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Memory-making and Vampire-hunting: A Hauntological Study of the "Recovered" Pomerania in the 1950s

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Summary: This article explores the memory strategies and approaches to German materiality in the lands incorporated by Poland after 1945, the so-called Recovered Territories, specifically in Central Pomerania. The research method involves a comparative narrative study of Bram Stoker's Dracula and a group of bureaucratic documents from 1958, related to a trade in formerly German cemetery stones in the Koszalin region. This case study reveals the legal and political complexities of dealing with formerly German property and heritage in 1950s People's Poland, as well as the attempts by local authorities to control and limit access to these cemetery stones, seen as valuable and scarce resources. The results show an inner dynamic of remembrance and forgetting, unveiled through the tension between center-imposed solutions from the ministries in Warsaw and locally decoded meanings. This study provides a new reading of the multifaceted history of the second half of the 1950s in the People's Republic of Poland, partially established in the formerly German lands. The findings are significant as they contribute to our understanding of the complex memory processes in the post-war period, shedding light on the interaction between central and local memory strategies and the handling of formerly German property and heritage.

Keywords: Recovered Territories; cemeteries; hauntology; vampires; materiality

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1 The Journey Begins

Before setting off to hunt vampires one autumn in the late 1800s, Professor Van Helsing leaves a description of his preparations for getting rid of the Un-Dead haunting Victorian England: "I shall […] seal up the door of the tomb […] only to prevent them [the vampires] coming out; […] the Un-Dead is desperate, and must find the line of least resistance, whatsoever it may be" (Stoker 2022). But sealing off tombs was not only important in Dracula-infested England in Bram Stoker's novel. Some decades later, elsewhere, we read that: "At mausoleums, all entrances should be bricked up, and at the tombs, if there is no stone, the vaults should be bricked up […]. Tombstones or their parts lying on the roads […] must be removed […]. It is emphasized that during the cleaning no restorative works on graves or tombstones should take place" (Archiwum Państwowe w Koszalinie 1958).

Although both texts describe analogous actions of closing off tombs, they refer to two different contexts. However similar the second one may sound, the passage I quote is not

another prescription of how to fight the Un-Dead. Moreover, it is not a passage of literary fiction. Instead, it is an excerpt from the nine-page long "Guidelines for cleaning works in discontinued cemeteries owned by the State", attached to the letter from the Polish Ministry of Municipal Administration (*Ministerstwo Gospodarki Komunalnej*, henceforth, the Ministry), and addressed to the Presidium of the Voivodeship National Council in Koszalin – formerly German Köslin (henceforth, the Presidium) on June 13, 1958.

I have put these two fragments side by side in order to address the memory strategies and approaches to German materiality in Poland during the 1950s in a particular region of the so-called Recovered Territories (Polish *Ziemie Odzyskane*), namely in Central Pomerania. To this end, I analyze the case of a trade in formerly German cemetery stones in Koszalin region in 1958. The case involves a request from the Warsaw branch of the Society of Fighters for Freedom and Democracy (*Związek Bojowników o Wolność i Demokrację*, *ZBoWiD*; henceforth, the Union) to buy "Swedish granite" to restore the graves of the Home Army soldiers in Powązki Military Cemetery in Warsaw. The request triggered a series of bureaucratic inquiries and responses from various state and local institutions, which reveal the legal and political complexities of dealing with the formerly German property and heritage in 1958 People's Poland. This case shows how the local authorities attempted to control and limit access to the cemetery stones, which are seen as valuable and scarce resources.

Furthermore, I argue that memory processes in the lands incorporated by Poland after 1945 had their own dynamic, not necessarily similar to what was happening in the "Elder Lands" (Polish *Ziemie Dawne*), however entangled with them. To demonstrate this, I analyze a case not from the early postwar period, when the colonizing of the lands incorporated into Poland after 1945 was evident, including extraction of the land and omnipresent plunder (Kończal 2021; Stańczyk 2021; Zaremba 2012). Instead, I examine a case from the second half of the 1950s. This enables me to show how the relation between center-imposed solutions, i.e. coming from the ministries located in the capital city of Warsaw, and locally decoded meanings, as well as the tensions between the central and local branches of organizations and offices engaged in the case I analyze, unveil an inner dynamic of remembrance and forgetting. Therefore, this article attempts a narrative study of tacit knowledge by comparing Stoker's *Dracula* with a group of bureaucratic documents which, when juxtaposed, unveil a new reading the multi-faceted history of the second half of the 1950s in People's Republic of Poland, partially established in the formerly German lands.

2 The Monsters of History and Their Hunters: A Hauntological Approach to the Polish-German Relations

In an attempt to establish a narrative study, I use storytelling as my chosen method (Sterling 2021: 82) to unveil the meanings behind the analyzed case and engage with the archival case, and critically re-imagine the landscape of the so-called Recovered Territories in the second half of the 1950s. Since narrative is "a means by which people give their lives meanings across time" (Pavlenko 2002: 213), thus comparing the archival case with a classic horror story allows me to draw distinctive motifs and better understand what has happened in the case under scrutiny. In turn, the storytelling method allows me to trace the "structural links between history, memory and fantasy" (Demos 2012: 20). This is to say, to depict the historical background against which this particular case unfolded, to show what memorial strategies were applied to make it plausible, and finally to unveil the tacit ideologies underlying the case and allowing the social actors who were engaged in it to act. By enacting in accordance with storytelling practices, I attempt to "weave together past, present and future in a ceaseless transformation of what has gone before" (Sterling 2021: 68).

