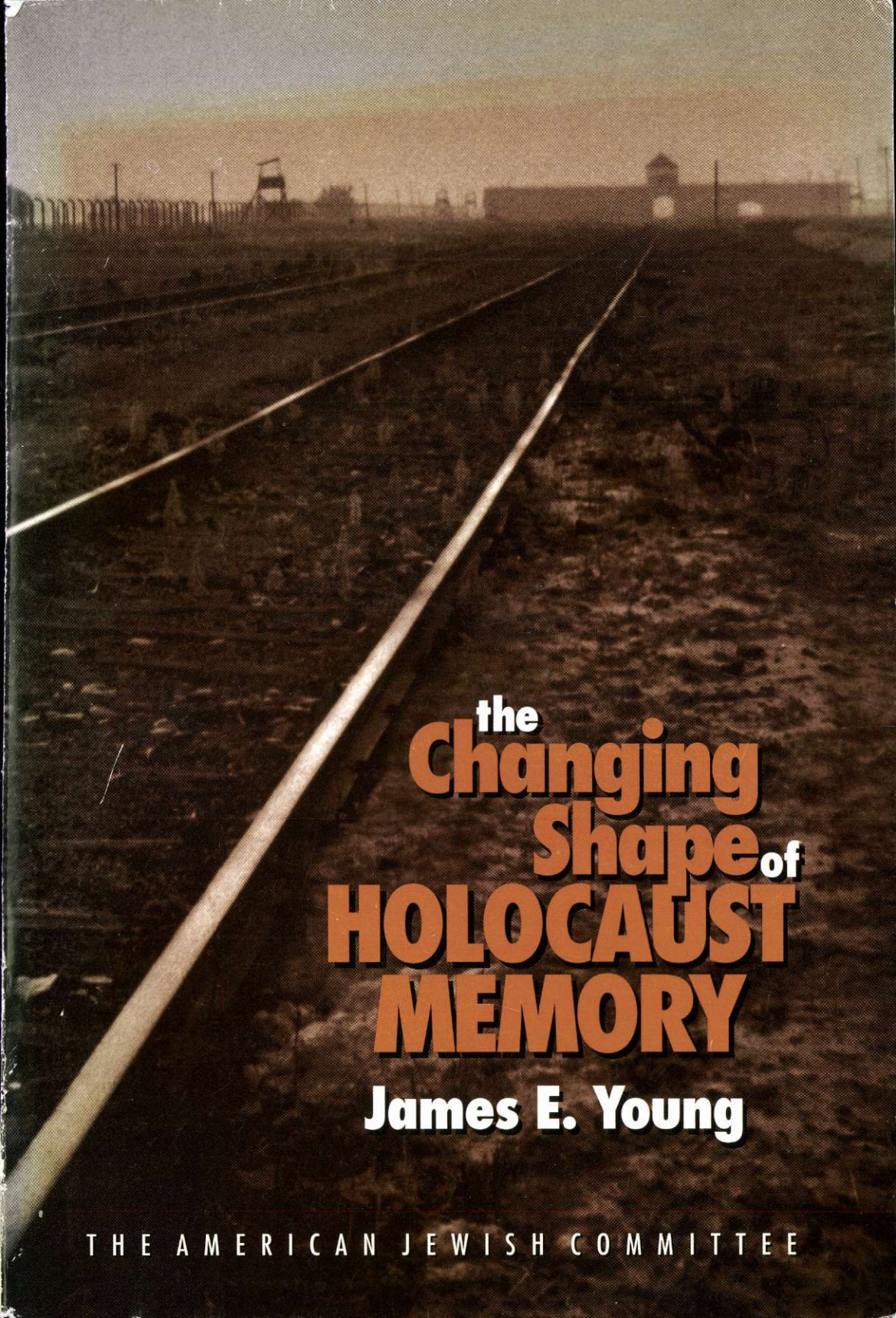

the Changing Shape of HOLOCAUST MEMORY

James E. Young

THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

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Foreword

The inscription at Yad Vashem, Israel's national Holocaust memorial museum, goes to the heart of the matter: "In remembrance lies the secret of deliverance." What then does this imply about society at present, when the memory of the Holocaust is quickly receding from general consciousness, when various scholars seek to relativize the Holocaust, and when a new generation of anti-Semites puts forward the obscene claim that the Holocaust never happened?

To shed light on the current situation with regard to knowledge and remembrance of the Holocaust, the American Jewish Committee launched a series of public-opinion surveys focusing on the subject. The first such probe was carried out in November 1992 in connection with the opening of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C. This was followed by surveys in Great Britain, France, Germany, and Australia, repeating many of the same questions. In January 1995, the American Jewish Committee released the results of a probe in Poland, conducted against the background of the commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz. The survey research program continues apace, with the most recent data coming from Austria. A sampling of key findings on knowledge and remembrance of the Holocaust in various countries is displayed in the center insert in this publication.

