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## The Museum of (Non)Remembrance. A Horse and the Warsaw Uprising Museum

The motto:

*The museum and the change. The time of narrative museums*

The title of a conference organised by the Warsaw Uprising Museum,  
7–8 December 2016.

**Abstract:** The permanent exhibition at the Warsaw Uprising Museum, which has been on display since 2004 (continuously since 2005) is a text of culture – a construct that is not free from power and politics. The political nature of the Museum does not, however, determine its value, but rather represents a diagnosis of the social reality where culture is a space of ideological confrontation. The view that the Museum is politically entangled in organisational and ideological terms is neither demeaning nor ennobling for a cultural institution. However, it requires that the Museum surrender its claims of neutrality in a situation where, by decision of its creators, it occupies a defined position in the discourse, as illustrated by the omission of the history of animals – victims of war – in the exhibition. Meanwhile, the new humanities provide the new museum (and also the traditional one) with trends that unmask the author of the narrative and demystify the objective nature of that narrative. They allow us not only to identify and explain the reasons why the WUM left out the wartime history of animals, but also to show how and why those issues should be thought about, discussed and presented in a different way.

**Key words:** a “narrative” museum, the Warsaw Uprising Museum, the wartime history of animals

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### Instead of an introduction: a “new museum”, also referred to as a “narrative” museum

The first fifteen years of the 21st century witnessed an unprecedented museum “boom” in Poland. The growing public interest in the offer of existing institutions was accompanied by numerous initiatives aimed at establishing new museums. Beginning from 2005, the following museums were created: the Warsaw Uprising Museum (hereinafter the WUM or the Museum), Oskar Schindler’s Enamel Factory (a branch of the Historical Museum of the City of Kraków), Polin Museum of the History of Polish Jews. Moreover, plans were made to build: the Museum of Polish History in Warsaw and the World War II Museum in Gdańsk, and others. The decisions concerning their location, construction and costs stirred up emotions and agitated the public opinion, especially considering that the profile of the created and planned museums was determined by the historical policy of the state authorities. All those museums were intended to commemorate the past events which were seen as having key importance for the national community. Thus, the vast majority of the new museums were dedicated to history. A common element shared by those

institutions was the absence of collections (at the stage of making the decision about the construction), the protection and display of which had previously been the basic mission of a museum and the main reason for its establishment. Thus, the first Polish museums without collections or with collections being still amassed were established. Their aim was to present the narrative created by historians concerning the selected historical processes in a space arranged by designers. This was a reversal of the process which had originally led from the collection of artefacts to their description. The new museum started with a narrative whose credibility was confirmed by the properly selected exhibits.

The scenery of the new historical museum did not require original exhibits and successfully managed to do without them. Authentic objects were replaced with replicas, reproduction and reconstruction. The need to use the prefix “re-” indicated a fundamental change in the museum’s function and ennoblement of the objects which would have not previously been called museum artefacts. Copies and imitations received the status of museum exhibits by giving them inventory numbers and placing them in exhibition spaces where no foods or drinks were allowed. At the same time, new trends in the museum sector were followed, such as abandoning the requirement of wearing protective footwear that had long been a symbol of entering the sacred premises of a museum. On the one hand, efforts were undertaken to make the newly created institutions resemble museums and, on the other hand, to depart from museums. Thus, many of the new facilities were museums in name only, or were intended to serve as museums. There were only a few isolated cases where the word “museum” was dropped from the names of the institutions, as illustrated by the examples of the European Solidarity Centre in Gdańsk and the “Przełomy” Dialogue Centre in Szczecin (a branch of the National Museum in Szczecin). The Pomeranian institutions are particularly noteworthy since they reflect the dilemmas connected with the usage of the term “museum” in contemporary realities.