Thus, the figure of a vampire seems promising, as it is the imagined monster which each time returns "to be read against contemporary social movements or a specific, determining event" (Cohen 1996: 5). In the case under scrutiny, however, not the vampire is a central figure helping me to interpret the case, as the traded tombstones are not dangerous per se. The threat is to be created. There is, then, a need for a Van Helsing. Presented by Stoker as an elderly scientist from the Netherlands, Professor Abraham Van Helsing legitimizes himself with a variety of eclectic scientific titles "MD, D.Ph., D.Litt., etc." (Stoker 2022). One can say that they are almost redundant: he has so many of them, it seems like a hoax or if he would like to forcibly convince everyone that he is who he claims to be. Today, interpreters of *Dracula* emphasize how Van Helsing sets the tone and interpretation of what is happening, becoming a central narrative figure within the story (Penton 2016; Kern 2020; Podonsky 2010). Thus, I follow a similar occurrence in the 1958 Poland, haunted by the constant menace of "German revanchism". To this end, I analyze official diplomatic documents concerning Polish-German relations – with both the German Democratic Republic (GDR) and the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) – and internal documents regarding Germans who remained in Poland after 1945. It allows me to show the confusion surrounding the image of the German.

In the case under scrutiny, Germans are oddly absent. Thus, what we are confronted with, are the officials dealing with German materiality left behind, namely tombstones in the cemeteries of the "recovered" Koszalin region. Paradoxically, then, there was no vampire, and yet the vampire hunt was launched by the Van Helsing of state propaganda, and further led by the administration, and administrative measures of this "vampire hunting" are at the core of my article. They were applied to the material traces, preserved in the physical environment in the aftermath of the disappearance of humans. Official activities relating to German cultures paradoxically pointed to the fact that their remains were still there, stubbornly coming back to manifest themselves in various forms in the 1958 "recovered" Koszalin region, even though, as I show, they were officially suppressed.

Thus, since it tackles the matter of a non-presence, the study I conduct is a hauntological one. Hauntology helps to investigate unexplained and underrepresented phenomena (Riding 2020: 17), such as the tacit knowledge about the fate of the German tombstones. It is possible since hauntology is an alternative ontology, i.e. different from the usual views of what exists (Derrida 2012). It is especially helpful in the case under scrutiny, where the present, i.e. the year 1958, is constantly pervaded by the past, namely the history of the Polish-German struggle, but also by the future (Gere 2016: 216), so the attempt at using the tombstones to commemorate Polish soldiers buried at Powązki.

Additionally, to fully recognize the potential of this story, I follow Jerome Cohen's "monster theory" manifesto, where he depicts it as a "method of reading cultures from the monsters they engender" (Cohen 1996: 3). I modify his approach according to the modern readings of Stoker's *Dracula* to focus not on the vampire, but the vampire-hunters. As such, this study is an attempt toward a new understanding of official postwar Polish culture, manifesting not only the monsters it created, desired and feared, but also the means it employed to fight them.

2.1 Between Recovery and Erasure: How Koszalin Region was "Recovered" and Forgotten

After the Second World War, Poland was literally moved westwards: it gained some of the territories of the defeated Third Reich and lost the prewar eastern regions to the Soviet Union. Soon, Polish authorities started to empty the newly acquired lands from their German inhabitants, simultaneously carrying out the new settlement. The push-pull character of the resettlement (McNamara 2014: 213), with the ambiguous role of the Red Army, was to

convince the Allies that the new Poland should be established within the Western border of the Oder and Lusitian Neisse rivers (Service 2013).

The newly incorporated regions, including Central Pomerania, which is the focus in the case under scrutiny, were presented by Polish state propaganda as lands that were inherently Slavic – or even Polish – but had been Germanized over centuries; now, in 1945, they were finally returning to the "Motherland" (i.e. post-war Poland) in an act of historical justice (Mazur 2006; Grzechnik 2017; Traba & Żytyniec 2017). This was the rationale behind calling the formerly German lands the "Recovered Territories", in Polish *Ziemie Odzyskane*. "Odzyskać", means in Polish "to become again the owner of something that has been lost" or "to return to a previous state", and it was translated into English as "recovery" by the officials involved in the scientific aspects of the resettlement action. As early as 1946, we can find documents in English, addressing the Ministry dealing with these lands as the Ministry of the Recovered Territories, hence *Ministerstwo Ziem Odzyskanych* in Polish (Archiwum Akt Nowych, 1946). It is hard to assume the authors of the early English translations, researchers themselves, overlooked the English connotation of "recovery" with a healing process: maybe presuming that establishing the new Poland was a process of not only returning to the "natural" borders of the country (Labuda 1966), but also overcoming a disorder of being "unnatural", in the sense of not being in the right place geographically and historically.

Even though the period of the intense Stalinization in Polish public life sealed the term's fate, it was still used occasionally. The disappearance of "recovery" from the official discourse started with the Ministry of Recovered Territories being liquidated in January 1949, and the minister Władysław Gomułka being accused of "rightist-nationalist deviation" (Ćwiek-Rogalska & Mrzygłód 2022), which meant he allegedly differed from the Soviet line on issues such as Poland's independence, relations with the USSR, collectivization of agriculture, and international affairs. Gomułka was forced to resign and self-criticize, and his supporters were purged from the Polish United Workers' Party. What followed was that the term "Ziemie Odzyskane" was replaced with the "Western Lands" or the "Western and Northern Lands", starting in 1957 when the *Towarzystwo Rozwoju Ziem Zachodnich* (The Society for Development of the Western Lands) was established (Jasiński 2006: 22). However, the "Recovered Territories" remained in popular use (Jasiński 2006: 22). What is more, the term was sometimes still used by the authorities. For example, in a diplomatic note sent from Kabul, Afghanistan, the author states that the Polish legation in Kabul continue its informational activities on issues of uttermost importance for People's Poland, such as "the question of the *Ziemie Odzyskane*" (Martynowicz 2011: 284).