It is a central virtue of Professor James E. Young's illuminating essay, which forms the heart of this publication, to remind us that there is far more at stake in Holocaust remembrance than straight factual knowledge. Such knowledge is indeed indispensable, but beyond

it lies the realm of interpretation. The "enormously disparate, complex, and ever changing face of Holocaust memory," Professor Young stresses, is a function of the "twin axes of Holocaust memory: both the ways that every memorial medium (from literature to film, from monuments to moments of silence) generates different meaning in Holocaust memory and the ways that every nation organizes Holocaust memory according to its own experiences, ideals, and political needs."

Today, fifty years after the end of the Second World War, the struggle for Holocaust memory continues. The "secret of deliverance" is yet to be revealed.

David Singer, *Director*
Department of Research and Publications
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The Changing Shape of Holocaust Memory

Because I was born in 1951, some six years after the end of World War II, I don't remember the Holocaust. All I remember, all I know of the Holocaust, is what victims have passed down to me in their diaries, what survivors have preserved for me in their memoirs. I remember not actual events, but the countless histories, novels, and poems of the Holocaust I have read, the plays, movies, and video testimonies I have watched over the years. I remember long days and nights in the company of survivors, listening to their harrowing tales, until their lives, loves, and losses seemed grafted indelibly onto my own life's story.

Finally, like many others, I have begun to remember more and more often my visits to Holocaust memorials—the museums and monuments in America, Europe, and Israel—that invite me to remember events I never experienced directly. Indeed, the further the Holocaust recedes into time, the more prominent its memorials and museums become. For a number of reasons, both cultural and demographic, Holocaust memory has begun to grow ever more public, whether as a mass-media spectacle like Steven Spielberg's *Schindler's List,* or as a civic institution like the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, or as a day-to-day metaphor by which all kinds of other people's suffering is being measured.

Dozens of survivor memoirs continue to be published by the trade presses every year, while the academic presses turn out hundreds of articles and books on aspects of the Holocaust. In addition, thousands upon thousands of monuments, preserved ruins, plaques, muse-

ums, and study centers devoted to Holocaust remembrance now dot European, American, and Israeli landscapes. As the last generation of survivors begins to pass on, many seem almost desperate to leave behind a testimony, a place, or an object around which Holocaust memory might still congeal. And as other forms of Jewish learning and traditional education wane among an ever-more-assimilated generation, the vicarious memory of past catastrophe serves increasingly as a locus for Jewish identity and knowledge.

The displacement in memory of a thousand years of European Jewish civilization with twelve catastrophic years is not a happy development, to my mind. But instead of merely bemoaning the Holocaust memory boom, and precisely because Holocaust memory has come to occupy such a vast part of Jewish resources and consciousness, we need to recognize its place in contemporary Jewish life, examine it critically, and understand its consequences. For what is remembered of the Holocaust depends on how it is remembered, and how events are remembered depends in turn on the multitude of texts now giving them form.

Rather than trying to determine precisely how much of our communal time should be devoted to Holocaust remembrance, therefore, I would like to examine here how it is being remembered, in what kinds of media, toward what kinds of understanding, and to what social, political, and religious ends. With these aims in mind, I will look here at the twin axes of Holocaust memory: both the ways that every memorial medium (from literature to film, from monuments to moments of silence) generates different meaning in Holocaust memory and the ways that every nation organizes Holocaust memory according to its own experiences, ideals, and political needs. Together, these twin axes of formal and national remembrance constitute the enormously disparate, complex, and ever changing face of Holocaust memory.

In these pages, I begin by looking at the literary forms of Holocaust memory—including the diaries, chronicles, memoirs, novels, and *yizkor bikher*—each generating entirely different kinds of meaning. From here, I explore some of the cinemagraphic forms of remembrance, such as film and video testimony, and the ways they work to fix

images of the survivor in our minds. In this context, I also explore the second generation's response to their parents' memories and the forms this has taken in popular culture. I then turn to the more public kinds of Holocaust commemoration found in national museums, monuments, and days of remembrance. All along, attention is given to the forms that Holocaust memory has begun to take in this skeptical, postmodern age, a time when memory necessarily falls into the hands of a new generation of artists and writers devoted to challenging their own capacity to transmit such history.[1]

The Holocaust in Jewish Memorial Tradition

Indeed, memory of historical events and the narratives delivering this memory have always been central to Jewish faith, tradition, and identity. For if the Jewish God is known only insofar as he reveals himself historically, as Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi and others suggest, then to remember history and to interpret its texts assumes religiously obligatory proportions.[2] Throughout Torah, the Jews are enjoined not only to remember their history but to observe the rituals of faith through remembrance: "Remember the days of old, consider the years of ages past" (Deut. 32:7); "Remember what Amalek did to you" (Deut. 25:17); "Remember this day, on which you went free from Egypt, the house of bondage, how the Lord freed you from it with a mighty hand" (Exod. 13:3). To this day, history continues to assert itself as a locus of Jewish identity, memory as a primary form of Jewish faith.