Permanent exhibitions were set up as closed narratives that restricted the freedom of interpretation and were not easy to redefine. They reflected the touchstone values of their creators and constituted the expression of the ideas about what and how to present. Some examples of controversial choices include the decisions: to present the Warsaw Uprising as a heroic revolt staged by the people of Warsaw in line with the Romantic tradition of Polish martyrdom, without devoting much<sup>1</sup> reflection to the purpose and justification of this undertaking (the Warsaw Uprising Museum), or to include the information about the involvement of certain representatives of the Jewish minority in pro-communist activity in Poland only in the exhibition concerning the post-war period, while failing to mention the pro-communist sympathies of the members and followers of the Zionist Movement during the Second Republic of Poland (Museum of the History of Polish Jews).

The new museums also stood out for their form of message communication. Special emphasis was put on sensory experience. “An air raid, an insurgent song or a prayer are much more powerful than the written word” (Kowal, 2016, s. 14).<sup>2</sup> As noted by Jan Ołdakowski, the new museum is “not a 19th century institution that requires the visitor to have an intellectual competence necessary for understanding the content – in the era of digitisation, it is closer to film and art” (Ołdakowski, 2013). The lighting, exhibition design, sound, texture and the type of surface used are intended to generate experiences

<sup>1</sup> Limited to the multimedia presentation ending the walk route on the first floor.

<sup>2</sup> The text by Paweł Kowal was written in 2005 and reprinted in *Przewodnik* of 2016.

and, consequently, recollections which are a substitute for the witnesses' memories of the past events to which the exhibitions are devoted.

An interactive exhibition became the predominant form of content presentation. The aim of the modern technologies was to turn the passive viewer into an active participant. By performing certain activities, e.g. using a replica of the printing press (Museum of the History of Polish Jews), or picking up the phone receiver and listening to the recollections of one of the insurgents (the Warsaw Uprising Museum), the viewer was expected to become involved. The main addressees of those techniques were children and young people on organised school trips, who represented a large proportion of the museum audience. Being accustomed to modern technologies, they were able to use and appreciate the solutions employed in the institutions visited. At the same time, given the profile of the museum audience, the newly created facilities put emphasis on educational departments. The museum space was provided with cinema auditoriums and lecture halls. Also, an evaluation system was developed to enable assessing the effectiveness of the presented message. Publishing activity and the production of souvenirs bearing the institutions' logos which could be purchased in museum shops became indispensable elements of museum operations. Moreover, food and drink outlets were set up in museums, usually cafés and bistros, less frequently restaurants. All those components had existed in museums before, but their proportions and mission were different.

The investments made, rich educational programmes adapted to various groups, along with a range of attractions, contributed to boosting the attendance of particular museums which started to compete against each other in terms of visitor statistics. New museums became desirable leisure venues and provided competition to historic monuments.

The newly established institutions, being a synthesis of the changes taking place in the museum sector over the last decades and the political transformations after 1989, generated the need to redefine the notion of a "museum". Meanwhile, contemporary museology still sticks to the definition proposed by Georges Henri Rivièr, according to which "a museum is a permanent, non-profit institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which studies the tangible heritage of humanity and its environment, acquires, conserves, and protects it, makes it available and exhibits it, conducts educational activity and provides entertainment" (Folga-Januszewska, 2008, s. 5). However, the awareness of the difference between the old museums and the newly established ones caused the former to be commonly referred to as "traditional museums", and the latter – as "narrative museums".

Those two museum formats have a lot in common, but the differences seem to be even more numerous. What they primarily share is the commercialisation of nearly every sphere of museum operations. The difference lies in the mission and the absence of the requirement to have a collection of original artefacts (at the stage of museum creation), which forced the creators of new museums to make decisions that rendered the institutions similar to thematic parks and, simultaneously, increased their gap from traditional museums. One example of this is the Warsaw Uprising Museum which, being the first narrative museum in Poland, set the standards for this type of institutions that the creators of subsequent museums had to be confronted with.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> According to literature, the first narrative museum was the Holocaust Museum in Washington which opened in 1993.

### What and how?: the place of animal history in the Museum

The Warsaw Uprising Museum opened on 31 July 2004. On the fourth day (3rd August) after its solemn inauguration, the Museum was closed in order to complete the unfinished works. The visitors were able to see the exhibition again from 2 to 7 October, and then from November until the next closure on 1 March 2005. The final shape of the permanent exhibition was presented to the audience on 3 May 2005 and has not undergone any major changes for 11 years now.