Doubtlessly, the discourse about the "recovery" in public Polish memory was changing with time, as was the ongoing process of coping with what contradicted the narration about the "recovery", i.e. the materiality left behind by Germans. Among them were houses, household items, urban planning, objects or everyday use and – the focus of this article – local cemeteries in towns and villages of Pomerania, as well as the tombstones and mausoleums located there. To finalize and justify the "recovery", various memory strategies had to be applied. Here, the top-down imposed perspective clashed with local strategies, employed after the forced disappearance of people who used to interact with their dead there on a daily basis (Ćwiek-Rogalska 2022). In other words, Dracula was no longer there, but since the vampires need to rest in their native soil to survive, the sole existence of material traces is enough reason to fight the Un-Dead. This is to say, the perspective of official dealing with the case disturbingly mirrors what we can call a Van Helsing's perspective, i.e. one that was based on vague premises, devoid of clear prerogatives and with covert ulterior motives.

However, it is hard to say to what degree the "recovery" was a part of public memory in general since it was mostly present as part of memory "software" (Etkind 2004), i.e. texts, such as newspapers, political speeches, or memoirs, collected on the ongoing basis by various

institutions since the 1940s (Praczyk 2018). Consequently, hardware memories, which could reinforce the group's sense of a shared past through various rituals (Erll & Rigney 2009: 1–14; Hobsbawm 2003: 1–14), were scarcely produced in the period under scrutiny. Therefore, it is difficult to determine the extent to which "recovery" was part of collective memory in 1958, since it was mostly communicated through software memories that were more ephemeral and fragile. Thus, during this period, it belongs to what Etkind calls a "ghostware", i.e. the form of memory which is constituted by "simulacra that carry the memory of the dead" (Etkind 2013: 211–212). Etkind argues that these elements signify the uncanny quality of memory, which fills memory with dread and unease of the past. One of such simulacra in the case under scrutiny would be the figure of vampire, manifesting not in a novel – as is the case with Etkind's analysis of post-Soviet hauntologies – but in the bureaucratic documents. It is, however, tacit, as I show as the case unfolds, with the vocal element of vampire-hunter.

To understand this uncanny manifestation, it is important to grasp the distinctive phases where the narration on the "recovery" in postwar Poland was imminent. It was firmly connected with the question of the Polish-German border. For this contested border the notion of "recovery" was crucial as an element of the memory policy. It originated in 1944 with the manifesto by The Polish Committee of National Liberation, which urged people to "fight for the freedom of Poland, for the return to the Motherland of the old Polish Pomerania and Opole Silesia, for East Prussia, for wide access to the sea, for Polish border posts on the Oder river!" (Polski Komitet Wyzwolenia Narodowego 1944). Here, the "return to the Motherland" was explicitly stated, creating a new center for future Poland: the westward shift is legitimized, and located between the rivers of Oder and Lusatian Neisse. This term was subsequently transformed into "recovery", as soon as a new, centralized institution for the administration of the incorporated lands was established, namely the aforementioned Ministry of Recovered Territories (Jaworski 1973). After the dissolution of this institution, "recovery" lost its popularity, even though it was present in the early 1950s in the Treaty of Zgorzelec, where Eastern Germany accepted the western Polish border, and the sentence about the "Recovered Territories" being "returned to Poland for eternity" was inscribed in the preamble to the Constitution of the Polish People's Republic, ratified in 1952. The border between Poland and Germany, which had been legally unsettled since 1945,[1] was finally determined by the 1990 German–Polish Border Treaty, signed in Warsaw on 14 November 1990 and came into force on 16 January 1992 when the ratification documents were exchanged.

With the Polish Thaw and Władysław Gomułka – the former and sole Minister for the Recovered Territories – returning to power in 1956, "recovery" was redefined. It was acknowledged that not everything had proceeded as planned, and the initial days of resettlement were not the days of triumph, but a period of hardship not only with Germans but also with the corrupted members of the Soviet Army, UBP (*Urząd Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego*, Department of Public Security, hence the secret police), and citizens' militia (*Milicja Obywatelska*, national police organization). Understanding these circumstances is essential for the story which started in 1958 on the formerly German cemeteries in Koszalin region.

2.2 The Curious Case of "Swedish Granite"

At the beginning of Stoker's *Dracula*, Jonathan Harker, a newly qualified English solicitor, visits Count Dracula at his castle in Transylvania to help him buy a house near London. In other words, the vampire enters the stage thanks to a commercial exchange. Similarly, the case

[1] Although People's Poland signed two separate treaties on the border: one with the GDR in 1950, and one with the FRG in 1970.

I analyze starts with a trade inquiry. Namely, on July 31, 1958, a branch of the Union in Warsaw asked the Ministry of Municipal Administration for permission to purchase no more than 16m^3 of Swedish granite to restore the graves of the Home Army soldiers in Powązki Military Cemetery in Warsaw.[2]

At the beginning of August 1958, the Ministry presented the case to the Presidium of the Voivodeship National Council in Koszalin. The Presidium sent queries to local national councils, asking about the possible supply of stones. At the same time, officers from Koszalin wanted to make sure what to do, so in turn, they asked the Ministry for guidelines. In reply, the Ministry claimed there was a legal solution already in place: the decree on "formerly German" (*poniemieckie*) property (1946), issued already in the late 1940s, as well as a hard-to-find circular, allegedly issued in 1956. These clarifications were then sent over to the local national councils along with the repeated request to send information about the stone supply. Seemingly, all important issues should have been solved by then, with the colonizing policies already in place, and yet, that was not the case.

Finally, on November 20, Koszalin was able to answer the query. Three local councils agreed to sell stones to the Union: Słupsk (German *Stolp*), Człuchów (German *Schlochau*) and Czarne (German *Hammerstein*). However, the National Council in Koszalin sent to the Union one more letter: on December 2, 1958, it informed the veterans that no more transactions of this type will be possible in the future, implying that from now on, they will keep a close eye on the cemeteries as sources of the stone. Only legally sanctioned actions, that local authorities know of in advance, will be possible.

The initial analysis of this bureaucratic exchange, makes one to ask several questions at once: What was the significance of this particular granite? Did the veterans from the Union presume that all granite in the "Recovered Territories" was "Swedish"? Did they consult the officials in Koszalin by chance or did they have a particular stone and location already in mind? Some of these assumptions cannot be substantiated, as we have only limited data in front of us. However, some of them may be answered by a close examination of the region in question.