The memory of historical trauma, in particular, has long played a pivotal role in Jewish national consciousness. We are reminded, for example, that some ultra-Orthodox communities continue to count the calendar years beginning with the second *hurban* (destruction of the Temple) of 70 C.E. and the dispersion; that is, Jewish time has traditionally been measured in the distance between protocatastrophe and present moment. Moreover, in Jewish tradition, memory and mourning come in both collective and individual forms. Among emblems of individual mourning, for example, are sitting shiva on a short stool, a

rent garment, a covered mirror, the *jahrzeit* candle and *yizkor* blessing, broken candlesticks emblazoned on a tombstone. We compare these images to memorial responses drawn from the liturgy and calendar commemorating collective destructions, specifically the destructions of the First and Second Temples: for example, public fast days (the Ninth of Av, Tenth of Teveth) or verses from Lamentations. Other, more folkloristic responses in the Jewish household include a burned pinch of the Sabbath challah, or a piece of wall left unpainted—both daily reminders of *hurban*. In this context, we see both the impulse to remember the Holocaust and the meanings engendered in such remembrance are to some extent prescribed by the tradition itself.

We also find that in keeping with the bookish, iconoclastic side of Jewish tradition, the first "memorials" to the Holocaust period came not in stone, glass, or steel—but in narrative. The *yizkor bikher*—memorial books—recalled both the lives and the destruction of European Jewish communities according to the most ancient of Jewish memorial media: the book. Indeed, as the preface to one of these books suggests, "Whenever we pick up the book we will feel we are standing next to [the victims'] graves, because even that the murderers denied them."[3] The shtetl scribes hoped that when read, the *yizkor bikher* would turn the site of reading into memorial space. In response to what has been called "the missing gravestone syndrome," the first sites of memory created by survivors were thus interior, imagined graves.

What distinguishes the *yizkor bikher* from other memorial narratives, such as diaries and memoirs, is their scribes' painstaking attempts to reconstruct all that was lost. Whereas Holocaust diaries and memoirs often concentrate on the time of destruction—the ghettoization and killing process—the memorial books were assembled just after the war by survivors to show what had once been: pictures of the local yeshiva are mixed with images of family picnics and youth camps; members of the burial society are listed alongside members of the Bund, Shomer Ha'tsair, and Betar. In the tradition of the shtetl scribe whose *pinkas* was the sole record of a community's transactions, its members' comings and goings, the *sofrim* of memorial books aimed

to record the density of life itself just before the deluge. The dead are mourned here not for the manner in which they died during the Holocaust but for having been wiped out so completely, leaving behind no family, no home, no community. For many *shtetlech*, the memorial books assembled by returning survivors are the sole witnesses to the richness and diversity of life lost during the Holocaust.

Holocaust Literature

Like other literary responses to catastrophe, Holocaust literature necessarily locates this terrible era in any number of national and aesthetic cultural traditions. Even the definition of the Holocaust itself will depend on who writes about it, under what conditions and to which audience. For the purposes of this essay, Holocaust literature consists of all the literary responses to the destruction of European Jewry and other peoples by the Nazi German state and its collaborators during World War II. It is necessarily an international literature, with works in all the European languages, as well as in Hebrew, Yiddish, and English.

In this conception, Holocaust literature includes: the diaries of victims and memoirs of survivors; chronicles and documents compiled collectively by community groups, assembled in the forms of archives and "memorial books"; novels and short stories on Holocaust-related themes by those who witnessed the destruction, as well as by those removed from it; poetry and drama from the concentration camps and ghettos, as well as that composed after the war with aspects of the Holocaust as subject; ballads and songs written both to inspire fighters in the ghettos during the war and to commemorate them afterward; and religious responsa that relate events of the Holocaust in the form of traditional Jewish legends and parables. More recently, the children of Holocaust survivors have begun to add their own, unique voice to these traditional genres, including "comix" and rock and roll lyrics.

