

DECAPITATING AND DEBRAINING THE NATION: KATYŃ AND THE BODY POLITICS OF MARTYRDOM

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Abstract: Katyń refers to the execution of approximately 22,000 Polish citizens by the NKVD (the Soviet secret police) in 1940. Polish and Russian historians of the Katyń massacre maintain that Stalin ordered the executions because those taken captive were considered an elite, and were the future leaders of an independent Polish nation. There are a number of narratives on Katyń that refer to the elimination of Polish prisoners as an attempt to 'decapitate' and 'debrain' the Polish nation. Katyń is framed as an attempt to destroy a very specific version of Polish national identity, and a nation represented by a male-oriented body politic. Those who were killed at Katyń are often portrayed as 'martyrs'. This martyrological narrative of Katyń is situated within a broader mythological narrative of Polish history and national identity known as 'Polish messianism'. This messianic myth developed in response to the partitions of Poland in the late 1700s. Polish nationalism in this era developed alongside a romanticised myth of Polish History in which Poland was viewed as an innocent 'victim' of oppression. Katyń has become a particularly powerful symbol within this history of victimisation. In this paper I focus on narratives of the body in order to analyse the ways in which the figure of the martyr is deployed to (re)produce particular ideas about history

and national identity. What are the effects of using the word 'martyr' to describe the Katyń dead? And whose bodies are (re)membered within this narrative?

Keywords: Katyń, martyrdom, national identity, narrative, Polish messianism, body politics.

I. INTRODUCTION

This paper looks at the role of Katyń within the broader mythological narrative of Polish history and national identity. Katyń refers to the execution of approximately 22,000 Polish citizens by the NKVD (the Soviet secret police) in 1940. Those who were killed at Katyń are often portrayed as 'martyrs'. This martyrological narrative of Katyń is situated within a broader mythological narrative of Polish history and national identity known as 'Polish messianism'. In this paper, I focus on narratives of the body in order to analyse the ways in which the figure of the 'martyr' is deployed to (re)produce particular idea(l)s about Polish nationalism and identity. I look at the effects of using the word 'martyr' to (re)member the Katyń

victims. I use the term '(re)member' to allude to the various parts that are (re)assembled to make up a whole 'body'.

II. KATYŃ BACKGROUND

Katyń refers to the killing of approximately 22,000¹ Polish citizens by Stalin's Soviet Secret Police, or the NKVD (Peoples Commissariat for Internal Affairs) in 1940. Following the Nazi-Soviet invasion of Poland in 1939, these men and one woman, who were made up of generals, army officers, policemen, teachers, priests, rabbis and doctors, were captured by the Red Army, then handed over to the NKVD. The prisoners were kept in three separate prisoner of war camps (at Kozelsk, Ostashkov and Starobelsk), and in 1940, the Politburo issued an order, signed by Stalin, to have the prisoners executed. The prisoners were shot and buried in mass graves in locations throughout the Soviet Union and the Ukraine. The prisoners being held at Kozelsk were buried in mass graves in the Katyń Forest, the prisoners from Ostashkov were buried in Miednoye and those from Starobelsk were buried in Kharkov.

In 1943, German soldiers discovered the graves at Katyń. It is because the graves at Katyń were the first to be discovered that the word 'Katyń' now refers to all the massacres. At the time of the discovery, the German government accused the Soviets of the crime and Stalin retaliated by blaming the Germans. Successive Soviet governments denied responsibility for the Katyń killings. The Soviet narrative was officially disavowed in 1990 when Mikhail Gorbachev released some documents that suggested that the NKVD was responsible.