The Museum was located at 79 Grzybowska Street, in the adapted buildings of the former Tramway Power Station which had been reconstructed after the war and used as a heating plant. In the 1980s, plans were made to locate the museum in Bielańska Street, but they were abandoned in 1994 due to ownership issues. Intensive works on establishing the museum in a new location were launched in 2003 when Jan Ołdakowski was appointed as plenipotentiary for the museum construction. In the same year, a decision was made to allocate a building for the museum from the city's resources, and the Honourary and Programme Council was set up. On 11 March 2004, the Warsaw City Council decided to establish a new cultural institution (Resolution, 2004). A public collection of exhibits was launched during which many objects of various historical value were acquired. The contractors were selected through a competitive process. The building adaptation design was created by Wojciech Obtulowicz, while the interiors were designed by Jarosław Kłaput, Dariusz Kunowski and Mirosław Nizio. The exhibition was located on three floors. The ground floors housed the exhibition devoted to the history of World War II and the realities of life in occupied Poland with a special focus on the capital city, as well as the Little Insurgent's Room where "the youngest visitors under the supervision of trained instructors could begin their 'adventure with history' ..., among the toys and games associated with the historical period" (*Katalog*, 2011, s. 9). The mezzanine and the first floor presented the course of military operations in August 1944 and the living conditions in Warsaw during the Uprising and after its failure. In 2015, the walk route was extended to include a new exhibition, located on the gallery, which was dedicated to the soldiers of the GROM Special Military Unit Group, established in 1990. In the Liberator Bomber Room, a 1:1 scale replica of the Consolidated B-24 Liberator aeroplane was suspended from the ceiling and an exhibition concerning the Allies' support for Warsaw's insurgents was set up. In the basement, the perspective was reversed and an attempt was made to depict the war through German eyes. At the same time, visitors were given an opportunity to walk through a replica of sewer tunnels used by the population of the occupied city. The scale of Warsaw's destruction was depicted in the 3D film entitled *The City of Ruins* which, since 2010, has been shown in the cinema auditorium and in the film chronicles screened in the space linking the Liberator Bomber Room with the basement. "Thematic rooms" located along the walk route were used to present microhistories. The entire museum complex was crowned with a 32-metre high observation tower with the symbol of Fighting Poland (*Polska Walcząca*) painted on it. The Museum premises also contain a Roman Catholic chapel where Mass is held every Sunday, a café and two shops with books and souvenirs. The neighbouring Park Wolności (Freedom Park), features a rose garden and a memorial wall bearing the names of the insurgents killed in the fight. The "Monter" bell placed in an aperture of the wall

strikes the “W” hour which marked the outbreak of the Uprising. Moreover, part of the space was availed to contemporary artists whose works covered the wall surrounding the museum complex on the side facing the garden. Research and educational activities were concentrated in the Stefan Starzyński Institute headed by Dariusz Gawin. The process of collecting photographs was launched, an oral history archive was created and short biographical notes on the insurgents were prepared.

The thirteen-month time span during which the project was completed was unprecedented for Poland. This was also the case with the number of awards and honours received in national and international competitions. The WUM became an integral element of the capital’s sightseeing map and an obligatory part of the excursions organised by Warsaw’s schools, which made it one of the most visited museums in Poland.<sup>4</sup> The level of interest attracted by the Museum proved that there was demand for it. Agnieszka Sopińska-Jaremczak in her book, which is recommended in both Museum stores, observed: “The phenomenon of the museum was on everyone’s lips practically from the day it was inaugurated. Not only did it restore Warsaw’s identity, and revive the Varsovians’ pride in their city, but it also gave rise to a community that entered the big politics. Operating within the ranks of the Law and Justice party, they functioned as ‘museum specialists’” (Sopińska Jaremczak, n.d., s. 7).<sup>5</sup> Thus, the Warsaw Uprising Museum was created without the participation of museum specialists and no curatorial positions were foreseen in its structure.

