

Memorializing the Holocaust

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The further the events of World War II and the Holocaust recede into time, the more prominent their museums and memorials become. Indeed, as survivors struggle to bequeath memory of their experiences to the next generations and governments strive to unify disparate polities with “common” national narratives, a veritable “Holocaust memorial and museum boom” has occurred since 1990, with the establishment around the world of hundreds of museums and institutions dedicated to remembering and telling the history of Nazi Germany’s destruction of the European Jews (and sometimes other populations) during World War II. Depending on where these memorials and museums are built, and by whom, they remember this past according to a variety of national myths, ideals, and political needs. Some recall war dead, others resistance, and still others mass murder. All reflect both the past experiences and current lives of their communities, as well as redefine national identity. At a more specific level, these memorializations also reflect the temper of the memory artists’ time, their architects’ schools of design, and their physical locations in national memorial landscapes.

Public art in general, and Holocaust memorials in particular, tend to beg traditional art historical inquiry. Too many discussions of Holocaust memorial spaces ignore their essentially public dimensions, remaining either formally aestheticist or almost piously historical. But in their fusion of public art and popular culture, historical memory and political consequences, these memorials demand a critique that goes beyond questions of high and low art, tastefulness and vulgarity. Rather than merely identifying the movements and forms on which public memory is borne, or asking whether or not these memorials reflect past history accurately or fashionably, we might also ask how this art may function as a basis for political and social action. In addition to asking how a memorial designer’s era and training shapes public memory of the Holocaust, we might also ask which role the memorial plays in contemporary, unfolding history.

For the purposes of this chapter, I distinguish a memorial from a monument only in a broader, more generic sense: there are memorial books, memorial activities, memorial days, memorial festivals, and memorial sculptures and spaces. Monuments, on the other hand, will refer here to a subset of memorials: the material objects, sculptures, and installations used to memorialize a person or set of events. A memorial may be a day, a conference, or a space, but it need not be a monument. A monument is always a kind of memorial.

Public memory of the Holocaust, as found in these memorials and museums, is never shaped in a vacuum. Both the reasons given for Holocaust memorials and museums and the kinds of memory they generate are as various as the sites themselves. Some are built in response to traditional Jewish injunctions to remember, others according to a government's need to explain a nation's past to itself. Where the aim of some institutions is to educate the next generation and to inculcate in it a sense of shared experience and destiny, others are conceived as expiations of guilt or as gestures of national self-aggrandizement. Still others are intended to attract tourists. In addition to traditional Jewish memorial iconography, every nation has its own institutional forms of remembrance. As a result, Holocaust museums and memorials inevitably mix national and Jewish figures, political and religious imagery. The aims of critical inquiry into Holocaust memorials and museums, therefore, have moved well beyond the mere survey or catalogue of these sites. Contemporary inquiries into material culture and history demand an exploration of how questions about the aesthetic, social, political, and performative dimensions underlying these sites resonate with the public: Who creates public memory of the Holocaust, under what circumstances, and for which audiences? Which events are remembered, which forgotten, and how are they explained? Which places do Holocaust museums occupy in national and religious commemorative cycles? How do memorial competitions, architects, and artists shape public memory? How do memorial representations of history both reflect and weave themselves into the course of ongoing events? What are the aims and consequences of these Holocaust memorializations, and why does memory as expressed in these national institutions matter at all? This chapter explores such questions by focusing on Holocaust memorial histories and debates in Germany, Poland, Israel, and the United States.

Germany

As the first concentration camp in Germany, Dachau came to epitomize the German memorialization of their *KZ-Zeit* (concentration camp time). Built in 1933 for political enemies of the Reich, Dachau housed and thereby created *German* victims, many of whom were also Jews. As horrifying as the conditions were at Dachau, its gas chamber was never used, so the crematoria burned “only” the remains of those who died of shootings, beatings, or most often, disease. Of the Dachau survivors still living in Germany most are Christians, many of them clergymen and Social Democrats, whose own memories constitute the core of these memorial projects. There are, therefore, three religious memorials in the camp: one each for the Catholic Church, the Protestant faith, and the Jewish community.

As the name “The Trustees for the Monument of Atonement at the Concentration Camp Dachau” suggests, however, the reasons for the museum and memorials at Dachau differ for each group of victims. The Christian memorials were not

established to mourn the loss of a Jewish population, but rather to atone for Nazi sins against humanity. Stylized and cerebral, the individual memorials within the grounds of the camp tend to emphasize the great gulf between past and present. From well-scrubbed barracks floors, to the swept gravel walks outside, to the crematorium (open, a sign says, from 9–5), cleanliness and order now govern the “remembrance” of filth and chaos. According to museum director Barbara Distel, over 900,000 visitors a year tour Dachau and its excellent museum. Most are Germans, but hundreds of thousands come from abroad on a pilgrimage to what is one of the most notorious tourist stops in Germany. What may not be apparent to many of the memory tourists, however, is that Dachau’s notoriety stems less from its having been one of the deadliest concentration camps (it was not) than from the widespread media coverage of its liberation, the on-site war trials, its proximity to Munich, and the accessible and concise narratives of its museum exhibitions. Dachau has become a Holocaust icon for western tourists, taking on a life of its own in the culture of travel.