Each of these forms represents the Holocaust in a slightly different way, each conveying different shades of meaning and understanding of events. Because they were written from within the whirlwind,

for example, ghetto and camp diaries can suggest themselves rhetorically as literal remnants of events; at the same time, the diarists are dependent on readers to complete their stories, since they wrote day to day without knowing their end. For a sense of the chaotic realities facing inmates of the camps and ghettos, the details of daily life under Nazi siege, and an understanding of how the victims grasped their circumstances at the time, the diaries of writers like Emmanuel Ringelblum, Chaim A. Kaplan, Zelig Kalmanovitsh, Moshe Flinker, Anne Frank, Eva Heyman, and others remain invaluable as sources.

By contrast, the thousands of Holocaust memoirists necessarily write with the advantage of hindsight, which allows them to know from the beginning of their recollections how it all turned out. Though they, like the diarists, have been inspired by the powerful urges to testify to such crimes and to order otherwise inchoate experiences, the memoirists also have had time to meditate on their survival and to reflect on their current lives in light of their people's destruction. As a result, the memoirs can suggest a sense of coherence and sequence to events often missing in the diaries.

Where the diarist's pages may have been smuggled out of the ghetto a few at a time on a daily basis (as were Kaplan's), lending the entire diary a sense of its own fragmentariness, the memoirist begins with an entire story intact. Survivors like Primo Levi and Elie Wiesel were thus able to reflect on their experiences, to find and relate the significance of early events in light of later ones. The shape of a Holocaust memoirist's work may thus depend as much on the writer's current preoccupations as it does on the actual events themselves. The incoherence of events as experienced at the time can be relieved by the much more complete understanding a survivor brings to this past years later. As a result, the memory we find in memoirs is often laced with the darkness of one who knows that the worst was indeed possible.

In yet other ways, Holocaust fiction, drama, and poetry also shape events and understanding according to their formal qualities, each genre raising its own literary, aesthetic, and historical issues. Of these forms, what has come to be called "documentary fiction" of the Holocaust continues to raise some of the most difficult-to-resolve

critical questions. Specifically, to what extent does a "documentary novel" of the Holocaust (like Anatoly Kuznetsov's *Babi Yar*, or John Hersey's *The Wall*) document events, and to what extent does it fictionalize them? Because the novel has traditionally sustained a certain fact-fiction ambiguity as part of its discourse, both writers and readers have asked whether or not it is an appropriate form for the representation of altogether unbelievable events. As a result, other Holocaust novelists (like Jean François Steiner in *Treblinka*) have gone to great lengths to assert an absolute link between their fiction and the historical facts of the Holocaust. Others, like novelist D. M. Thomas (in reference to his *The White Hotel*), have claimed on ethical grounds that they had no right to imagine such suffering and therefore relied on the voices of actual witnesses. In both cases, it is difficult to know whether such claims are actually part of these novels' essential fiction.

The poet has similarly been warned by the Frankfurt School critic T. W. Adorno that not only is poetry after Auschwitz barbaric, but it may be immoral to derive the slightest bit of aesthetic pleasure from the suffering of Holocaust victims. Though Adorno later retracted his dicta against such poetry after reading Paul Celan's masterpiece, "Todesfugue" (Death Fugue), critical questions over the poetic appropriation of Holocaust imagery persist. To what extent do lineation, rhyme, and meter, for example, distract from and domesticate the brutal facts of the Holocaust? Or, to what extent can the aesthetic qualities of poetry and figurative language actually reveal poetic truths unavailable to documentary narrative? Through the verse of Nelly Sachs, Jakov Glatstein, Avraham Sutzkever, and Dan Pagis, to name only a few, readers glean kinds of Holocaust knowledge that fall between public and private memory, between communal and personal history.

The very languages the writers used often determined both the shape and content of their works. In choosing to write in Hebrew instead of Yiddish, for example, the ghetto scribes Chaim A. Kaplan and Zelig Kalmanovitsh may not have deliberately chosen every specific allusion and figure in the Hebrew over those in Emmanuel Ringelblum's Yiddish, but they did locate events within different linguistic

realms all the same. Where Hebrew tends to locate events in the sanctified sphere of scripture, rabbinic disputation, and covenant, writers in Yiddish (the daily language) tended to emphasize the details of daily life and its hardships. Conversely, questions of theodicy, covenant, and scriptural antecedent had a lexicon in Hebrew they did not have in Yiddish.

Depending on where these works were written, by whom, and under what circumstances, each conveys its own unique grasp of events. A member of Poland's formerly vast Hasidic community, for example, has an entirely different experience to relate from his socialist coreligionist, and he will tell it in an entirely different manner. Where the ultrareligious survivor may turn to a parabolic storytelling tradition to raise issues of God's justice and the righteousness of martyrdom, the labor-Zionist will more likely explore the heroism of resistance in the style of factual reportage.