III. MYTH AND HISTORY

Norman Davies suggests that national myths are an idealised interpretation of idea(l)s, but one that is required in order to provide a particular understanding of the nation as a cohesive entity. Davies defines myth as a set of "simplified beliefs", and argues that nations need myths in order to give people a sense of origin, identity, and purpose (Davies, 1997: 141). To put it another way, national myths (re)produce a 'purified' and 'innocent' version of the nation as the embodiment of an 'essence' that is naturally occurring. An effect of a coherent national narrative is that members of a national group can develop strong investments in these national myths, which can often lead to conflicts with other nations. William McNeil, an American historian, coined the term 'mythistory' to explain that "amounts to a history for one group is considered a myth by another group" (Collins, 2003: 358). This concept recognises that there are multiple interpretations of events, and that these various positions are influenced by the fact that people "inherit or embrace different starting assumptions and organizing concepts about the world" (McNeil cited in Collins, 2003: 358), which are then (re)produced in mythical narratives. In Foucauldian terms, myths are 'truth-effects' of particular situated systems and techniques of power/knowledge.

Myth and history are commonly viewed as opposed in character. History is often perceived as providing "an account of what really happened, while myth is construed as the false version of that same event" (Collins, 2003: 342). Indeed, myth is often critiqued by historians as a "distorted version" of an event whose

“particular slant on that event is designed to serve some present purpose” (Isichei cited in Collins, 2003: 343). The implication being, that history, insofar as it is allegedly objective, is not motivated by subjective aims, desires, and purposes. This view of myth is inherently problematic since it relies on (and reproduces) a clear distinction between history and myth, truth and non-truth, or truth and its distortion. The oppositional critique of history and myth is itself a product of a specific politics of truth, and is sustained by a belief that the historian is an objective observer of an absolute ‘truth’. History is perspectival, and ‘truth’ is not a single, identifiable fact, rather, ‘truths’ are an effect of discourses that shift over time and vary between societies. An alternative way to conceive history, myth, and the relation between them, is to see history (in the conventional sense) as always-already mythic in both its nature and its function. As Castelli points out, processes of mythic meaning making involve a “heightened narrativizing of the past and a careful linking of particular stories to larger, cultural master narratives” (Castelli, 2004: 30). Like myth, the construction of a traditional, linear historical narrative involves a selection of some events and a simultaneous forgetting of others. These decisions are always informed by the socio-historic contexts within which these narratives are produced.

IV. POLISH MESSIANISM

Poland has various national myths that have shaped national discourse. In this paper I focus on the messianic myth that emerged in the aftermath of the partitions of Poland-Lithuania in the late 1700s. I look at the ways in which the messianic myth has

(re)emerged in narratives on Katyń in an attempt to locate which narratives are heightened, and which narratives may be excluded or forgotten in this process. The era of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries are significant to a particular narrativisation of Polish history. Prior to the 1700s, the Poland-Lithuanian Commonwealth was a powerful rival state. The partitioning of the Polish-Lithuanian nations was instigated by Russia, Prussia, and Austria, and took place in three stages – (in 1772, 1793 and 1795) (Hosking: 1997: 29). The third and final partition of 1795 wiped Poland-Lithuania from the map of Europe entirely (Snyder, 2003: 25; Burnell, 2009: 38) and the nation was absorbed into Russia, Prussia and then Austria in 1815.

For the Poles, this era symbolised the loss of a very particular idea(l) of the nation, and it was this loss that fed into the construction of a specific myth of Polish History and national identity. The era of the late 1700s-1800s marked the establishment of a new political order in Europe as old regimes were overthrown. This changing political climate was also the backdrop for the emergence of modern concepts of the nation and nationalism. Influenced by the romanticism of the day, Polish intellectuals, poets and patriots developed a narrative of history and national identity, which has come to be known as ‘Polish messianism’. Polish nationalism in this era developed alongside a romanticised myth of Polish History in which Poland was viewed as an innocent ‘victim’ of oppression. When Polish patriots of the nineteenth century reinterpreted the events of the 1700s and the 1800s, they came to view the partitions of Poland as “international crimes against freedom” (Burnell, 2009: 56). This romantic myth provided the Poles with a

reason to endure their suffering by promising a messianic vision of the future; the Poles would eventually be rewarded, the nation would be reborn, and they would once again be free and independent. Propagators of this myth dubbed Poland the 'Christ of Nations'.