The prevalent acceptance was accompanied by less numerous critical voices. They mainly concerned the content and form of the museum message. Historians raised the issues of responsibility of the Uprising’s political and military leaders for provoking Germans to annihilate the city and its inhabitants, and for the erroneous assumption about the continuation of the Soviet offensive.<sup>6</sup> The problems were not given sufficient attention in the exhibition, which was a consequence of the hypotheses adopted by the Museum’s creators, presented as complete theses, according to which: “The Uprising was not [...] an irrational, romantic revolt, but a conscious, though tragic, political decision made by the highest, fully legitimate Polish authorities” (*Katalog*, 2011, s. 9), while the insurgents themselves – according to D. Gawin – “were neither mentally deranged nationalists, or militarists mad with hatred. They were normal people who got entangled into the huge wheels of history” (Sopińska Jaremczak, n.d., s. 7). In accordance with the guidelines, “it was [therefore – M.L.] necessary to stress that the Uprising stood for revolt, dynamics, action, pride and hope of the insurgents” (Ołdakowski, Mazur, 2014, s. 57).

The emphasis was reflected in the consistent use of capital letter spelling in the exhibition: “Warsaw Uprising” and “Insurgents”. Although this practice goes against the rules of the Polish language, it is acceptable since the use of this type of spelling stresses the highly emotional attitude of the Museum’s creators to the presented events and people.

Quite apart from any evaluation of the adopted hypotheses, it should be noted that the permanent exhibition lacked references to women’s wartime history, this fact being

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<sup>4</sup> In 2015, according to the Central Statistical Office data, it ranked eighth with an attendance of 546,263 visitors (*Kultura*, 2016, s. 124).

<sup>5</sup> The author listed the following person in that group: Elżbieta Jakubiak, Paweł Kowal, Jan Ołdakowski, Dariusz Gawin, Lena Dąbkowska-Cichočka and Marek Cichocki.

<sup>6</sup> Another surprising fact was placing the exhibition entitled *There is such as force in Poland. JW GROM\_Cichociemni 1990–2015* in the Warsaw Uprising Museum.

generally ignored by the Museum's creators, audience and the majority of reviewers. As a result, the narrative created at the WUM did not notice, or consciously downplayed one of the main subversive criticisms, i.e. feminism. To compensate for the absence of women in the permanent exhibition, various events were organised, such as the meeting *Courageous girls, or women in the Warsaw Uprising* (1 August 2015), promotion of the book by Anna Herbach *Dziewczyny z Powstania* (Girls of the Uprising) (28 May 2015) and the theatrical installation *Gdzie ty idziesz dziewczynko?* (Where are you going, little girl?), directed by Agnieszka Glińska (1–5 August 2016).

The Museum also ignored the problem of animals as victims of war. The few boards featuring the enlarged photos of horses during the operation "Tempest", or a flock of sheep driven away by Germans had little to do with the results of scholarly research on the wartime fate of animals. They remained a "mute", and therefore an insignificant part of the permanent exhibition. The family urban game organised on the premises of the Municipal Zoological Garden in Warsaw, entitled *On the trail of the Żabiński family* (12 September 2015), did not change much in this regard. The presentation of the situation of Warsaw's Zoo under German occupation can hardly be seen as a representative picture of the wartime fate of animals.

Since the WUM was in many respects a pioneering museum in Poland, it seems legitimate to analyse the reasons for omission in the Museum's narrative of the theme of animal hecatomb during a man-made war. Although the technical solutions used in the Museum corresponded to the latest trends, the omission of the wartime fate of animals meant a departure from European practice in this regard, as exemplified by, among others, the Imperial War Museum in London. The WUM, while innovative in form, remained conservative and selective in terms of the presented content relating to animals.

### **Why is this the case?: the reasons for downplaying animal history in the Museum**

A museum, and especially a narrative museum, has always been political in nature.