2.3 The Unburied Past: The Situation of German Cemeteries in the "Recovered" Region of Koszalin

I employ the term "Central Pomerania" to designate the territory of former Koszalin voivodeship that was first established in 1950, as it was initially part of a larger voivodeship of Szczecin that encompassed the whole "recovered" area of Pomerania. Only later it was divided between Szczecin and Koszalin. Due to the high heterogeneity of the local policies in the "Recovered Territories", and local modes of commemoration, the policy toward the cemeteries varied depending on the region.

The situation of Central Pomerania was quite exceptional. It was the region where the settlement was least successful and the rhetoric of "recovery" had to be created either by connecting with the distant past or by mythologizing the recent war events. Therefore, on the one hand, some historical events were magnified for the sake of creating a Polish historical narrative for the new inhabitants to identify with, and concentrated mostly on the distant "Slavic" past of the regions and the tradition of the early eleventh- and twelfth-century Polish states of the Piast Princes Bolesław Chrobry and Bolesław Krzywousty, which included Central Pomerania. On the other hand, it relied on consecrating the battles fought to break through the Pomeranian Line, a line of fortifications guarding the eastern border of the Third Reich, in 1945 as the recent founding myth of Central Pomerania (Ćwiek-Rogalska 2020). This project, however, was still in the future, as most of the conceptual work on commemoration

[2] The analyzed documents are preserved in the State Archive in Koszalin, in the Union (ZBOWiD) files.

and Polonization of Central Pomerania was done only in the 1960s. The period under scrutiny here, in terms of memory policies in the region, seems to be a time of neglect and abandonment. Apparently, in the 1950s, Poland was still facing the fact that it was partially established in formerly German lands. The "Recovered Territories", despite the claims of central authorities, were not fully merged with the rest of the country, and the excess material traces of German culture was passively decaying or were deliberately destroyed. This was also the fate of cemeteries.

The situation of the German minority – the main users of the cemeteries in question – in the 1950s Koszalin voivodeship was not yet fully settled. No documents exist that enable us to determine with certainty how many Germans were displaced from the region since 1945. According to Katrin Steffen's estimations, approximately 291,000 people departed from the entire Pomerania in 1945 alone (Steffen 2001: 238). However, it should be noted that Germans were displaced throughout the entire 1940s, as some of them worked in estates administered by the Red Army who was reluctant to release them sooner (Steffen 2001: 259–260). In 1958, the region of Koszalin was enlisted among the two with the densest German population not expelled – the other one being the Wrocław region – with 1.100 people identified as Germans living in Koszalin voivodeship at the time. They did not form a cohesive group, but were depicted as "2-3 families" living in a given locality and mostly working at local PGRs[3] (n.a. 2011a: 727). Such scattered communities were not a threat to imposing any kind of activities in German cemeteries.

Secondly, there was still an influx of the new inhabitants to the region, and in turn a need to have burial places for them as well, even though the official migratory processes in Poland came to an end in the 1950s. The State Repatriation Office (*Państwowy Urząd Repatriacyjny*, PUR) was shut down in 1951 based on the belief that internal migrations had ceased (Sula 2002). Moreover, in 1959, the authorities terminated the "repatriation" of Poles from the Soviet Union – either former residents of pre-war Polish borderlands or Polish citizens forcibly deported to Siberia or deep into the USSR (Popiel 2011). At the same time, by the end of 1958, the remaining Germans were supposed to be evacuated (n.a. 2011a). It would result in finishing the process of resettlement and making the homogeneous society of Polish Koszalin region.

In such circumstances, apart from the relocation itself, population exchange dynamics presupposed that the newcomers would adapt to their new environment and that it would meet all their basic needs. Although most official documents focused on living and working spaces, some also addressed the need for spaces to bury the dead, such as cemeteries. In the first postwar years, the new inhabitants either used some part of German cemeteries, or established their own burial grounds. Thus, as the condition of the cemetery reflects the extent of transformations in cultural practices (Brencz 2000: 278), the cemetery can be a laboratory allowing us to see the development of the culture of new inhabitants of the "Recovered Territories".

In the aftermath of the war, Poland enacted various laws concerning the management of cemeteries. But as claimed by Andrzej Brencz, "all these laws were instrumentalized for propagandistic and political ends with regard to the cemeteries of the former German population" (Brencz 2000: 289), as they were "testifying to inconvenient historical realities" (Chwistek 1997: 93). One of the solutions on how to manage the cemeteries was to introduce a separate institution, i.e. the Ministry, to whom the question of the Union was addressed. It was a relatively new institution at the time: established in 1950, it took the place of the Ministry of Public Administration and the Office for Religious Affairs until it ceased to exist in 1972. It

[3] In Polish *Państwowe Gospodarstwo Rolne*. State-owned agricultural enterprises that operated in People's Poland from 1949 to 1994.

was responsible for such tasks as housing policy; construction of roads; street lighting; management of parks and hotels; water, gas, and electricity supply; as well as management of cemeteries and tombs. Although it seems it was the last task that made the Union ask the Ministry for the Swedish granite, in fact, it was an entanglement of management tasks in the power of the Ministry.

Speaking of the central institution, it is however important to distinguish how the top-down policies were exemplified in the region and how they were renegotiated. The situation of German cemeteries in Koszalin region was similar to what was happening in other "recovered" areas. City cemeteries were demolished as a result of bottom up initiatives, by decisions of local authorities, without proper permits (Brencz 2000: 291). This, in turn, was interpreted as a sign of "the enormous disorder that prevailed in the offices and the certain incompetence of the people working there" and it was "these officials, often employed at random, without qualifications, […] [who] were accountable for the fate of German cemeteries" (Brencz 2000: 292).