Polish romantic writers encouraged the interpretation of Polish History as a series of sacrificial uprisings on the path to progress and freedom. This can be seen for example in the writings and teachings of the Polish Catholic priest and poet, Jan Paweł Woronicz (1757-1829), and literary critic and poet Kazimierz Brodziński. However, the messianic metaphor was elaborated primarily by the poet Adam Mickiewicz (1798 – 1855) (Porter, 2002: 27). In Mickiewicz's poem 'Forefather's Eve, Part III', for instance, Poland is represented as an innocent victim of oppression and violence committed by other nations – thereby propagating a myth of Polish victimhood. Mickiewicz also encouraged the myth of Polish martyrdom. In a speech given in Rome in 1848, Mickiewicz conflated martyrdom with a spiritual and national dimension:

Our country, though distant, claims from you this sympathy by its long martyrdom. The glory of Poland, its only true glory, truly Christian, is to have suffered more than all the nations... (Mickiewicz cited Porter, 2003: 221).

The Christ narrative provided a mythical framework within which the Poles could (re)mythologise their past in anticipation of a better (knowable) future. In this way, Polish messianism resonates with the Polish-Catholic narrative² of Polish history and national identity, although it is worth noting that the Catholic Church distanced itself from the nationalist cause in the 1800s (see Porter, 2003).

V. THE KATYŃ MARTYRS

The messianic myths of nationalism that flourished in the aftermath of the partitions continue to be (re)interpreted by Poles in order to make sense of 'present' events. The persistence of the messianic myth in Katyń and WWII narratives suggests the extent to which romantic imagery and the narratives of martyrdom it encourages continue to be an influential force. Katyń is a "unique place in Polish mythology", and the focus of "intersecting lines in the martyrology of the nation" (Koczanowicz, 2012: 815). Since the end of WWII and after the collapse of Soviet Communism, there are numerous examples of the ways in which those who died at Katyń are portrayed as martyrs. For example, in the brochure for the Katyń Museum in Warsaw, it states that the original plans for the museum "called for establishing a center for scientific study of martyrdom" (Katyń Museum, 2004). The directive emphasised that as well as housing a "collection of *relics*", the museum "should have its own archives and a library accessible to anyone researching the most recent history of the *fatherland*" (Katyń Museum, 2004, my emphasis). Clearly, the role of the museum is to catalogue a very particular 'history', one that reiterates the (masculine) myth of martyrdom. The repetition of this narrative cements the role of the "thousands of young strong, healthy" men, the "elite of the Polish soldiers" (Katyń Museum, 2004), in the broader Polish national mythology.

It is interesting to note that the dissemination of the martyrological discourse is not limited to Polish texts. For example, a Katyń memorial was erected in Budapest in 2009, which was named the 'Memorial for the Katyń Martyrs'. Interestingly, the Russian language

Katyń memorial's official website also refers to the martyrological narrative. The website opens with an epigraph: "The Katyń forest became a symbol of martyrdom and the power of fate which each person faced under genocide" (cited in Melentyeva, 2009: 197-198). It is important to point out here that 'Katyń' is described as a *symbol* of martyrdom, the 'victims' are not constituted as martyrs. Yet this demonstrates that the martyrological narrative of 'Katyń' has a strong influence beyond Poland.