In former West Germany, memory work was often regarded as a punitive – if self-inflicted – kind of penance for crimes of a past regime. But in its single-minded charge to rebuild after the war, the western sector not only absorbed itself in reconstruction but also effaced numerous reminders of the Nazi period. Encouraged by its Allied occupiers, the Federal Republic strove to begin anew – to put its Nazi past behind it. In former East Germany, however, the Soviet occupiers ensured that the debris of Germany’s destruction would remain to be seen for decades to come. On the one hand, what was officially regarded in the West as Germany’s disastrous defeat was recalled in the East as East Germany’s victory, its seeming self-liberation. At the behest of the Soviet liberators, East Germans came to recall primarily the communist victory over fascism, the great redemption of socialist martyrs in the founding of the German Democratic Republic (GDR). On the other hand, bullet-pocked facades and a weedy no-man’s land – even the destroyed Reichstag – reminded a vanquished nation precisely how it arrived at the present moment. A whole German nation self-defined as an anti-fascist state was born, thereby self-absolved of responsibility for fascist crimes. Once thus defined, the GDR needed to make only a small step to commemorate itself as a victim state as well. The GDR’s national identity was thus rooted in the political memory of the Nazis as an occupying power, from which the German people would have to be self-liberated. This self-idealization was enacted to great effect in both the plastic monuments and museum narrative at Buchenwald, which emphasized that the camp was not liberated by American soldiers, but was instead *selbst befreit* or self-liberated by the camp underground, comprised mostly of German communists.

Of all the camps in Soviet-occupied Germany, only Buchenwald became a truly national East German memorial to the Nazi period. Indeed, as both place and idea, Buchenwald played a fundamental, nearly mythological role in the GDR’s self-conceptualization. First, as an internment center for young German communists, the camp served as an enforced gathering site for debate and political formulation, a place where plans were drawn for the future, where leaders were being chosen to create the new order. As a remembered site, Buchenwald became an idea: a place in the mind where character, courage, and communist identity were forged. It played such a formative part in young German communists’ coming of age that later visits were often characterized as returns to the very wellsprings of their being, the roots of their identity. As a site of suffering and resistance, as the seedbed of the German Communist Party, Buchenwald became hallowed, sacred ground. Little wonder, then, that GDR officer

cadets were awarded their bars at Buchenwald – where their political forebears had symbolically earned their own stripes as enemies of the Third Reich.

With the fall of the communist regime in 1989, however, Holocaust memory itself at Buchenwald had become a kind of embarrassing relic. Shortly after Germany's reunification on October 3, 1990, the museum at Buchenwald closed as it underwent both physical and ideological renovation. It is now recalled, for example, that shortly after the war some 130,000 Germans – some Nazis, some SS (*Schutzstaffel*), some Social Democrats regarded as enemies by the Soviets – passed through 11 Soviet-run camps near Buchenwald, of whom 50,000 died. While many, perhaps hundreds, of these had been taken out and shot, then thrown into mass graves, most of the dead probably succumbed to hunger, disease, and a neglect that was general to the immediate postwar era of shortages and famine. Within two years of German reunification, Buchenwald's museum was reconfigured to efface what was regarded as the self-aggrandizing version of events as told by the Communist Party. Two years later, Volkhard Knigge (1954–) became the museum's director, and his first accomplishment was to show the evolution of official memory itself in Buchenwald's museum, from the communist to a post-communist era. But in recalling the forgotten Soviet takeover of the Nazi camps at Buchenwald and other places, the post-reunification German state has created a new form of memorialization. Now when the chancellor lays flowers at Buchenwald to the victims of Nazi terror, he or she saves a wreath for the six new memorial crosses commemorating an estimated 8,000 to 13,000 Germans who died at Buchenwald during the Stalinist regime. The accretion of memory has made Buchenwald a place where Germans were victimized by both sides. With further updating, Buchenwald may serve as a national memorial for the New Germany, as well as it did for the GDR. With the introduction of further German victims into its memorial landscape, the normalization of Germany's national identity is becoming ever more complete.