This "political nature" under modern conditions can be defined in several ways. Usually, the pioneers of the modern discussion about the political are quoted, i.e. Carl Schmitt and Max Weber. According to C. Schmitt, the political is constituted by the categories of foe and friend (Schmitt, 2000). Wherever this distinction exists, we are dealing with the political, the aim being the unity of the state. According to M. Weber, politics "comprises any type of independent leadership activity" (Weber, 1998, s. 55). One of its attributes is the ability to use violence as a special means of persuasion. Wherever there is a power that is able to apply violence, there is also politics. What connects those concepts is the fact that they set the political exclusively in the realities of interpersonal relationships where specific groups organise themselves and attempt to seize and/or maintain power. Thinking about politics in terms of the human collective can also be seen in the works by Hannah Arendt who believes that it is not an individual person, but rather a group that is political (Arendt, 1998). According to the author of *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, politics is a choice made by thinking people who, in a pluralistic and diverse world, are able to organise themselves and undertake joint action in the public sphere, even if only for the purpose of pleasure and self-fulfilment (Król, 2008, s. 160–162). Those ap-



proaches were criticised by Agnes Heller who claimed that “the political” could be seen as the property of a certain thing, but it could also be seen as a sphere which endows everything that enters it with political nature (Heller, 2005). While interpreting Arendt’s ideas, A. Heller noticed that the political “involves direct action, discussion and theoretical activity” which, when taking place in the public sphere, are political in nature (Heller, 2005, s. 79). Expanding upon this idea, she came to the conclusion that the political manifests itself in the tension between “ought and is” (Heller, 2005, s. 80). When analysing this concept, Jakub Szczepański observed that the sole criterion of dynamics between “ought and is” was not sufficient for Heller. It is necessary to “indicate a universal value which would be concretised within the sphere of the political,” this value in Heller’s opinion being freedom (Szczepański, 2009, s. 62).

None of those concepts of “the political” is directly applicable to a museum. However, when physical violence is replaced by symbolic violence, then a museum will also be engaged in politics. When the content presented in a museum becomes a space for making a distinction between our people and strangers, the museum will become political. One can also easily imagine a museum as a space for discussion between thinking people. It seems that that the greatest potential for a museum is to be found in the concept of the political which requires applying the criterion of tension between what is and what ought to be, assuming that freedom is the supreme value in the public sphere. For the time being, a museum – thanks to the power it possesses – is oppressive in nature, which is reflected in restricting the freedom of choice, imposing a particular worldview and prompting the desired response. As Michael Foucault once wrote, power “produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth” (Foucault, 1998, s. 189). A museum acts in a similar way. This, on the other hand, results from its dependence on power and, on the other hand, from the performance of an authoritative function by this institution. The case of the WUM is an example of this twofold entanglement of a museum with power and politics.

In line with its statute, the Warsaw Uprising Museum is a local government-run cultural institution which is directly subordinate to the Mayor of Warsaw, and is subject to the general supervision by the minister competent for culture and national heritage (Statute, 2012). The opening of the Museum was the fulfilment of the promise made in 2002 by the Mayor of the capital city, Lech Kaczyński, according to which the insurgents were to have their own museum on the sixtieth anniversary of the outbreak of the Warsaw Uprising. The previously quoted authoress of the book *Operacja “Muzeum”* (The Operation “Museum”), one of the apologists of the WUM, made an observation which is hard to disagree with: “Without Lech Kaczyński, his persistence, determination and vision of modern Warsaw, the Warsaw Uprising Museum would have never come into being” (Sopińska Jaremczak, n.d., s. 7). The Museum staff and veteran circles expressed their gratitude to “President of the Republic of Poland, Lech Kaczyński, the founder of the Warsaw Uprising Museum” through the solemn unveiling of the memorial plaque on the “first anniversary of the tragic death at Smolensk” (8 April 2011), which was just one of the several forms of commemorating the former President at the WUM.

The political will which was followed by specific decisions (including personal ones) determined the location, form and time of construction of the Museum. The handover of the building from the resources of the capital city, provision of funds and appointment of the director were therefore determined by political factors. They were not without effect

on the Museum which represented particular ideas and values. Not only the permanent exhibition, but also the entire museum space and the building's architectural design are a form of communication, and, as such, represent tools of social politics.