Schudson proposes that martyrs are "tangible cultural resources, drawn upon when 'people may need a symbolic object to define, explain, or galvanize a course of action'" (Schudson, 1989: 156). In the Polish context, the word martyr is an ideologically loaded term that resonates with (both) the Polish-Catholic myth of History as well as the romantic-nationalist myth in which suffering and sacrifice are central to national identity. The terms 'victim' and 'martyr' both have historical significance for the Poles. Inspired by universal Christian morality, propagators of the romantic narrative of Polish History viewed the Polish nation as the victim of oppressive and immoral regimes. But it was the messianic call to action that glorified the concept of martyrdom. By (re)membering those who died as martyrs, they are constituted as something more than simply victims of a singular massacre, or victims of a war in which millions of others also died: they also symbolise patriotism, freedom, Christianity, and of course, Polishness. Just as Poland will not die, nor will these martyrs who are the embodiment of the nation. What are the effects of using the word 'martyr' to describe the Katyń dead? And whose bodies are (re)membered within this narrative?

VI. THE BODY POLITICS OF MARTYRDOM

Narratives of the body are crucial to the (re)construction of the martyr myth. DeSoucey et al argue that "framing the story of execution is an important moment to invoke the body for powerful visual and rhetorical effect" (DeSoucey et al, 2008: 105-106). This is evident in narratives that investigate the reasons why the Polish prisoners were executed. Due to a lack of documents regarding Stalin's decision to shoot the prisoners, there is much debate as to what Stalin's motives were (Cienciala et al, 2007). The most common view, held by Polish and Russian historians of the Katyń massacres is that Stalin wanted to destroy the prisoners because they constituted an elite, the potential leaders of a future independent Poland (Cienciala et al, 2007: 141-142). Certainly this view is supported by a number of sources (see for example Zawodny, 1962: 103-104). In historical texts on Katyń there are countless references to the status of the men in Polish society. George Sanford, for example, argues that those most at risk from the Soviet government were:

Army officers who had evaded capture and returned home, individuals who had resisted the Soviet occupation, frontier crossers, 1920 war veterans and military settlers as well as political, social, trade union, religious and cultural figures and members of inter-war Polish organisations. The *decapitation* of the Polish elite and its organisational core was followed by the arrests of relatives, friends, collaborators and anyone named during interrogation (Sanford, 2005: 25, my emphasis).

Sanford's use of the word 'decapitation' plays into a dominant narrativisation of the Katyń victims and what their deaths signify. This narrative relies on the construction of a particular version of Polish patriotic national identity. The emphasis on the victims' professions³ implies that these men were upstanding citizens who all contributed in some way to the betterment of Polish society⁴. Their deaths are symbolic of a broader narrative of Polish history in which the Poles are constituted as victims. While it is possible to tell a victim narrative even when those killed are not 'leaders', when they are described as 'elite' then something more is happening. The killing of leaders, of the head(s) of a body politic, is a form of decapitation that does insurmountable injury to the social body. It is very different to cutting off the feet, so to speak. If say, the people killed were 'criminals', the effect would not be as devastating to the state, the body politic, as a whole.

Ewa Gruner whose father, Julian Gruner, was buried in Kharkov, uses similar language. She argues that both countries neighbouring the Polish Republic (Germany and Russia) had the same goal:

[T]o deprive the Polish nation of its leaders, of its educated and learned people. These neighbours wanted to 'decapitate' and 'debrain' the country so that Poland would never be reborn. They had been dedicated to the same goals in the 18th century when they partitioned Poland and subsequently laid claim to her as their own for more than 120 years (Kaczorowska, 2006: 33, my emphasis).

Gruner traces the attempt to obliterate Polish national identity back to the partition era. She views the treatment of Poland during WWII as mimicking the

events of the partition era, thereby absorbing 'Katyń' into the broader narrative of Polish history. Drawing on the rhetoric of messianic discourse, Gruner argues that "this yet unadjudicated and inadequately researched crime has made it difficult for us as a nation to undergo rebirth" (Kaczorowska, 2006: 49), alluding to nineteenth century nationalist discourses about the rebirth of Poland as the 'Christ of Nations'. Gruner's choice of the words 'decapitate' and 'debrain' here is interesting in that it draws on the idea that that the masculine is associated with the mind and with rationality. The elimination of Polish men is then read as an attempt to dis(re)member⁵ the nation by removing the 'brains'. The elimination of Polish women would not be read in this same way as women do not represent the nation, nor are they associated with rationality, with the public world of politics, with leadership, and so on.