In some cases, whether or not a Holocaust literature even came to exist depended on the national literary traditons of the victims. Because Jewish religious tradition is an essentially literary one, with a 2500-year history of catastrophe responsa, remembering the Holocaust in writing assumed something approaching religious obligation. Both because they were the principal racial victims of the Nazis and because their tradition mandated it, Jewish writers have thus accounted for the great majority of the thousands of Holocaust literary works. Obversely, the primarily oral tradition of the tribes of Sinti and Rom (commonly, if disparagingly, known as Gypsies) nearly guaranteed a frightful literary silence on their part. Because their story depended on the voices of the tellers themselves, the history of the Gypsies' deportations and mass murder died in the throats of the victims—and so remains largely unknown.

Other themes emerge people by people, gender by gender. In comparing the brilliant short tales of Sara Nomberg-Przytyk with those of Polish writer Tadeusz Borowski, one is struck by the stark differences between their preoccupations, themes, and voices. In her vividly told "true tales from a grotesque land" (Auschwitz), Nomberg-Przytyk brings into sharp relief the unique experiences of women in

the camps, the ways a woman's history of subjugation had provided her with a ready-made literary lexicon for the humiliation and degradation she found at the hands of the Nazis. Borowski, on the other hand, was a non-Jewish Pole interned at Auschwitz as a socialist, regarded after the war as Poland's greatest young writer. Though his personal conduct in the camp was by all accounts beyond reproach, even at times heroic in his assistance to the harder-pressed Jewish inmates, Borowski's stories are told through the self-incriminating eye of someone seemingly inured to the suffering and death surrounding him. It is a literary mea culpa of one who seemed to survive at the expense of the hundreds of thousands gassed at Auschwitz. Because nothing before or after the war seemed to compare to the atrocities he witnessed in Auschwitz, and because no one before or after would seem to comprehend it, Borowski limited his language and metaphor to that of the camp's realities alone, thus sealing both his and the readers' minds into the concentration-camp universe—from which he would allow no literary escape.

At some point, nearly all writers of the Holocaust, whether a diarist like Chaim A. Kaplan, or memoirists like Elie Wiesel and Primo Levi, lament the sheer impossibility of their task: How to describe what seems indescribable? On the one hand, as one of Wiesel's characters recognizes, words seem to destroy what they aim to describe, alter what they try to emphasize, even end up taking its place. For Holocaust survivors who may have lived solely to bear witness and who hoped they could bring the reality of their experiences forward in their writing, the perception that their experiences could be displaced by their writing and not embodied in it becomes nearly unbearable.

At the same time, diarists like Chaim A. Kaplan feared that the narrative act itself, with its intrinsic ordering properties, would betray what seemed to be the completely inchoate experience of the ghetto. How was it possible, the diarist wondered, to describe a disorderly thing in an orderly fashion? Similarly, at the outset of their memoirs, Elie Wiesel and Primo Levi among others have asked whether a Holocaust literature is possible. How to write the Holocaust without displacing it? How to describe it without distorting it? How to deliver

eyewitness evidence in a medium that yields only words? In each of these cases, the writers concluded that as difficult as their literary conundrum seemed, silence was not an alternative. They recognized that without a literature, the Holocaust would have been a self-consuming catastrophe, giving the killers a posthumous victory.

Video and Cinemagraphic Testimony

Memory rarely comes in a long and twisting narrative skein, but more often in freely associated moments, kernels of time around which events gather and acquire significance. By inviting a Holocaust survivor's recollections and then filming them, the makers of video and cinemagraphic testimony simultaneously (and paradoxically) preserve broken fragments of memory, even as they stitch them together into a continuously unfurling scroll: a kind of celluloid megilla. These high tech testimonies are now being taped, cataloged, indexed, edited, and transcribed in video archives at Yale, UCLA, and Gratz College, among other repositories. Using some of the profits from his extraordinarily popular film, *Schindler's List*, director Steven Spielberg has also initiated a vast video project intended to record the stories of some 50,000 survivors.

From these archives, the video tapes can be distributed for use in classrooms and on television, for courses devoted specifically to Holocaust history and literature, as well for more general courses in oral history, psychotherapy, and literary testimony. But like other narrative, Holocaust video testimony necessarily begins and ends somewhere, which frames and encloses the survivors' experiences for both speaker and viewer. "Start at the beginning," suggests the interviewer, at which point the survivor must determine where this beginning came. Was it when the family moved to Germany from Russia after World War I, or when they heard on the radio that Hitler was appointed chancellor, or was it *Kristallnacht*? Was it when the community was deported to the ghetto, or when they arrived at Auschwitz? Or does one's personal memory of the Holocaust actually begin on a collective basis centuries before, in the *hurban* of the First and Second Temples and subsequent

pogroms? And where then does one's testimony end? At liberation from the camps, or on one's arrival in Israel? When the tape runs out, or when the interviewer grows tired? Can memory ever have closure? Depending on where the beginning and end of testimony come, particular premises, conclusions, and meanings are created for the whole of the testimony. In this context, we recall that like the literary memoirist, the survivor in video testimony also begins testimony with full knowledge of the end, which inevitably contextualizes—and occasionally figures—early experiences in terms of later ones. Some memories are given elaborate voice, while others from before and after the block of testimony remain unrecorded altogether.