The omission of the human-animal relationships in the permanent exhibition can be treated as a benchmark for the identification of the Museum's ideological layer. The lack of reflection on the fate of animal victims of World War II and Warsaw Uprising is indicative of the conservative vision of the world held – as evident from the character of the exhibition – by the Museum's creators. In this way, the permanent exhibition reiterates the conviction about the superiority of humans over animals which was derived from Christianity (mainly from Thomism) and has prevailed in Europe through the centuries.

This belittling attitude to non-human beings is reflected in the use of the very word "animals". As noted by Jacques Derrida, this has to do with "the issue of a limit as rupture or abyss between those who say 'we men', 'I, a human', and what this man among men who say 'we', what he calls the animal or animals" (Derrida, 2006). Thinking in terms of a difference, which manifests itself in naming, categorising, and establishing a hierarchy, led people to deny other beings the ability to think and/or feel.

The permanent exhibition at the WUM, which aimed to present the Warsaw Uprising, concentrated exclusively on the history (treated in a selective manner) of the human subject and an a priori assumption about the object status of animals.

The object is the antithesis of the subject. The distinction between subject and object is related to the recognition that the former is characterised by will, activity and the ability to decide for oneself, while the latter has no will, is passive and dependant on the acting subject. As Andrzej P. Kowalski noted, adoption of the subject-object dichotomy implies treating things as „purely material and ontically neutral objects" (Kowalski, 2008, s. 24). This is exemplified by the title of the enlarged reproduction of the photo featuring a herd of sheep being driven away by Germans during evacuation. The animals are referred to as "property" which turns them into objects of material value. However, this value was denied to the two horses from the enlarged prints or reproductions of archival photographs in the exhibition devoted to the operation "Tempest". The descriptions below the photos make no reference to the animals.

Thus, the Museum offers no space for emancipation of the animal non-object, which would problematize the issue of perpetrators and victims. Meanwhile, the decision to undertake military action by the insurgents led to the German counter-offensive and annihilation of the city along with all its living beings. One consequence of this was the shift in meanings which required recognising animals as victims and, simultaneously, humans (including the insurgents) as perpetrators in this regard.

### **How things could change and why they should?: conclusions to be drawn by the Museum from the new humanities**

It has been demonstrated that the permanent exhibition in the Museum aims to preserve the paradigm of the difference between humans and non-humans and, in this way, to exercise its authoritative functions. This dominant perception of animals as objects could be contrasted with the Actor-Network Theory whose main representatives include



the French philosopher of science and anthropologist Bruno Latour. Latour's approach does not mean subjectification of the object, in this case – the horses and sheep depicted in the photos at the WUM, but the necessity to cross the ontological dualism, typical of the Western world, which divides the world into the subject and the object. In B. Latour's opinion, the collective is composed of "humans" and "non-human factors" (animals, plants, objects). The relationship between them is symmetrical rather than hierarchical. Therefore, it is not exclusively the human subject that decides about the object. In the French philosopher's theory, there is no distinction between subjects and objects. What matters is the connection which can be either active – and is then called mediation, or passive – intermediation. Humans and non-human animate and inanimate factors can – in Latour's opinion – be actors (actants) that affect others through their actions. As Krzysztof Abriszewski noted in the introduction to the Polish edition of Latour's *Reassembling the Social*, "as long as we treat all entities as identical, it makes no sense to talk about the agency of objects, but when we differentiate entities, simultaneously differentiating the (situated) contexts, their agency changes" (Abriszewski, 2010, s. XXI). According to Latour, "there might exist many metaphysical shades between full causality and sheer inexistence. In addition to 'determining' and serving as a 'backdrop for human action', things might authorize, allow, afford, encourage, ...forbid and so on" (Latour, 2010, s. 102).

The connections between human and non-human factors and their changeability determined by the context of time and place abolish the thinking about things in terms of their essence. Assuming that every animal can have agency, it seems illegitimate to formulate judgements on its essence. The only thing that remains is the relationship between all actors.

The actor-network theory, which postulates the equalisation of human and non-human factors, permits creating critical museum narratives about the human-animal relations. Thus, a museum can become a space of resignation from hierarchisation of beings by introducing the criterion of agency as understood by B. Latour.