Issues surrounding Holocaust memorialization come into the sharpest, most painful relief in Germany. In the land of what Saul Friedländer has called “redemptory anti-Semitism” (1997: 3), the possibility that art might redeem mass murder with beauty (or with ugliness), or that memorials might somehow redeem this past with the instrumentalization of its memory, continues to haunt a postwar generation of memory artists. Moreover, these artists in Germany are both plagued and inspired by irreducible memorial questions: How does a state incorporate shame into its national memorial landscape? How does a state recite, much less commemorate, the litany of its misdeeds, making them part of its reason for being? Under what memorial aegis (whose rules) does a nation remember its own barbarity? Unlike state sponsored memorials built by victimized nations and peoples to themselves in Poland, the Netherlands, or Israel, those in Germany are necessarily those of the persecutor remembering its victims. Facing this necessary breach in the conventional “memorial code,” German national memory of the Holocaust remains torn and convoluted. Germany's “Jewish question” is now a two-pronged memorial question: How does a nation mourn the victims of a mass murder perpetrated in its name? How does a nation reunite itself on the bedrock memory of its horrendous crimes? These questions constitute the conflicted heart of Germany's struggle with its national memory of the Holocaust.

One of the most compelling results of Germany's memorial conundrum has been the advent of its “counter-monuments”: brazen, painfully self-conscious memorial spaces conceived to challenge the very premises of their being. Contemporary German

memory artists are heirs to a double-edged postwar legacy: a deep distrust of monumental forms in light of their systematic exploitation by the Nazis, and a profound desire to use memory to distinguish their generation from that of the killers. In these artists' eyes the didactic logic of monuments – their demagogical rigidity and certainty of history – continues to recall too closely traits associated with fascism itself. A monument against fascism, therefore, has to be a monument against itself: against the traditionally didactic function of monuments, against their tendency to displace the past they would have us contemplate – and finally, against the authoritarian propensity in monumental spaces to reduce viewers to passive spectators.

Rather than attempting to resolve such memorial questions in their designs, contemporary artists and architects (such as Jochen Gerz, Esther Shalev, Horst Hoheisel, Hans Haacke, Renata Stih and Frieder Schnock, Sol LeWitt, Richard Serra, Daniel Libeskind, and Peter Eisenman) have strived for formal articulation of the questions themselves. An early critique of Germany's "memorial problem" is embodied in the *Exit-Dachau* project (1971) by Jochen Gerz (1940–), and in disappearing and invisible memorials in Harburg and Saarbrücken, among other installations. In 1986, for example, Gerz and Esther Shalev (1948–) created their *Monument Against Fascism* in Harburg-Hamburg, a 12-meter-high (slightly under 40 feet), lead covered column that was sunk into the ground as people inscribed their names (and much else) onto its surface; upon its complete disappearance in 1993 the artists hoped that it would return the burden of memory to those who came looking for it. With audacious simplicity their "counter-monument" thus flouted a number of memorial conventions: its aim was not to console but to provoke; not to remain fixed but to change; not to be everlasting but to disappear; not to be ignored by its passersby but to demand interaction; not to remain pristine but to invite its own violation; not to accept graciously the burden of memory but to throw it back at the town's feet. How better to remember a now absent people than by a vanishing monument?

In a similar vein, Horst Hoheisel (1944–) commemorated the void left behind by Europe's missing Jews in his "negative-form memorial" (Aschrott-Brunnen or Aschrott Fountain project, 1986) in Kassel. In related installations, such as the empty underground library room on the Bebel Platz created by Micha Ullman (1939–), or the cenotaph-like *Bibliothek* on the Juden Platz in Vienna, sculpted by Rachel Whiteread (1963–), the artists have turned to bookish themes and negative spaces to represent the void left behind by the "people of the book." Still other artists in Germany, such as the American Shimon Attie (1957–) in his *Writing on the Wall* project in Berlin, have attempted to reanimate otherwise amnesiac sites with the dark light of their pasts, reminding us that the history of such sites also includes their own forgetfulness, their own lapses of memory. In this vein, Berlin artists Renata Stih and Frieder Schnock mounted 80 signposts on the corners, streets, and sidewalks near Berlin's Bayerische Platz. Each includes a simple image of an everyday object on one side and a short text on the other, excerpted from Germany's anti-Jewish laws of the 1930s and 1940s. Where past citizens once navigated their lives according to these laws, present citizens may find their lives affected by their memory of them. For these and other artists and architects, the possibility that memory of events so grave might be reduced to exhibitions of public craftsmanship or easy pathos remains intolerable. They reject the traditional forms and reasons for public memorial art – those spaces that either console viewers or redeem such tragic events, indulge in what they regard as a facile kind of *Wiedergutmachung* (reparation), or purport to mend the memory of a murdered

people. Instead of searing memory into public consciousness, they fear conventional memorials seal it off from awareness altogether; instead of embodying memory, they find that memorials may only displace it. These artists worry that to the extent we encourage monuments to do our memory work for us, we become that much more forgetful. They believe, in effect, that the initial impulse to memorialize events like the Holocaust may actually spring from an opposite and equal desire to forget them.