This reflects what Moira Gatens writes in her essay 'Corporeal representation in/and of the body politic', in which she critiques the use of the term 'representation' as it is used in political theory. Gatens proposes that the issue of 'representation' in the modern body politic involves an understanding of 'representation' where "one body or agent is taken to stand for a group of diverse bodies" (Gatens, 1996: 21). Gatens argues that the metaphor of the unified body politic has achieved two important effects:

First, the artificial man incorporates and so controls and regulates women's bodies in a manner which does not undermine his claim to autonomy, since her contributions are neither visible nor acknowledged. Second, in so far as he can maintain apparent unity through incorporation, he is not required to acknowledge difference. The metaphor functions to restrict our political vocabulary to one

voice only: a voice that can speak of only one body, one reason, and one ethic (Gatens, 1996: 23).

In other words, the masculine body is the privileged body in and of the body politic. It is the masculine body that controls the political narrative and women are invisibilised and silenced within this political discourse.

An example of this in Katyń narratives is the treatment of the sole female 'victim' of Katyń – Second Lieutenant Janina Lewandowska, who was a Lieutenant of the Polish Air Force. Lewandowska is rarely mentioned in historical texts on Katyń and hardly ever named. In Mackiewicz's book *The Katyń Wood Murders* (1951), he notes that there was one female victim found in the exhumations at Katyń, however he names her only in a footnote (Mackiewicz, 1951: 128). Similarly, Zawodny mentions her in his book *Death in the Forest*, but does not name her. He does however name some of the male victims and provide brief biographical sketches on them (Zawodny, 1962: 22-23), thus cementing the importance of these men in the body politic. This is an example of how History privileges particular bodies, and leaves others to the margins. In the next section, I will look at the ways in which the (re)membering of these bodies and what they symbolise, takes place within the realm of the feminine, suggesting that the actions of the male body politic would be forgotten if it were not for the (passive) suffering feminine.

VII. MESSIANISM AND GENDER

An analysis of the gender politics of martyrdom and mourning reveals that the woman (particularly the mother) plays a significant part in preserving

national identity and myths of nationalism. In Mickiewicz's 'Poem to a Polish Mother' (1830), for example, the Polish mother must "prepare her sons for a life of treachery, pain, suffering, and death, for only by refusing to surrender to defeat can the nation keep alive its hope for freedom" (Burnell, 2009: 81). The destiny of the Polish mother is linked to fate of Poland's mother – the Mother Mary. The figure of Our Lady is the penultimate suffering mother who sacrificed her only son to save the sins of the world. The Matka Boska, as patron saint of Poland, is the example which other Polish mothers should follow. The role of the Polish mother/Matka Boska in Mickiewicz's poem is referred to Katyń narratives – for example, the Katyń memorial in Wrocław and the portrait of Our Lady of Katyń. The woman depicted in the Katyń memorial in Wrocław is shown cradling one of the Katyń 'martyrs' as she looks up towards the looming figure of the Angel of Death. Like Mickiewicz's Polish mother, she has prepared her son for this fate. Her subservient position suggests that she is succumbing to her own role in the narrative, and that is to accept that her sacrifice is contributing to a broader narrative that gives meaning to her suffering. The similarities between this image and that of Our Lady of Katyń, where Our Lady is depicted holding the head of a shot soldier, reinforces the shared fate of the Polish mother and the Matka Boska – both women hold the fate of Poland in their hands. In a certain way, they hold its future too – in order for Poland to survive, the memory of these men must be preserved by the women. At the same that that these texts highlight the significance of the role of women in preserving Polish national identity, this role is still a very traditional one in which they play the subservient sufferer to the

gallant fighter. As mothers, they are (re)producers of the narrative and not the producers of action.