Here, however, the issue of incompetence and confusion of the officials emerges. Armed with the center-issued prerogatives, they are on site to fight the Un-Dead. But what if someone accidentally reveals that Van Helsing does not have such credible credentials as he himself claims to have? The local authorities were, against their will, provided with Van Helsing-like competences, and had to terminate the existence of the German materiality left behind – literally and metaphorically. However, it was not the sole existence of such a materiality that poses a danger to the already established order: it was the acknowledgment of its being there. It is a widespread belief that vampires cannot enter one's home unless invited to come in (Wicke 1992: 476). Similarly, no one took official interest in the left behind German tombstones, until the invitation – in a form of a trade inquiry – did not come from Warsaw. Then, and only then, the tombstones appeared, and thirteen years after the war, the problem emerged how to explain their state, what to do with them, and how to strip them of their problematic pedigree – and in turn, to make new use of them.

This imminent characteristic of the newly established authorities we can illustrate precisely with the figure of Stoker's Van Helsing. When the protagonists of *Dracula* do not know how to resist the eponymous vampire, Professor Van Helsing arrives. But what prerogatives does he have? What are his credentials, what authority permitted him to pierce dead bodies with a stake? "I have an Indulgence," (Stoker 2022) he explains to the hesitant comrades and as we are informed, no one was able to distrust him. In other words, there is some reason why new authorities are to be believed, some gravely sounding, but at the same time elusive, credentials. We trust them because they claim to be trustworthy, or we are at the cusp of reversing the already established order.

The liquidation activities in German cemeteries took place mostly in the 1950s and 1960s, Andrzej Brencz claims that up to this point almost everywhere formerly German cemeteries were demolished (Brencz 2000: 291–292). With the recognition of the cultural and economic value of the cemeteries in the 1960s, came a paradox: the struggle for the Polishness of the formerly German lands resulted in the "robbery and destruction of German cemeteries, whose marbles and other precious rocks adorned in the form of floor coverings in villas of the heroes of the little stabilization [i.e. the Gomułka period, 1956–1970 – KĆR]" (Czarnuch 1997: 179). It resulted from the new act of January 1959 which allowed for the cemetery to be used for another purpose if 40 years have passed since the last burial and after moving memorabilia of historical, archaeological or artistic value. Thus, the case of 1958 is still in the grey zone between the official predicaments of 1959 and local "plundering fever" of the 1940s.

2.4 Polish Thaw, Commemoration of the Home Army and the German Question in 1958

An important factor for solving the riddle of how come the Union wanted to commemorate the late Home Army soldiers only thirteen years after the war ended, in 1958, we need to delve into central discourses in Poland of the second half of the 1950s.

The 1950s witnessed significant political and social transformations in People's Poland. The sovereignty of the country was severely limited until the demise of Stalin in 1953 and the denunciation of his personality cult by Khrushchev in his secret speech of February 1956. Subsequently, a period known as the Polish Thaw ensued, which entailed a gradual liberalization and democratization of the Polish society. The end of Stalinism, a totalitarian dictatorship marked by terror, censorship, collectivization and industrialization, enabled a more liberal faction within the Polish United Workers' Party to challenge the hardline Stalinists. The leader of this faction was Władysław Gomułka, who became the First Secretary of the party in 1956 during what some historians term the "inter-October revolution" (Kochanowski 2017).

For the German question, the onset of the thaw also coincided with a change in the status of East Germany, which was Poland's neighboring German state. In 1955, East Germany, created in 1949, attained sovereignty and in 1956 it joined the Warsaw Pact, a military alliance led by the Soviet Union. Thus, the representation of a "German" in the Polish official discourse was gradually differentiated between the necessity to establish proper diplomatic relations with both German states, the demands of the propaganda, which still stimulated anti-German sentiments and the dichotomy of East Germany as a part of the Eastern Bloc, i.e. allies, and West Germany as the epitome of capitalism, revanchism and a vital threat to the border on Oder and Neisse.

Germany was still associated with the outbreak of the Second World War, thus a representation of German as a threat was an essential component of any commemorations organized, including those managed by the veterans. The only official veteran association in People's Poland was the aforementioned Union. Established in 1949, it was meant for the veterans of the Polish People's Army who, along with the Red Army soldiers, liberated the Polish territories in 1944–1945 and took an active part in conquering what was to become the "Recovered Territories". Thus, the initial function of the Union was "to ensure control of the rulers over the ruled and to transmit the official ideology to the people" (Wawrzyniak 2015: 35).

The political changes of the late 1950s, i.e. de-Stalinization of public life, changed the composition of the Union: now, also the representatives of other units, such as the previously banned Home Army, could apply for membership. Before, the Home Army, a large resistance movement in the Nazi-occupied Polish territories, allegiant to the Polish exile government in London, was a hostile formation for the Soviet-dependent authorities. Thus, the members of the Home Army were persecuted and the memory of it was repressed (Panecka 2008; Sawicki 2005; Gawin 2004). Thus, it was only in 1958 that the Union was able to react.

2.5 Germanies and Germans in the Discourse of the 1958 People's Poland

If we further analyze the central discourse regarding Germans, the two German states – the FRG and the GDR – and the "Recovered Territories", it becomes clear they were still hot spots of memory policies in 1958. A note issued after November 14th, 1958, on the Polish-Eastern German relations, summarizes the twists and turns of Polish central policies towards Germans who remained after the expulsion process (n.a. 2011a).

I briefly discussed the situation of Germans who remained in Poland, and particularly in the Koszalin region, after 1945. Like others, they were subjected to harsh policies toward everything identified as German, until the end of the 1940s. With the 3rd Plenary Meeting of the Central Committee of the Party (11th–13th November 1949), whose pamphlet is indeed an extensive critique of Gomułka and the Ministry of the Recovered Territories, first steps were

taken to acknowledge that there are still Germans in Poland, and this is no longer a temporary situation. Some reflection on giving Germans some basic rights were, however, postulated by the Ministry for the Recovered Territories (Browarek 2009: 60).