Among the hundreds of submissions in the aborted 1995 competition for a German national “memorial for the murdered Jews of Europe,” one seemed an especially uncanny embodiment of the intractable questions at the heart of Germany’s memorial process. Hoheisel proposed a simple, though provocative, anti-solution to the memorial competition: blow up the Brandenburger Tor (Brandenburg Gate) (opened 1791; restoration completed 2002), grind its stone into dust, sprinkle the remains over its former site, and then cover the entire memorial area with granite plates. How better to remember a people murdered in the name of the German nation than by destroying Germany’s national monument? Rather than commemorating the destruction of a people with the construction of yet another edifice, Hoheisel wanted to mark one destruction with another. Rather than filling in the void left by a murdered people with a positive form, the artist intended to carve out an empty space in Berlin by which to recall a now absent people. Rather than concretizing and thereby displacing the memory of Europe’s murdered Jews, the artist aimed to open a place in the landscape to be filled with the memory of those who come to remember Europe’s murdered Jews. A landmark celebrating Prussian might and crowned by a quadriga, bearing Eirene, the Greek goddess of peace, would be demolished to make room for the memory of Jewish victims of German might and peacelessness. Of course, such a memorial undoing would never be sanctioned by the German government and this, too, was part of the artist’s point. Hoheisel’s proposed destruction of the Brandenburger Tor participated in the competition for a national Holocaust memorial, even as its radicalism precluded the possibility of its execution. At least part of its polemic, therefore, was directed against actually building any winning design, against ever finishing the monument at all. Hoheisel seemed to suggest that the surest engagement with Holocaust memory in Germany actually lay in its perpetual irresolution – that only an unfinished memorial process could guarantee the life of memory.

For a time, in fact, it looked as if Germany’s national memorial would indeed remain an endless debate only. But then in 1997, with Chancellor Helmut Kohl’s blessing, the Bundestag and Berlin Senate appointed a *Findungskommision* to devise yet another process and competition. After much further debate, much of it politically-infused, the jury recommended that the field of stelae designed by Peter Eisenman (1932–) be built on the five-acre site of the former ministerial gardens, between the Brandenburger Tor and Potsdamer Platz in the center of Berlin. Dedicated in 2005, Germany’s national *Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe* provides no single vantage point from which to view it. The memorial stretches like an Escherian grid in all directions and even echoes the rolling, horizontal plane of crypts covering Jerusalem’s Mount of Olives. From its edges, the memorial is a somewhat forbidding forest of stelae, most of them between three and 10 feet in height, high enough to close us in but not so high as to block out sunlight or the surrounding skyline, which includes the Brandenburger Tor and Reichstag building to the north, the renovated and bustling Potsdamer Platz to the south, and the Tiergarten across Ebertstrasse to the west. The color and texture of the stelae change with the cast of the sky, from steely gray on

dark, cloudy days, to sharp-edged black and white squares on sunny days, to a softly rolling field of wheat-colored stelae, glowing almost pink in the sunset.

As one enters into the field of stelae, one is accompanied by light and sky, but the city's other sights and sounds are gradually occluded, blocked out. From deep in the midst of the pillars, the thrum of traffic is muffled and all but disappears. Looking up and down the apparently pitching rows of stelae, one catches glimpses of other mourners. Their appearance and disappearance, an interactive feature of the memorial, reminds one of absent Jews. One can feel very much alone in this vast space, almost desolate, even in the company of hundreds of other mourners nearby. Depending on where one stands, along the edges or deep inside the field, the experience of the memorial varies – from the reassurance one feels on the sidewalk by remembering in the company of others, invigorated by life of the city hurtling by, to the feelings of existential solitude from deep inside this dark forest, oppressed and depleted by the memory of mass murder, not reconciled to it. Able to see over and around these pillars, visitors have to find their way through this field of stones, even as they are never actually lost in or overcome by the memorial act. In effect, they will make and choose their own individual spaces for memory, even as they do so collectively. The implied sense of motion in the gently undulating field also formalizes a kind of memory that is neither frozen in time, nor static in space. The sense of such instability helps visitors resist an impulse toward closure and heightens the visitor's role in anchoring memory in oneself. (Of course, visitor experiences are not monolithic, as chronicled by Quentin Stevens 2012.)

As one descends the stairs from the midst of the field into the *Orte der Information*, it becomes clear just how crucial a complement the underground information center is to the field of pillars above. It neither duplicates the field's commemorative function, nor is it arbitrarily tacked onto the memorial site as an historical afterthought. But rather, in tandem with the field of stelae above it, the place of information reminds us of the memorial's dual mandate as both commemorative and informational, a site of both memory and of history, each shaped by the other. Indeed, as conceived and designed by the architect Dagmar von Wilcken (1958–), the “information center” allows the entire site's commemorative and historical dimensions to interpenetrate, suggesting an interdependent whole, in which neither memory nor history can stand without the other.