Many survivors have chosen to speak and tell their stories only in English, which they regard as a neutral, uncorrupted, and ironically amnesiac language. Having experienced events in Yiddish or Polish or German, survivors often find that English serves at least as much as mediation between themselves and their experiences as it does as medium for their expression. In video and cinemagraphic testimonies, this on-camera simultaneous translation of events from memory into language and from one language into another is strikingly evident in ways lost to literature. Part of the video text here is precisely the visual record of this entry of memory into language, the search for the right words, and the simultaneous interpretation of events in this search for language.

This process is perhaps best exemplified in Claude Lanzmann's film *Shoah*, where all layers of translation and interpretation are left intact on screen. Indeed, the effect at times is that of a multilingual echo chamber, in which experiences seem almost to be in search of a language. In *Shoah*, Lanzmann asks the questions in French, they are translated by an interpreter into Polish, Yiddish, or Hebrew, answered in one of these languages, translated back into French, and then in this country flashed onto the screen in English subtitles. In the process, questions and answers are thus literally repeated three times in different translations (i.e., interpretations) for the viewer. Even though each language brings a slightly different twist to the testimony, it is almost as if no single language were finally adequate to the task. At least part

of the text here is both this repetition and seeming reformulation of events in language, as well as the events' apparent flight from language.

Another important part of the text is the on-screen interpretation of questions and answers by the translator-interpreters in Lanzmann's film. Though Lanzmann attempts to frame his questions as directly and as unambiguously as possible, they are often laden with irony and even sarcasm that might well have antagonized the witnesses, had they not been rephrased by his interpreters. As it turns out, his interpreters screened the answers as well, attempting to relate only that which seemed pertinent to Lanzmann's questions. The intermediaries in this case are clearly interpreters: rendering the French into an acceptable Polish question, receiving a reply to a Polish question, and then reinterpreting it back into the frame of the French original, even editing it slightly to conform with the perceived intent of the original question.

It is not merely a story or narrative being recorded in cinematographic and video testimony, but the literal making of it: the painful and deliberate choice of words, selection of details and memories, the effect of these details on the speaker, and then the effect of these details on the narrative itself. We watch as experiences enter speech: that point at which memory is translated, transformed into language, often for the first time. Whereas writers necessarily break silence in order to represent it, in video testimony silence remains as much a presence as the words themselves; silence, which cannot exist in print except in blank pages, is now accompanied by the image of one who is silent, who cannot find the words.

Unlike literary testimony, however, video testimonies can also represent not telling a story, the point at which memory will not enter speech. We are witness to the speaking and to the not speaking, to the choice of whether to go on or not. Unlike written narrative, which tends to collapse the spaces between words and ideas, in video testimony the pauses and hesitations in the telling of a story remain intact, as evident as the words themselves. The sense of incoherency of experiences, the associative nature of reconstructing them, the visible

groping for terms and language are all preserved in video and become as much a part of the textual content of video testimony as the story itself.

The process of remembrance, of construction, of editing, of formulating ideas, and the search for order—which remain mostly invisible in literary texts—gives the video testimonies a painful self-awareness and reflexivity missing in literary testimony. In fact, this sense of self-reflexivity is animate in the tellers themselves: that is, they often seem to respond to the sound and meaning of their own words as they talk, even making slight corrective movements in tone as they proceed. They seem to be their own audience at times, reflecting on what they have just said, turning it back over in their minds, sometimes seeming to wonder what to do with their own stories.

In fact, at times the survivors seem almost to guard themselves against their stories, approaching remembrances warily, circling them as if measuring the impact their words will have not just on the listener but on themselves. There is a point at which these memories are still part of the survivor's inner life, still an inner wound; if, in watching these memories pass from the private to the public sphere, we also feel some of the pain in this transition, we may understand something more about the consequences of both the experiences and the telling of such experiences.