VIII. KATYŃ 2010

Two centuries have passed since the birth of Polish messianism and yet the figure of the martyr is still called upon in contemporary narratives on Katyń and other events. 2010 marked the 70th anniversary of Katyń. Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk attended a ceremony held at the Katyń Forest in the company of Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin. This was the first joint commemoration of the massacre⁶ and was viewed by many as an important step towards Russian-Polish reconciliation as it appeared to “signal a potential thaw in the tense relations between Warsaw and Moscow” (*Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty*, 7 April 2010). President Lech Kaczyński, leader of the right-wing conservative Law and Justice party was not invited to the joint commemoration, prompting him to make his own way there a few days later. On 10 April 2010, the week following Tusk and Putin’s commemoration of Katyń, the plane carrying Kaczyński crashed near Smolensk, killing the president, his wife, and 95 passengers (including many members of the Law and Justice party⁷).

The proliferation of narratives in the aftermath of the presidential plane crash in 2010 suggests that these same myths continue to shape ways of (re)interpreting current events in Poland. When the presidential plane crashed en route to a commemoration of ‘Katyń’ and at a site located at the “very centre of Poland’s historical mythology of sacrifice and martyrdom” (Etkind & Finnin et al, 2012: 132-133), it was the romantic mythology which

shaped the way in which the president was (re)remembered after the crash, especially via the pro-Law and Justice media which emphasised Kaczyński’s “romantic notions of Polish patriotism and Polish national identity” (Niżyńska, 2010: 473). Considered by some to be a leading figure in the “struggle for the memory of Katyń” (Etkind & Finnin et al, 2012: 139), Lech Kaczyński became a “sacrificial figure on a mission to preserve the ‘traditional values’ of faithfulness to memory” (Niżyńska, 2010: 474) – he had become a martyr. While there has been resistance to the propagation of the martyrdom myth⁸, the romantic mythology is still a part of contemporary discourse, and its long lasting legacy continues to inspire new generations of Polish myth makers.

IX. CONCLUSION

How is it that a myth that dates back almost two centuries, still informs the way in which Poles try to make sense of post WWII and post-communist narratives? What is it about this narrative that makes it so difficult to shift? A number of current studies suggest that narratives of martyrdom are demonstrative of collective memory (see for example Castelli, 2004; DeSoucey et al., 2008), and that these narratives are deeply embedded in the collective consciousness of particular groups⁹. Niżyńska suggests that it is the “exaltation of victimhood, not victory, that imbues this paradigm with such irresistible power” (Niżyńska, 2010: 479). In order to sustain this narrative of Polish History and nation, the romantic myth of martyrdom overly (re)members some events at the expense of others. Historical narratives that refer to Poland’s loss and suffering

take precedence over historical narratives that describe moments when Poland was the aggressor¹⁰.

By raising these issues, I do not deny that an injustice has been done, nor do I disregard the very real, material effects of trauma that people have endured as a consequence. My focus has been on the narrativisations of suffering, and the ways in which groups of people make sense of suffering with reference to broader mythical narratives of national identity and History. I agree with Castelli's suggestion that "the overprivileging of the self-sacrificial dimensions of the "martyr" results in a flattening out, the dangerous eclipsing of the possibility of recognizing the suffering of others" (Castelli, 2004: 203). Ultimately, it seems to me at least, that the problem is not that some groups in Poland will not acknowledge that Poland ever did 'wrong' but rather, that a psychic investment in the figure of the victim, the martyr, limits other ways of seeing and remembering other pasts and other futures. It is worth considering, what is being (re)membered, and who or what is forgotten in this process?