Poland

Between 1939 and 1945, some 3.2 million of Poland's 3.5 million Jews were killed by the Nazis and their collaborators. During the same period, nearly 3 million non-Jewish Poles died as a result of concentration camp internment, slave labor, mass executions, and military action. This means that some 6 million Poles died during World War II, half of them Polish Jews murdered solely for having been Jews. In Poland, however, the perceived symmetry of numbers (though not proportions) also suggested a certain equivalency of suffering. Moreover, with the mass exit of Poland's surviving Jewish populous after the Kielce and other pogroms (organized massacres) in 1946, Jewish memory also departed: memory of a thousand-year Jewish past, memory of good and bad relations with their Polish neighbors, memory of the Holocaust, and finally memory of Poland's own post-Holocaust pogroms. When

Jewish Holocaust survivors next remembered, it was often to themselves in their new communities abroad – and to their new compatriots. It was not to the Poles who were left alone with their own, now uncontested memory of events, which was not to be challenged again until the survivors' return to Poland years later as tourists with their children in tow. As a result, remaining memory of this past would now be left in Polish hands and would thus reflect a characteristically Polish ambivalence about these events, and eventually even a Polish need for a Jewish past.

As widespread as the tendency is in Poland to balance Jewish and Polish suffering during the war, therefore, the reasons are more complex than mere appropriation of the Jews' experience – or effacement of it altogether. That the death camps were located on Polish soil is not viewed by the Poles as evidence of local anti-Semitism or collaboration, but as a sign of the Germans' ultimate plans for the Polish people. In the Polish view, the killing centers in Poland were to have begun with the Jews and ended with the Poles. The mass murder of Jews becomes most significant in Polish memory as it is perceived as a precursor to the Poles' own, narrowly averted genocide. Indeed, the very first Holocaust memorials anywhere were the places of destruction themselves. Liberated by the Red Army in July 1944, the intact remains of the concentration camp at Majdanek, just outside Lublin, were turned into the first memorial and museum of its kind. Early the next year, the Polish Committee of National Liberation conferred similar status on the ruins of Stutthof, the earliest camp in Poland, and on the gargantuan complex at Auschwitz-Birkenau, commonly regarded as the epicenter of the Holocaust.

Beyond their pastoral facades, the memorials at Majdanek and Auschwitz are devastating in their impact, for they compel the visitor to accept the horrible fact that what they show is real. In both cases, the camps seem to have been preserved almost exactly as the Russians found them 40 years ago. Guard towers, barbed wire, barracks and crematoria – mythologized elsewhere – here stand palpably intact. In contrast to museums and memorials located away from the sites of destruction, the remnants here tend to collapse the distinction between themselves and what they evoke. In the rhetoric of their ruins, these memorial sites seem not merely to gesture toward past events but may be perceived as fragments of events, inviting us to mistake the debris of history for history itself. In the words of the communist era guidebook of the State Museum at Majdanek, for example, the aim of the museum was threefold: to preserve these buildings as material evidence of the crimes committed here; to analyze the facts of these crimes; and to present analyzed facts to the public (Marszalek and Wisniewska 1983: 3). As became clear, however, the Majdanek ruins were material evidence not only of these crimes but also of a state's reasons for remembering them. Indeed, little reason for preserving these ruins existed outside of the meanings such preservation imputed to them. Majdanek's remains thus "told" the story of the camp's Soviet liberators, configured in a reflexively economic interpretation of the war and its victims. As a result, the Jewish victims of Majdanek were assimilated twice-over: once to the memory of Polish national suffering, and again to a stridently economic critique of the camp, which was blind to the ethnic identity of its victims. At Majdanek, where Jews accounted for more than 80 percent of the 350,000 murdered victims, the memorial recalls Jews primarily as part of other persecuted groups, including Poles, communists, and Soviet Prisoners of War (POWs).

For years at Auschwitz-Birkenau, memorialization was a mix of ruins, museums, and sculpture. Surrounded by a seemingly endless field of countless barracks'

chimneys and piles of dynamited crematoria, a long row of block-like sarcophagi mark the end of the rail line and the beginning of the death zone. In concert with the relics nearby, this complex provides material evidence of the simple message that used to be inscribed on 20 stone tablets in 20 different languages, including Yiddish and Hebrew: “Four million people suffered and died here at the hands of the Nazi murderers between the years 1940 and 1945.” With Poland’s regime change in 1989 these inscriptions were removed from the tablets, memory’s slate wiped clean and corrected. While historians agree that the exact number of people murdered at Auschwitz-Birkenau will never be known, they believe the most accurate count is closer to 1.3 million, of whom about 1.1 million were Jews. The remaining 200,000 victims were Polish Catholics, Gypsies, and Russian POWs (Wellers 1983: 127). The figure of 4 million was as wrong as it was round, arrived at by a combination of the camp commandant’s self-aggrandizing exaggerations, Polish perceptions of their great losses, and the Soviet occupiers’ desire to create socialist martyrs.

