

Yishai Sarid's most recent novel, *Mifletzet Ha-Zikaron*, or *Monster* in its German translation (it's not yet published in English), raises central questions about the purposes and effects of studying the Holocaust. Each development in the story leads to tensions, colliding perspectives, and breakdowns that put the role of the teacher, guide, or scholar of the Holocaust into question.

The narrator is an Israeli who, after writing a doctoral dissertation on the extermination camps (because it seemed the smoothest academic path, rather than from any compelling interest), finds it more remunerative to work in Poland leading tours of the camps than to work as a teacher in Israel. Dilemmas that haunt Holocaust scholarship--such as the tension between communicating the processes and details of *mass* murder, while also trying to grasp the specificity of the million-fold names, faces, and voices of individuals--here lead to personal crises, and generate an escalating series of misunderstandings and embarrassments. The narrator's audience and interlocutors (Israeli schoolchildren, soldiers, video game developers, tourists, a German filmmaker) each take away something very different from his learned expositions than what he had intended.

These continual misfires force the reader--and especially readers who themselves are Holocaust scholars or who take students to Holocaust sites--to grapple with questions about what we hope to gain from ever greater knowledge about how and where Jews were killed, what we hope to teach others, and what our own motives for pursuing this research might be.

I will articulate the urgent questions and paradoxes that the novel puts into play and address how we might productively explore these issues beyond the boundaries of the novel. How can MONSTER help us confront the central challenges for the Holocaust scholar and teacher today, almost 75 years after the end of World War II?