ENDNOTES

- [1] The exact figure varies between sources and depends on which deaths are included under the umbrella of 'Katyń'. Generally speaking, about 14,500-14,700 are considered to have been executed from the three main camps (Kozelsk, Ostashkov and Starobelsk), while another 7,300 are believed to have been killed in NKVD prisons in Belarus and the Ukraine, as part of the same operation (see Sanford, 2005; Cienciala et al 2007:1; Szonert-Binienda, 2012: 652).
- [2] For a more detailed critique of the Polish-Catholic (or *Polak-Katolik*) narrative of Polish history see Porter, 2002.
- [3] Cienciala et al similarly point out that the Soviet authorities "viewed Polish Army officers, police, administrators,

officeholders, judges and other legal personnel, politicians, educators, and clergy as counterrevolutionary; by virtue of their professions, they were automatically classed as opponents of communism" (Cienciala et al, 2007: 123).

- [4] Szonert-Binienda has also argued that "this perception of the perpetrators is further confirmed by Beria's Directive dated March 20, 1940 that ... defines the condemned men as 'former officers of the Polish Army, police, prison guards, gendarmes, intelligence agents, former landowners, manufacturers, and prominent officials of the former Polish state apparatus . . .'" (Cienciala et al 2007: 153; Szonert-Binienda, 2012: 672). Szonert-Binienda asserts that the "list of categories of people demonstrates that the condemned men were people of stature, wealth and patriotism on whom the future of independent Poland depended" (Szonert-Binienda, 2012: 672).
- [5] I borrow this term from C. Jacob Hale's article on the ways in which the dead body of murdered transgendered teenager Brandon Teena/Teena Brandon were (re)appropriated by the media and gay and lesbian groups in order to push their own agendas. Hale writes "it sometimes looks as if lesbian and gay organizations and media collude with the mainstream press to consume the flesh of (transsexual or otherwise) transgendered men's corpses" (Hale, 1998: 319).
- [6] In the past, "Polish officials visited Katyń to honor the dead in a private, unofficial capacity" (*Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty*, 7 April 2010). Putin was also the "highest-ranking Russian official to mark the Katyń massacre" and Tusk, the "first Polish leader to receive an official invitation to attend" (*Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty*, 7 April 2010).
- [7] Also among the victims were the heads of major Katyń groups and institutions such as Andrzej Sariusz-Skapski (the head of the Federation of Katyń Families); Andrzej Przewoźnik (head of the ROPWiM); Janusz Kurtyka (head of the Institute for National Remembrance); and Tomasz Merta, (historian and Minister of Culture and National Heritage) (Etkind & Finnin et al, 2012: 138-139).
- [8] There was some resistance to this narrative when it was announced that Lech Kaczyński and his wife would be buried at Wawel Castle in Warsaw. As the "traditional resting place for Polish kings and national heroes" (Hinsey, 2011: 143), this burial would in effect, install Kaczyński "in a pantheon of great Polish leaders and martyrs" (Etkind & Finnin et al, 2012: 139). Many Polish leaders and members of the public opposed

- the decision (Niżyńska, 2010: 474) and several protestors took the streets wearing fake crowns and bearing banners with slogans such as 'Bury me in Wawel too!' (Etkind & Finnin et al, 2012: 139). When Jarosław Kaczyński (Lech Kaczyński's twin brother) announced that he would be running for presidency, it was partly the "continuing associations with narratives of martyrdom and victimhood" that cost Kaczyński's party the election (Drozdzewski, 2012: 316).
- [9] Elizabeth Castelli, for example, argues that the memory of martyrdom "lies at the heart of a certain practice of culture making" (Castelli, 2004: 196). Poland is by no means the only nation to draw on the figure of the martyr for different political purposes. Castelli study provides examples of contemporary American manifestations of martyrological narratives such as the Columbine massacres, and the murders of Matthew Shepard and Brandon Teena (see Castelli, 2004: 174-193).
- [10] Burnell, for example, suggests that Poland needs to "examine its own sins and demythologize its own recent history, such as Poland's involvement in the 'partition' of Czechoslovakia" (Burnell, 2009: 160).
- [8] Snyder, Timothy. *The Reconstruction of Nations: Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania, Belarus, 1569-1999*. New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2003. Print.
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