However, the political bureau of the Central Committee of the Party explicitly acknowledged the existence of some problems affecting the German population as late as in 1955, when they resolved to finally address them. Their resolution implied the recognition of various forms of discrimination against the Germans, as well as the lack of financial and material support for their living, housing and cultural conditions. Moreover, they indicated the need to intensify the "cultural and mass work", which encompassed propaganda efforts to persuade the Germans of the benefits of living in People's Poland. Also, the acknowledgment stressed the existence of a cultural administration that enabled Germans to access education in German. However, in the Koszalin region of the 1950s, the situation was far from satisfactory: only 44 children were taught in German in 3 schools with German language (n.a. 2011a: 727).

This resolution, however signaling the need to solve the German question, failed to address the variety of problems of the Germans who remained in Poland, as it did not deal with the issue of confiscated property or the material status of the German minority, i.e. also the case of cemeteries and burial places. The question of citizenship was partially resolved by the citizenship act of January 8th, 1951 (Browarek 2009: 73; Kacprzak 2010: 223). Therefore, another resolution was required to "regulate the legal situation of Germans in Poland", which was issued by the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the Party in April 1957, so just before the case under scrutiny took place. The authorities attempted to regulate the issue of German property, but it was contingent on several conditions. Germans were expected to depart, while the indigenous inhabitants of the "Recovered Territories" were to be dissuaded from identifying as German or to follow their relatives who had left Poland earlier. Furthermore, according to this resolution, Germans had to choose between obtaining a passport of the GDR or an ID issued by Polish authorities if they decided to stay in Poland or to reject an East German passport. Furthermore, the issue of minority was to be settled definitively: Germans had to decide whether to stay in Poland or leave permanently. The central authorities envisaged that they would complete their departure by the end of 1958. Thus, 1958 was the year when the places of German origin were to be deserted for good and no one was to care for them anymore. The scale of departure is best illustrated by numbers: from the beginning of the action, i.e. from 1952 to November 1, 1958, 46,878 people left for the GDR and 203,674 people for the FRG. The tone of official documents was disdainful and the departure is referred to as a "travel psychosis" (*psychoza wyjazdowa*). As seen from the note evaluating this resolution, from the perspective of three subsequent years, it did not have a "stabilizing effect" on the German population in Poland and did not "bind them permanently to Poland" (n.a. 2011a: 732). Nothing was, however, said about the German cemeteries in the "recovered" regions.

At the level of interstate connections, the analysis of the documents concerning Polish-German diplomatic relations reveals that in 1958 there was no consistent image of Poland in both German countries, nor was there any of both Germanies in Poland, and that the relations were still imbued with an atmosphere of suspicion. A note issued by the Polish embassy in Berlin on January 2, 1958, illustrates such an image of relation with the comrades from the GDR (Szybek 2011). Thus, the question of the relationship between Poland and the Germanies, as well as Poland and "its Germans" was a particular variety of "border trouble", as Simon Lewis puts it, a term that refers to the politicized division in memory that has characterized Polish culture since the end of the Second World War and denotes the conflicting narratives and interpretations of the historical events and experiences that shaped Poland's borders, identity and relations with its neighbors (Lewis 2019).

The question of Western Polish border was still heavily discussed. In January and February 1958, Mieczysław Rakowski, a prominent communist official, visited the FRG and

stated that the question of Polish border on Oder and Neisse rivers "emerged in almost every talk [he had]" (Rakowski 2011: 117, 120). Following the question of the border, the official documents corroborate the extent to which the question of former Germanness of the "recovered" regions was still an issue for the central discourse, such as, for instance, the aforementioned diplomatic note sent from Kabul, Afghanistan. It contained an explanation provided by the Polish official working there that some of the local geography textbooks still used the pre-1939 western Polish borders and the newly incorporated lands were described as "Under Polish Administration", which was regarded as an act of "revisionist activities" of FRG (Martynowicz 2011: 282).

The FRG was accused of revanchism more than once. During Władysław Gomułka discussion with the delegation from the GDR, including Walter Ulbricht, First Secretary of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany, himself, Ulbricht suggested to address the issue of potential revisionist work in the "Recovered Territories". It triggered Gomułka to response that, again, diplomatic relations with West Germany could be established if the borders on the Oder and Neisse rivers were to be acknowledged. In the same document, Gomułka used the term "our Germans", which allows to prove that the question of Germans in Poland was to be settled leastways at the state level (n.a. 2011b). Furthermore, it demonstrates that the question of expulsion was concluded and the time of adaptation had begun. Then, what remained of German materiality should have been "cared for", even if this care meant bricking up the mausoleums and removing tombstones.

2.6 Van Helsings of Koszalin: How the Tombstones Became a Recycling Material

In summary, in 1958 the German question was regarded as resolved in People's Poland. Even though some of the legal resolutions were not yet in place and were only designed, the attitude of the officials, visible in the diplomatic documents, was the same as if it was already accomplished. Germans who still resided in the "Recovered Territories" were expected to either migrate to Germany, preferably to the GDR, or assimilate completely to the Polish conditions and acquire Polish citizenship for good. They retained some partial privileges as a minority group, such as undertaking cultural activities and education in German, but the issues of property confiscation after the war and overall marginalization were not addressed.

One of the obstacles to fully acknowledging their voices was the persistent ideology of "recovery", which was still present in 1958, albeit with a different component: as the German question was deemed to be settled, the "Recovered Territories", now renamed as the "Western Lands", were purported to be integrated with the rest of the country. With the Polish Thaw, Gomułka, formerly a Minister of Recovered Territories and as such one of the main proponents of the ideology of "recovery", regained power: his anti-German sentiments remained unchanged (Żukowski 2014). Therefore, the concept of "recovery" still prevented Germans from claiming their previous existence in these lands in the official discourse. A very evident sign of this existence were the cemeteries. We know already that they were not adequately preserved and that the sequence of regulations did not resolve this issue.