A different path was taken by the advocates of emancipation of the animal subject, as exemplified by the concept created by Éric Baratay. The author drew attention to the social and ideological determinants of human moral obligations towards animals. By creating the so-called "decentred history" project, the French historian reversed the perspective and turned – to use film terminology – the former extras into the main characters. He demonstrated that scientific publications treat animals predominantly in an instrumental manner. As a result, publications dealing with breeding are not concerned with animals, but with their role in the economy, their place in the agricultural holding, and the changes in their use and efficiency (Baratay, 2012, s. 16). A prominent example here is the historiography of the Great War which contains very few works devoted to the hecatomb of millions of animals. The majority of authors treated the wartime fate of animals as an insignificant anecdote, thereby excluding animals from the history of suffering (Baratay, 2012, s. 18). A similar conclusion can be drawn with respect to the permanent exhibition at the WUM which omitted the history of animals, except that this time the omission concerned World War II. Baratay's postulate was derived from ethics and applied in order to challenge the objectification of animals and pose questions about animals without making an a priori assumption about their subservient role in relation to humans.

The concepts discussed above have the potential for conducting studies on human-animal relationships (human-animal studies or, in short, animal studies) also referred to – in imperfect Polish translation – as studies on animals. They represent one of the trends in the new humanities, which is based on the criticism of the anthropocentric approach that perceives the human being as a superior category. Monika Bakke observed that in academic debate the research on human-animal relationships is an expression of “the need to rethink the position of the human subject in relation to anti-essentialist trends in the humanities” (Bakke, 2011, s. 194). It seems that a narrative museum, despite not being an Academy, should discern those issues so that its “novelty” is not limited to the use of technologies.

### Conclusion

The permanent exhibition at the Warsaw Uprising Museum, which has been on display since 2004 (continuously since 2005) is a text of culture – a construct that is not free from power and politics. The political nature of the Museum does not, however, determine its value, but rather represents a diagnosis of the social reality where culture is a space of ideological confrontation. The view that the Museum is politically entangled in organisational and ideological terms is neither demeaning nor ennobling for a cultural institution. However, it requires that the Museum surrender its claims of neutrality in a situation where, by decision of its creators, it occupies a defined position in the discourse, as illustrated by the omission of the history of animals – victims of war – in the exhibition. Meanwhile, the new humanities provide the new museum (and also the traditional one) with trends that unmask the author of the narrative and demystify the objective nature of that narrative. They allow us not only to identify and explain the reasons why the WUM left out the wartime history of animals, but also to show how and why those issues should be thought about, discussed and presented in a different way.

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**Muzeum (nie)pamięci.  
Koń a Muzeum Powstania Warszawskiego**

**Streszczenie**

Prezentowana od 2004 roku (nieprzerwanie od 2005 roku) wystawa stała w Muzeum Powstania Warszawskiego jest tekstem kultury – konstruktem niewolnym od władzy i polityki. Polityczność Muzeum nie przesądza jednak o jego wartości, a jedynie stanowi diagnozę rzeczywistości społecznej, w której kultura jest obszarem konfrontacji ideologicznej. Teza, że Muzeum jest uwikłane politycznie pod względem organizacyjnym i ideologicznym, nie jest deprecjonujące ani nobilitujące dla instytucji kultury. Wymaga jednak od Muzeum rezygnacji z roszczeń do neutralności, w sytuacji w której, decyżją swoich twórców, zajmuje ono w dyskursie określoną pozycję, czego przykładem jest pominięcie na ekspozycji historii zwierząt – ofiar wojny. Tymczasem nowa humanistyka oferuje nowemu muzeum (ale i tradycyjnemu) nurty, które demaskują twórcę narracji i demistyfikują jej obiektywny charakter. Pozwalają one zobaczyć i wyjaśnić powody pominięcia wojennej historii zwierząt w MPW, ale i wskazać, jak można i dlaczego powinno się inaczej o tych kwestiach myśleć, mówić i je pokazywać.

**Słowa kluczowe:** „muzeum narracyjne”, Muzeum Powstania Warszawskiego, wojenna historia zwierząt

