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Summary of the doctoral dissertation

“May this treasure end up in good hands...”: The shaping of Holocaust memory based on the translation history of the Ringelblum Archive

This dissertation attempts to analyse the translation history of the Ringelblum Archive and determine how and if the translation process has influenced the shaping of Holocaust memory at the national and international levels. It follows the chronological framework delimited by three events: 1) the establishment of the Ringelblum Archive in the Warsaw ghetto by the historian Emanuel Ringelblum, 2) the discovery of the first and second parts of the archive in 1946 and 1950 respectively and their partial availability to the mass public, 3) the functioning of the archive in the modern world. Moreover, it is supplemented by Questionnaires for Translators Participating in the Translation Project/Process of the Ringelblum Archive filled in by a group of Polish translators.

The paper is divided into three chapters. It starts with an introduction in which the theoretical background of the dissertation is presented, concentrating on English as the preferred language of the Holocaust and the role of translator in the process of translating Holocaust-related texts (skopos theory by Hans J. Vermeer and Christiane Nord). Further on, the dissertation presents the Polish historical context of the Second World War and discusses the establishment of Jewish ghettos in the territories occupied by the Nazis.

In the first chapter, the figure of Emanuel Ringelblum is presented. The historian and researcher was responsible for establishing in the Warsaw ghetto a research collective, Oneg Shabbat, to study the life of Jews under the Nazi occupation, both inside and outside the ghetto; later, they collected evidence about the Nazi crimes and documented the Holocaust. By describing the characteristics of Oneg Shabbat, their agenda and the materials they gathered in the Ringelblum Archive, this chapter proves that

Ringelblum's undertaking was unique and of particular importance, because it presented a broad spectrum of authors, subjects, genres, languages and contexts.

The following chapter discusses the editorial history of the Ringelblum Archive, focusing on the first publications of Ringelblum's notes after 1945 and tracing back their publications in Yiddish, English and Polish. Moreover, it comments on the Polish critical edition of the collection published between 1997 and 2020 and pays attention to English and Polish inventories. Next, an attempt to reconstruct the status of the Ringelblum Archive in Polish consciousness is made, with particular attention paid to the most recent literary, exhibition and spatial interventions.

Finally, the dissertation demonstrates the Polish translators' perspective on translating the Ringelblum Archive, based on the qualitative data obtained through questionnaires. Then, three English volumes of the complete critical edition are briefly compared with their Polish equivalents to evaluate the editorial concept behind the English edition. This chapter also seeks to verify to what extent the archive is available via the Internet.

The conclusion reveals that the complete English edition of the Ringelblum Archive is an indispensable undertaking to transmit and maintain the memory of the Holocaust experience in the English-speaking world. A possible path is suggested for the Jewish Historical Institute to follow in order to solve the determined problems and change the peripheral position of the current English edition of the archive, increasing the quality of future translations and its digital availability.