In the testimonial image, we also perceive traces of a story the survivor is not telling; these traces are in his eyes, his movements, his expressions—all of which become part of the overall text of video testimony, suggesting much more than we are hearing and seeing. We grasp here that memory is being transmitted not merely through narrative but by body movements and behavior as well. In fact, here we realize that there are kinds of memory available to us only in video or film, kinds of testimony that we must ourselves witness. In *Breaking the Silence*, Eva Fogelman's film about the children of survivors and their relationships with their parents, we discover that the children have inherited a particular understanding of events, an entire memory of them, that has little to do with what their parents have told them; in fact, part of the problem for many children was just this want of actu-

al telling by the parents, an overload of behavioral and nonverbal signs that are so difficult to interpret. Part of their parents' testimony has come in feelings of permanent dislocation, overprotectiveness, an implicit diminishing of adolescent problems, or just plain guilt at having survived. None of these responses may have been articulated or narrated as such, but have been conveyed in a thousand daily ways to the children as memory. And as the parents' body language, silences, and other nonverbal behavior communicate something to their children, the survivors in video testimony convey particular nonverbal messages and kinds of memory to its viewers as well.

The visual images in video testimony carry other significance as well. Of all the obscenities inflicted upon the Jews during the period of the Holocaust, one of the most perverse may have been the calculated displacement of a millennium-old civilization by what David Roskies has called "an enormous freak show of atrocity victims."[4] Unfortunately, the unassimilable images of the wretched dead and survivors have become for many in America not only the sum of European Jewish civilization but also the sum of knowledge about the Holocaust and its survivors. Too often the point of departure for the "popular study" of the Holocaust begins and ends with these images alone, the unmitigated horror at the end of Jewish history in continental Europe, not the conditions of history, politics, culture, and mind —the rich history of European Jewry—that preceded it.

But as thriving Jewish communities were reduced to—and displaced by—images of corpses and skeletal prisoners, these pictures of survivors might now be displaced by the well-groomed, outwardly mended survivors on the video tapes. By showing us whole human beings, however inwardly scarred they are, the video tapes rehumanize the survivors, and in so doing rehumanize the murdered victims as well.[5] Instead of static black and white images of hollow-eyed victims, we find the survivors as they are now, which suggests to us the humanity of all the victims before the war. Both victims and survivors are thus relocated in the human community, which simultaneously rehumanizes and reindividuates them. In this way, the tapes might return just a fraction of the dignity and humanity the Nazis attempted to de-

stroy; and as this dignity is returned to the survivors in their testimonies, it is also returned to those still stripped of it in the footage of the camps' liberation.

The Popular Culture of Holocaust Memory

It has been said that the Holocaust turned every survivor into a witness, every witness into a writer. This is not true. Some became writers, others graphic artists, others filmmakers. Still others fell silent altogether and went to work as farmers, mechanics, shop clerks, engineers, businessmen, bureaucrats, and parents. Given the very bookishness of Jewish tradition, the number of witness-scribes telling their stories may not be surprising. But not all survivors are born rememberers or gifted storytellers. In fact, the great majority will probably live out their lives without having transmitted a fraction of their experiences. Except for the day-to-day pockets of memory opened in interactions with family or their responses to daily tribulations, most survivors may leave their pain, bitterness, or gratitude for life itself largely unexpressed. This is one of the reasons why the listener's task has never been to deny the survivor his medium of expression—whatever it may be. In light of the growing volume of second-generation literature, some of it remarkably idiosyncratic, attempts to restrict the artistic expression of the survivors' children are no less misguided.[6]

The range of possible responses to the Shoah by the children of survivors grows with every generation. In an age dominated by popular culture, survivors' children are as likely to distinguish themselves as abstract expressionists as they are portrait artists, or as likely to play rhythm and blues as as they are classical piano. By remaining true to his medium, for example, Art Spiegelman has not trivialized his parents' experiences so much as wondrously expanded what he calls the "comix" art form itself—that is, the "co-mixture" of image and narrative. In the case of Spiegelman's *Maus: A Survivor's Tale*, the artist has even redefined the borders of his medium, creating a form that allows a powerful self-scrutiny of both the survivor's storytelling process and the child's attempt to remember it.

Maus is not about the Holocaust so much as about the survivor's tale itself, his father's telling of it and the artist-son's recovery of it. In Spiegelman's own words, "*Maus* is not what happened in the past, but rather what the son understands of the father's story." To this end, the artist's mixture of image and narrative constitutes the imaginative record of his father's telling. Throughout *Maus*, Art confronts even his father with the record of his telling, even incorporating his father's response to Art's record into later stages of *Maus*. Like any good postmodern memory art, *Maus* thus feeds on itself, recalling its own production, even the choices the artist makes along the way (would he draw his French wife who converted to Judaism as a frog or an honorary *Maus*?)—all toward highlighting the inseparability of his father's story from its effect on Art.

When Spiegelman is asked "Why mice?" he answers, "I need to show the events and memory of the Holocaust without showing them. I want to show the masking of these events in their representation." In this way, he can tell the story and not tell it at the same time. As ancient Passover *Haggadoth* used to put birds' heads on human forms in order not to show humans and to show them at the same time, Spiegelman has put mouse heads on the Jews. By using mouse masks, the artist also asks us not to believe what we see. They are masks drawing attention to themselves as such, never inviting us to mistake memory of events for events themselves.