The questions for the post-communist museum at Auschwitz became: What is required to create a commemorative space large enough to accommodate the plural memories and symbols of disparate, occasionally competing groups? How should the proportions of space and significance be allotted? How can the Polish and Jewish narratives best be told? Are these decisions properly made by museum professionals? Resolution of these issues continues to be fraught because, by dint of its location, Auschwitz will always be a Polish memorial to both Polish and Jewish victims, a shared but contested shrine to both Jewish and Polish catastrophes.

Israel

The national Holocaust Remembrance Day in Israel (Yom Hasho’ah Vehagvurah) commemorates both the mass murder of Europe’s Jews and the heroism of ghetto fighters – all seemingly redeemed by the birth of the state. Like any state, Israel remembers the past according to its national myths and ideals in the context of its current political needs. At times ambivalent, at times strident, the official approach to Holocaust memory in Israel has long been torn between the simultaneous need to remember and to forget – between the early founders’ enormous state-building task and the reasons why such a state was necessary, between the Holocaust survivors’ memory of victims and the Israeli soldiers’ memory of resistance. On the one hand, early founders like David Ben-Gurion (1886–1973) regarded the Holocaust as the ultimate, bitter fruit of Jewish life in exile. On the other hand, such founders also recognized their perverse debt to the Holocaust: it had, after all, seemed to prove the Zionist dictum that without a state and the power to defend themselves, Jews in exile would always be vulnerable to just this kind of destruction (Liebman and Don-Yehiya 1983: 24). Ironically, however, by linking the state’s *raison d’être* to the Holocaust, the early founders also located the Shoah at the center of national identity: Israel would be a nation condemned to defining itself in opposition to the very event that makes it necessary. The questions for the early state became: How to negate the diaspora and put it behind the “new Jews” of Israel while basing the need for new Jews in the memory of the Shoah? How can you remember the Holocaust in Israel without allowing it to constitute the center of one’s Jewish identity? In part, the answers entailed a forced distinction between the “*galut* (or exilic) Jew” and the Israeli.

According to this distinction, the Jew in exile has known only defenselessness and destruction, the Israeli has known fighting and self-preservation. Such stereotypes negate, of course, the early reality of Israel as an immigrant nation whose population of about 800,000 in 1948 included more than 400,000 Holocaust survivors. The Holocaust-related tensions in Israel's national narrative persist in the ubiquitous twinning of martyrs and heroes in the nation's memorial iconography. In this configuration, the victims are memorable primarily for the ways they demonstrate the need for fighters, who, in turn, are remembered for their part in the state's founding. The martyrs are not forgotten but are recollected heroically as the first to fall in defense of the state itself.

Whereas memorials and museums in Europe, especially those located at the sites of destruction, focus relentlessly on the annihilation of Jews and almost totally neglect the millennium of Jewish life in Europe before the war, those in Israel locate events in a historical continuum that includes Jewish life before and after the destruction. In Israeli museums at kibbutzim like Lohamei Hageta'ot, Tel Yitzchak, Givat Chaim, and Yad Mordechai, Jewish life before and during the Holocaust is emphasized over the killing itself – and Jewish life after the Holocaust is to be found primarily in Israel. Over the years, the museums at these kibbutzim have changed little, continuing to reflect their early attachment to a strong Zionist ideology underlying their very genesis. As a result, a new generation of Israelis often tends to see these (and almost all kibbutzim) as museums to both an actual historical past and to a past way of understanding the present. Such kibbutz museums often end up speaking more to tourists who come to see Israel itself as a museum to their own nostalgic longing for Israel's pioneering days.

Kibbutz Lohamei Hageta'ot (literally Fighters of the Ghettos) was thus founded by survivors of the camps and ghettos, many of them partisans and members of the Jewish Fighting Organization, as a living monument to what they had seen. Although the museum there is now dedicated to the memory of poet Yitzchak Katzenelson (1886–1944), in both its name and memorial configuration, the kibbutz commemorates less the dying of Jews and more their fighting during the war and surviving afterward. Of the 12 museum halls, only two are devoted to the ghettos, concentration camps, and exterminations. In the narrative constructed in this museum, one arrives at these halls only after visiting graphic reconstructions of Vilna (now Vilnius), “the Jerusalem of Lithuania,” and “The Shtetl, Olkieniki.” If, in this layout, the path to the Holocaust lay through the centers and shtetls (small towns with large Jewish populations) of diaspora life, then the road from the Holocaust leads through resistance to survival, to the kibbutz itself, and to the vibrant new self-sufficiency of Jews in their own land. Here the Holocaust is contextualized not only to include aspects of life in exile but also to remind one that Jewish life preceded and will now follow it. In its conception and design, the theme of Holocaust Remembrance Day ceremonies at Lohamei Hageta'ot is always the same: “From Destruction to Redemption.”

