transitions to the main principals of Bachelard's *Poetics of Space* and Nora's *Places of Memory* theoretical frameworks explaining how space and place can evoke memory.

The second chapter emphasized the role of architecture in reviving memory and reinventing identity through the detailed analysis of W.G.Sebald's *Austerlitz* applying the two theoretical frameworks, Bachelard's *Poetics of Space* and Nora's *Places of Memory*. The examination of themes of memory and identity, from an architectural perspective, revealed the

## General Conclusion

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powerful role of architecture in recollecting the past and stirring emotions and feelings. In this novel, mostly, Sebald associates the memory of past events with places and spaces, and he does not connect it with specific times. This demonstrates the great importance of space and place in stirring memory. In addition, each architectural element has its meaning and symbolism. The building's situation and environment, the design style, the building material, the shape, colors, the light and darkness, the visibility, and the size have a great impact on memory. Moreover, architecture is represented as part of identity. The study did not focus on the physical characteristics of buildings, but it explored the emotional influence of places on characters.

The analysis of this novel demonstrated how memories are fixed in spaces, how places symbolize personal and collective memory, and how new spaces, similar to old ones, brings memories from the past to present. Mostly, these memories are accompanied unconsciously with emotions and feelings. The study focused on the characters' emotional interaction with places and spaces.

There are many places of memory in this novel such as The Antwerp Centraal Station which is associated with its function, during WWII, as refuge for Jewish children who arrive there through Kindertransport mission, therefore it represents a place of collective memory for Jews. As for Austerlitz, it is a place of personal memory, because it is his destination when he leaves Prague. In addition, Fort Breendonk and Terezin, a concentration camp, are places of collective memory which symbolize the suffering of Jewish people from the Holocaust. Moreover, Building materials play a great role in evoking memory. The stone floor in The House of Emir Elias in Bala reminds Austerlitz of coldness that leads to stress and tiredness. Additionally, the smell of buildings evokes memories. Similar to the smell of soft soap that reminds the narrator of places of torture in Fort Breendonk, the smell of damp limewash makes

## General Conclusion

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Austerlitz recall his childhood in Number 12. As demonstrated by psychologists, narrow and dark spaces can enhance levels of stress and fear such as casemates in Fort Breendonk and the dark spaces of The House of Emir Elias. Also, the similarities between spaces lead Austerlitz to bring the memories of Church of Salle to Liverpool Street Station. Furthermore, architecture can reconstruct identity. This idea appears clearly in the Eclectic style of design of Antwerp Centraal Station which enhances Belgian people's sense of belonging to Europe. It is demonstrated also that Austerlitz finds parts of his identity in his parents' apartment in Number 12 through the octofoil mosaic flower which refers to the cultural heritage of Austerlitz's society, and the apartment's pieces of furniture which remind him of his childhood and his parents' life style.

In conclusion, this dissertation demonstrated that architecture evokes memory, because the images of the past events exist in people's minds connected with specific spaces and places, in which they take place. Therefore, architecture is considered as a stimulator which stirs memory when individuals confront new spaces share similarities with old ones. In addition, architecture represents part of people's identity through design styles, motifs, and building materials.

Finally, this study explored the horrible implications of the Holocaust on Jewish people, who are supposed to be aware of the unsupportable pain of genocide. But, what they are doing nowadays in Palestine makes them look as if they are projecting the Holocaust trauma on Palestinian people. Their demolition of buildings, spaces, and places aims to erase Palestinian memory as well as identity, and this leads me, as a researcher, who would work on memory and identity in destroyed places such as Gaza, Palestine, to find out other theories related to architecture and memory, because Bachelard's *Poetics of Space* and Nora's *Places of Memory* theoretical frameworks would be unsuitable if not meaningless for this kind of research.

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## الملخص

يعالج هذا البحث إعادة بعث الذاكرة وإعادة تشكيل الذات من خلال الهندسة المعمارية في رواية "أوسترلنيز" للكاتب الألماني دابليو جي سيبالد. كما يهدف، على وجه التحديد، إلى تسليط الضوء على دور الهندسة المعمارية في إعادة بعث ذاكرة شخصيات الرواية وإعادة تشكيل هوية البطل أوسترلنيز وكيف لها أن تثير المشاعر والأحاسيس. حيث يتفاعل هذا البحث مع بطل الرواية في نضاله من أجل البحث عن أصوله. تعتبر هذه الدراسة إضافة لما هو موجود في ميدان الأدب حالياً، فيما يخص الذاكرة والهوية، بمنح رؤية جديدة حول دور الهندسة المعمارية في إثارة الذاكرة وإعادة تشكيل الهوية. ومن بعد آخر، نستطيع القول أن هذه الدراسة ليست مهمة فقط في مجال الأدب بل أيضاً في مجال الهندسة المعمارية التي تعد وسيلة للتعبير عن الموروث الاجتماعي والثقافي. وبغية الوصول إلى تحليل عميق لنص الرواية استندت الدراسة على إطارين نظريين. الأول هو "شعرية الفضاء" للفيلسوف الفرنسي غاستون باشلار، في حين أن الثاني يتعلق بـ "أماكن الذاكرة" للمؤرخ والفيلسوف الفرنسي بيير نورا، إضافة إلى مفاهيم علم النفس ذات الصلة بالذاكرة والهوية. وقد استعملنا هذين الإطارين النظريين لكونهما مناسبين لموضوع البحث حيث أن الفضاء والمكان عنصران معماريان مهمان ولديهما علاقة وطيدة بالذاكرة والهوية. وقد أثبتت نتائج البحث أن للهندسة المعمارية أثر كبير على الشخصيات في تذكر الأحداث والمشاعر والأحاسيس التي هي من الماضي من خلال معاني ورمزية عناصر الهندسة المعمارية كالفضاء وأماكن الذاكرة ومواد البناء ونمط التصميم. الكلمات المفتاحية: الذاكرة، الهوية، الهندسة المعمارية، المكان، الفضاء.