At the same time, with the Polish Thaw, some groups that had been previously excluded from commemoration, such as the Home Army, were admitted into the public discourse. For them, these cemeteries became a source of materials. One marginalized group supplanted another. How did this happen and were the causes of this rooted earlier? The aspect that I have not yet examined is the role of the officials, both central and local. What can we deduce from the "soulless" exchange of bureaucratic documents? It may help us to avoid reducing the reasons for the neglect or destruction of these cemeteries only to ideological and political context (Brencz 2000: 288–289) and to reveal the cultural patterns of the period. Likewise, it is important to elucidate the role of German property for Poland after 1945. To this end, it is

essential to demonstrate what strategies were employed to remove a stone from a cemetery, which is after all a place of remembrance and sanctity. The same way as Van Helsing rationalizes killing someone because they are under the influence of vampires, the same goes about the recycling of the tombstones because they are "abandoned" and "left behind".

To this end, one of the memorial strategies was to strip the materiality of its previous, that is, German, characteristics, which explains why it is socially acceptable to destroy and erase any traces left by its representatives. The close reading of all the official documents in the case reveals that the tombstones were never referred to as "German", or "formerly German" (*poniemieckie*). Thus, "Swedish granite", so clearly stated in the first letter by the Union, becomes not only a specific kind of stone. To this day, this kind of granite remains the most sought-after black stone on the Polish cemetery market. Because of its durability, it is resistant to the stresses that occur in the tombstone, which in turn prevents micro-cracks on the tombstone cover that may result in its deterioration (Admin 2016). The way the Union used the adjective "Swedish" may not only indicated that they were after a particular kind of stone, but also that they refused to admit they wanted a stone from a German cemetery. Even though the Home Army veterans were a previously marginalized group that want to benefit from the property of another still marginalized group, they do not express that directly.

Likewise, the cemeteries are not referred to as "German" or "formerly German" but as "abandoned" or "closed". Their designation is ostensibly purely geographical: "all cemeteries in the Recovered Territories, which became the property of the State in accordance with the decree … on abandoned and post-German properties" (*wszystkie cmentarze na terenie Ziem Odzyskanych, które przeszły na własność Państwa zgodnie z dekretem […] o majątkach opuszczonych i poniemieckich*). However, two elements of the ideology of "recovery", obstructing the German voices, are present: the region is referred to as the "Recovered Territories" and the decree on abandoned and formerly German property is evoked.

The circulation of the documents in the case under scrutiny shows how the responsibilities were shifted and how no one was made liable for the undertaken actions. For example, the fact that the letters to local national councils were sent according to the distribution list is quite telling. Since 1950, national councils were local administrative units, formed at the level of towns and communes, as well as counties and voivodeships. Although they pretended to be the local democratic bodies – as indicated by their composition, where the representatives of various unions and organizations, including the parties different from the ruling one, i.e. the Polish United Workers' Party, were present – in fact, they were controlled by the Party. Although they pretended to be the local democratic bodies, in fact, they were controlled by the Party. Clearly, the presidium in Koszalin had no idea where the stone could be extracted and shifted this responsibility to the municipalities: local national councils were to estimate how much stone is located in cemeteries in their region and as soon as possible send the information back to Koszalin.

Likewise, we see the poor circulation of the legal documents from the center to the peripheries, and that even though the cemeteries should have been "cleaned up" and inventoried, they were robbed and left to decay. All that said, the case was not about the stone per se; it was about turning the tombstones, abandoned because of the forced displacement, into stones ready to be reused. Surprisingly, then, except for the Union which plays here the initiating role of the innocent Johnathan Harker led by hostile forces, the stones are not at the center of attention to all parties involved. What concerns them the most is how to extract the stones in a way that seems to be legal. What should concern us, then, as the interpreters of this story, is what they do not tell there to achieve their aim.

Here, two matters are at stake. First, that the ideology of "recovery" disregarded cemeteries as indicators of previous German presence in these lands. The problem was exacerbated in 1958 by the seemingly "settled" German question and not yet resolved by the

new regulations on cemeteries which was to be issued a year later, in 1959. Thus, in 1958, it resulted in the issue of further disconnection between the living and the dead, which is the foundation of how the cemetery functions (Kolbuszewski 1996: 19). To deal with places where the foreign dead, as well as the dead they chose to ignore as testimonies to the Germanness of the land, is the subject of the bureaucratic exchange under scrutiny. This exchange enables us to ask what happens when cemeteries, which usually preserve the past in the cultural landscape, become places that evoke not fond memories and pride, but anxiety and shame, and bear witness to negligence and decay instead of commemoration and preservation.

But still: why did the officials seem to be so incompetent and confused by the case in 1958? To understand it fully, we have to go back to 1945 and first attempt at cope with formerly German properties in the "Recovered Territories". The main problem of the period was not only how to deal with the excess of property Germans were forced to leave, but also how to prevent the omnipresent looting (Polish *szaber*) of it. Given the uncertain future of the "Recovered Territories" – amplified in the 1950s by the question of the Polish-German border – people frequently decided to loot the properties and take them to the Elder Lands, instead of dealing with them on site.

Marcin Zaremba has proposed a threefold periodization of *szaber* (Zaremba 2012: 296–300). The first period, immediately after the front passed, was chaotic and random, done in passion. The second period, after the front moved west in April 1945, attracted new looters by a mirage of German treasures, and they focused on small items. Thus, it was more systematic. The third period was the most systematic looting and ceased in the Spring and Summer of 1946. Then, there were too few empty places to loot and too many settlers already using the formerly German properties on site. Also, at the time two regulations were introduced: that only the Minister of the Recovered Territories can authorize the removal of items from the regions in question and that those who prevent the illegal removal may be subjected to an award.