Of all the memorial centers in Israel, only Yad Vashem Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority bears the explicit imprimatur of the state. Conceived in the throes of the state's birth and building, Yad Vashem would be regarded from the outset as an integral part of Israel's civic infrastructure. As one of the state's foundational cornerstones, Yad Vashem would both share and buttress the state's ideals and self-definition. In its eclectic amalgamation of outdoor monuments, exhibition halls, and massive archives, Yad Vashem functions as a national shrine to both Israeli pride

in heroism and shame in victimization. Unlike memorials that attempt to remove their national origins and interests from view, Yad Vashem's mission as simultaneous creator and custodian of national memory was explicitly mandated in its law. The function of memory here is precisely what it has always been for the Jewish nation; that is, in addition to bringing home the "national lessons" of the Holocaust, memory would work to bind present and past generations, to unify a world outlook, to create a vicariously shared national experience. These are the implied functions of every national memorial, of course, merely made visible in Israel's legislation of such memory. At the same time, however, Yad Vashem was also conceived by the state's founders as an explicit tearing away from the traditional religious continuum and its meanings – another kind of counter-memorial. Its founding would inaugurate a new, civic religion: its genesis would coincide with the creation of the state itself. Toward this end, a new historical space would be created, in which events of the Holocaust and the state's founding would quite literally be recalled side by side. The foundation stone for Yad Vashem was thus laid into the hillside just west of the national military cemetery at Mount Herzl on July 29, 1954, in a ceremony that turned this entire area into Har Hazikaron (Memorial Hill; Handelman 1990: 201). In this way, Yad Vashem would be regarded as a topographical extension of the national cemetery where Israel's ideological founder, Theodor Herzl (1860–1904), lay alongside Israel's fallen soldiers including Hannah Senesh (1921–1944), Israel's martyred heroine ideal of the Holocaust.

As if trying to keep pace with the state's own growth, Yad Vashem has continued to expand its reservoir of images, sculptures, and exhibitions. Almost every year has witnessed an unveiling of a new memorial sculpture or gardens placed on the grounds, including reproductions of memorial sculptures from the Warsaw ghetto and Dachau. A monument and plaza commemorating Jewish soldiers in the Allied forces was added in 1985, a children's memorial in 1988. A memorial sculpture commemorating four martyred women, heroines of the Auschwitz *Sonderkommando* uprising, was dedicated in 1991. A huge project, The Valley to the Destroyed Communities, was completed in 1992. Paralleling the state's self-construction, the construction of memory at Yad Vashem spans the entire history of the state itself. As the state grows, so too will its memorial undergirding.

Until its massive 2003 redesign, however, the historical museum at Yad Vashem had been concerned primarily with the destruction of Jews during the war – not with other groups murdered en masse by the Nazis. But as the state began to recognize the fact of its plural and multi-ethnic society, and its own debt to globalization, its perception of the Holocaust has evolved to include other Jewish victims of the Nazis. With a new generation's mandate in mind, Yad Vashem has thus completely revamped its historical exhibition to reflect a new generation's reasons for remembering this history in the first place. The most significant of the many changes now in Yad Vashem's new historical museum, therefore, is a narrative that includes not just Jewish victims of the Nazis but also Gypsies, Jehovah's Witnesses, political prisoners, homosexuals, and even Polish clergy and German victims of the Nazis' early T-4 (euthanasia) program for the mass murder of the disabled and handicapped. In a land of immigrants – including Christian Russian spouses of Jewish immigrants from the former Soviet Union and Ethiopian Jews – and at a time when young people are increasingly looking outward at other groups of contemporary victims in the world around them, Yad Vashem also now tells the stories of victims other than Jews. With a newfound

grasp of itself as a plural, immigrant nation, Israel's institutions have begun to counter the traditional Zionist negation of the diaspora.

The United States

In 1964, when a group of Jewish American survivors of the Warsaw ghetto uprising submitted a design for a Holocaust memorial to what was then New York City's Art Commission (since 2008 the Public Design Commission), they were turned down for three reasons. First, the commissioners claimed that the design proposed by Nathan Rapoport (1911–1987), whose credits included the *Warsaw Ghetto Memorial*, was too big and not aesthetically tasteful. Second, such a monument might inspire other "special groups" to be similarly represented on public land – another regrettable precedent. And finally, the city had to ensure that "monuments in the parks ... be limited to events of American history" (Farrell 1965: 1). Apparently, the Holocaust was not an American experience. For the Jewish survivors of the Holocaust who had immigrated to America after World War II, and who regarded themselves as typical "new Americans," such an answer challenged their very conception of what it meant to be an American. For the first time, a distinction had been drawn between "events of American history" and those of "Americans' history." Did American history begin and end within the nation's geographical borders? Or did it, as most of these immigrants believed, begin with the experiences abroad that drove them to America's shores? But with the April 1993 dedication of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) in Washington, D.C., survivors' experiences were recognized as part of the nation's experience – and the Holocaust made a part of American history.

Situated adjacent to the National Mall and within view of the *Washington Monument* and the *Jefferson Memorial*, the USHMM is a neighbor to the National Museum of American History and other museums in the Smithsonian Institution complex. By dint of its placement, the USHMM enshrines not just the history of the Holocaust, but American democratic and egalitarian ideals as counterpoints to the Holocaust. The official American justification for a national Holocaust museum in the nation's capital was provided by President Jimmy Carter (1924–) in April 1979. Not only would this museum depict the lives of "new Americans," he said, but it would reinforce America's self-idealization as a haven for the world's oppressed. It would thus serve as a universal warning against the bigotry and anti-democratic forces underpinning such a catastrophe, and call attention to the potential in all other totalitarian systems for such slaughter (US Holocaust Memorial Council Press Release). As the ultimate violation of America's Bill of Rights and the persecution of plural groups, the Holocaust encompasses all the reasons immigrants – past, present and future – ever had for seeking refuge in America. Yet other levels of meaning can be found in the design of the museum itself. "It is my view," the museum's architect, James Ingo Freed (1930–2005), once said, "that the Holocaust defines a radical ... break with the optimistic conception of continuous social and political improvement underlying the material culture of the West" (Freed). This view led, in turn, to a fundamental architectural dilemma: How to represent the Holocaust as an irreparable breach in the western mind without violating the strictly enforced architectural harmony of the nation's capital? Freed's answer was an exterior that conformed to the Fine Arts Commission's strict guidelines and an interior that metaphorically removes visitors

from the capital. In an echo of the brokenness already recalled in traditional Jewish mourning motifs, Freed's design includes skewed angles, exposed steel trusses, and broken walls – all to suggest an architectural discontinuity, rawness, and an absence of reassuring forms.

The discontinuity and fragmentation evident in the museum's interior architectural space cannot, however, be similarly conveyed in the permanent exhibition narrative itself. For like the coherence of all narrative, the exhibition's account depends upon the continuous sequence of its telling, the chronology, and integration of history's events. Though housed in a structure reverberating with themes of brokenness and the impossibility of repair, the exhibition itself exists solely on the strength of its internal logic, the linear sequence by which events of the Holocaust are ordered in their telling. While visitors to the permanent exhibition first encounter the Holocaust through the testimony of American soldiers – including General and later President Dwight D. Eisenhower (1890–1969) – who liberated Nazi concentration camps in 1945, the exhibition proper begins with the rise of Nazism and its post-World War I historical context. And then because the American experience of Nazi Germany in the 1930s was necessarily mediated by newsreels, papers, and radio broadcasts, the media experience itself is recreated in the next part of the permanent exhibition. Further sections focus on deportation, ghettoization, mass murder, concentration camps, resistance, and rescuers. Finally, like the museum narratives in Israel, where lives were rebuilt after the Holocaust, USHMM's permanent exhibit also ends with the “return to life,” an idealistic trope shared by America and Israel in which both are represented as lands of refuge and freedom. USHMM's version of the “return to life” story emphasizes immigration, the long journey from “old world” anti-Semitism, ravaged towns, and “displaced persons” camps to the “new world” of American egalitarianism. The story underscores America's absorption of immigrants and their memories, the gradual integration of Holocaust memory into American civic culture.

A similar appreciation for the richness of Jewish life in America is found in New York City's Museum of Jewish Heritage (self-identified as “A Living Memorial to the Holocaust”) located on the Battery in downtown Manhattan within sight of the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island, and only blocks removed from Ground Zero of the September 11 World Trade Center attacks. Though it opened only in September 1997, the Museum of Jewish Heritage is the culmination of what was to be America's first Holocaust memorial. Years of city and state debates over where and how to commemorate the Holocaust in New York combined with numerous competing fundraising agendas to delay the building of what is now one of the city's most prominent memorial institutions. As its name suggests, the Museum of Jewish Heritage integrates the Holocaust into a Jewish past, present, and future, locating the Shoah in the long continuum of Jewish life in Europe before the war and then after the war in Israel and America. Looking out over New York Harbor from the museum's exhibition halls, visitors are able to hold in mind both the time of destruction in Europe and the safety of refuge in America, life before and after the catastrophe. With its much-lauded *Memorial Garden of Stones*, designed in 2003 by the artist Andy Goldsworthy (1956–), the Museum of Jewish Heritage integrates the symbols of universal and Jewish material culture, each now grasped in terms of the other. Sapling trees of life and regeneration grow out of 18 boulders to embody the miracle of new life taking hold wherever it can, the indomitable spirit of survivors, and by extension, all immigrants who have been cast voluntarily or involuntarily on America's shore.

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