Bearing in mind that Zaremba's study encompasses early postwar period, two issues important for the case unfolding in 1958 cannot be thoroughly discussed using only his remarks. First, Zaremba excludes "official looting" from his analysis, as it was not done for personal gain (Zaremba 2012: 302). Thus, he distinguishes between *szaber* as a criminal activity and what he calls "the care of a host" (*gospodarska troska*). Criminality associated with looting is related not only to destruction as a means to Polonize the regions (Zaremba 2012: 305) but also reflects the omnipresent desire to find valuables left behind, even if that meant digging graves, either German or Jewish (Zaremba 2012: 304–305). Those who were lured by "the legends about Polish Canada in the so-called Recovered Territories" (Zaremba 2012: 311) were looting not only because of the need to avenge the war and anti-Germanness of the period (Zaremba 2012: 275), but also because of private profit. Secondly, he only mentions that some forms of *szaber* might have been legalized, as it was the matter in the "Recovered Territories". He does acknowledge that new society in the "Recovered Territories" was bonded together by the distribution of the looted objects, which in turn strengthened social ties, often of a client-patron nature in various arrangements and constellations (Zaremba 2012: 307). However, for Zaremba, *szaber* occurs where the social control cannot be maintained and the lack of feeling either guilty or to be punished is a valid factor (Zaremba 2012: 277) and moral erosion occurs. Thus, *szaber* is a "people's reaction to crisis", especially when people are deprived of material goods. However, for Zaremba, the groups "closer to the social center", i.e. some form of elites, were less inclined to plunder (Zaremba 2012: 278). This conviction cannot be maintained when we realize that the dynamic of elite creation in the "Recovered Territories" was tightly connected with *szaber* (Tomczak 2006) as well as that as late as in 1958 some forms of *szaber* were still present and could have been connected to the "social center", as the case under scrutiny shows.

When we consider the situation in 1958, we see that it still bears some marks of *szaber*. For obvious reasons, the intensity, social actors and reasoning behind the looting were different, yet there were still places and objects left to be plundered. At first glance, it is evident that even though some of the officials' activities met the criteria of *szaber* according to Zaremba, others were different. First of all, what we observe is an institutionalized looting of German cemeteries – a question of how to legally transform tombstones into recyclable material – and then, that it was not done for pure personal gain and lack of material goods, but because it was possible to achieve public goals at the expense of a group which was still marginalized. The case occurs as late as in 1958 because of many reasons discussed above, but it is plausible to hypothesize that it was done in 1958 also because some might have thought there was no one to care, no firm regulations yet in place, and they could have done that safely. Therefore, indeed for *szaber* to occur, even as late as in 1958, the situation of suspension of legal norms is required, as Zaremba argues. Even if there are seemingly some regulations, no one knows exactly how to apply them or pretends they do not want to apply them. Using Stoker as an example once again: it is not about Count Dracula, as it is not about the tombstones. The figure of a vampire only mirrors cultural fears of the nineteenth century: the fear of the other, who is narrated about instead of listened to (Kern 2020). What we know about Dracula is deduced more by Van Helsing than vocalized by Dracula himself: "Van Helsing's worldview is vocalized and incessantly reaffirmed by guilt-inducing speeches to the other characters" (Penton 2016). It is Van Helsing who provides the explanations and frames the actions of the party with meaning, while the disturbing Dracula has to be silenced.

2.7 "And now, my child, you may kiss her. Kiss her dead lips if you will"; or, Conclusions

The hypothesis I followed in this article was that the materiality left in Koszalin region of the Polish "Recovered Territories" was constructed as obtrusive, i.e. analogous to the way in which Van Helsing constructs the Un-Dead. However the officials were at first perplexed and bewildered by the Union's request, and perhaps they did not initially intend to demolish the cemetery simply because it was a cemetery, or perhaps the National Council in Koszalin had other motives for retaining the tombstones, for mundane reasons, the analysis of the case unveils, how these tombstones triggered a response similar to what we seen in Stoker's *Dracula*.

Contrarily to what we could assume, the hauntological analysis of the reality of the "recovered" Koszalin region in 1958, against the background of the dynamically changing socialist reality of the country in general (Friszke 2002; Zaremba 2001), shows that local officials – credited with taking care of the cemeteries as their users were expelled or marginalized – who clearly did not know what they were supposed to do. It was a third party – the Union in Warsaw – that directed their attention to the cemeteries; yet, not as places of commemoration to the dead, but as reservoirs of scarce building material. Thus, the case shows what memorial strategies were used at the national level to cope with the issue of the neglected German heritage and how they did or did not sediment in time in space, influencing the decision making at the level of local authorities.

This contributes to the monster theory in accordance with contemporary interpretations of classic monster narratives, such as Stoker's *Dracula*. Therefore, the cultural implications of monster creation are not the only aspect worth examining, but also the characteristics of those who fight these monsters. In other words, we can shift our analytical lens more towards the Van Helsings than the vampires they pursue, as the vampire hunters produced by specific cultures can reveal their values and ideologies as well, since sometimes vampires are merely constructed for the Van Helsings to perform their roles.

We see that the memory strategies, formulated at the central level already in the 1940s, were hardly present at the level of local administration of the "recovered" Koszalin in 1958 and new regulations were to come soon. Moreover, various mnemonic orders start to be intertwined as soon as the pluralism of public memory was allowed, like the memory of the Home Army after the Polish Thaw, which is not to say that the Polish collective memory started to be multilayered as soon as the 1950s. However, making the Home Army memories accessible in the public debate, complicated the monochromatic memory of the war (Wawrzyniak 2015), where from the narrative on the "Recovered Territories" stemmed.

Furthermore, what the case under scrutiny proves, we can follow the adjusting memory strategies over the course of years by examining how the materiality left behind was reused and how this reusing was justified. Here, we can trace what kind of anxieties it excited, such as in the analyzed case where the primary anxiety came from the legal ambiguity, which is to say, by the ineffective top-down efforts to legitimize the destruction through a series of legal acts, complicated by the local incomprehension and lack of decisiveness, characteristic of the post-1945 Polish administration.

Finally, what the case under scrutiny shows, is the entanglement of national and local policies, the negotiation of responsibilities between various authorities, and the attempts to introduce what was left of cemeteries as seemingly neutral objects, stripped of their meanings and ready to be reused. At the same time, it makes obvious that there was no united vision of what to do with these materials, as there was no one "recovered" memory in question, and the state's policies, as well as local efforts, were not clear from the start.

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