Other aspects of Spiegelman's specific form and technique further incorporate the process of drawing *Maus* into its finished version. By drawing his panels in a 1:1 ratio, for example, instead of drawing large panels and then shrinking them down to page size, Spiegelman reproduces his hand's movement in scale—its shakiness, the thickness of his drawing pencil line, the limits of miniaturization, all to put a cap on detail and fine line, and so keep the pictures underdetermined. In addition, the box panels convey information in both vertical and horizontal movements of the eye, as well as in the analogue of images implied by the entire page appearing in the background of any single panel. The narrative sequence of his boxes, with some ambiguity as to the order in which they are to be read, combines with and then chal-

lenges the narrative of his father's story—itself constantly interrupted by Art's questions and own neurotic preoccupations, his father's pill-taking, the bitter father-son relationship, his father's new and sour marriage. As a result, Spiegelman's narrative is constantly interrupted by—and integrative of—life itself, with all its dislocutions, associations, and paralyzing self-reflections. It is a narrative echoing with the ambient noise and issues surrounding its telling. The roundabout method of memory-telling is captured here in ways unavailable to straighter narrative. It is a narrative that tells both the story of events and its own unfolding as narrative.

And as if all this weren't enough, we now have *Maus* on CD-ROM, in which the text panels of *Maus* are accompanied by complete genealogies of their origins. Where did a particular story or set of images come from, how did they first enter the artist's consciousness? It's all here: just press the interactive screen on one of the colored boxes and up comes a complete (pre-)history of that panel: Vladek's tape-recorded voice tells one version, with Art's interruptions. The artist's early sketches done as his father spoke tell another. Photographs and drawings from Art's library that inspired certain images appear one after the other, even video footage of Art's trip to Poland and Auschwitz. By making visible the memory of this memory-text's production, the CD-ROM version of *Maus* reveals the interior, ever evolving life of memory—and even makes this life too part of the text.

The National Landscapes of Holocaust Memory

As memory of the Holocaust is shaped by survivors' diaries and memoirs, by their children's films and novels, so it is being molded also by proliferating memorial images and spaces. Depending on where these memorials are constructed and by whom, these sites recall the 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 the state's memory of itself. At a more specific level, these memorials also reflect the temper of the memory-artists'

time, their place in aesthetic discourse, their media and materials.

Public memory is never shaped in a vacuum, its motives are never pure. Both the reasons given for Holocaust memorials 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 memorials is to educate the next generation and to inculcate in it a sense of shared experience and destiny, other memorials are conceived as expiations of guilt or as self-aggrandizement. Still others are intended to attract tourists. In addition to traditional Jewish memorial iconography, every state has its own institutional forms of remembrance. As a result, Holocaust memorials inevitably mix national and Jewish figures, political and religious imagery.

In Germany, for example, memorials to this time recall Jews by their absence, German victims by their political resistance. In Poland, countless memorials in former death camps and across the countryside commemorate the whole of Polish destruction through the figure of its murdered Jewish part. In Israel, martyrs and heroes are remembered side by side, both redeemed by the birth of the state. As the shape Holocaust memory takes in Europe and Israel is determined by political, aesthetic, and religious coordinates, that in the United States is guided no less by distinctly American ideals and experiences—such as liberty, pluralism, and immigration.

The aim of our inquiry into Holocaust memorials, therefore, will not just be to survey the many faces of public memory. It will be to examine precisely how and why public memory of this era is being shaped by the museums and monuments created to recall events. Instead of concentrating on finished or monolithic memory, we might look at the process by which public memory of the Holocaust is constructed. We ask who creates this memory, under what circumstances, for which audience? Which events are remembered, which forgotten, and how are they explained? What are these monuments' places in national and religious commemorative cycles? What is the contemporary artist's role in public memory? Finally, we ask what the aims and con-

sequences of Holocaust memorialization are, why memory and monuments matter.

By themselves, monuments are of little value, mere stones in the landscape. But as part of a nation's rites or the objects of a people's national pilgrimage, they are invested with national soul and memory. For traditionally, the state-sponsored memory of a national past aims to affirm the righteousness of a nation's birth, even its divine election. The matrix of a nation's monuments emplots the story of ennobling events, of triumphs over barbarism, and recalls the martyrdom of those who gave their lives in the struggle for national existence—who, in the martyrological refrain, died so that a country might live. In assuming the idealized forms and meanings assigned this era by the state, memorials tend to concretize particular historical interpretations. They suggest themselves as indigenous, even geological outcroppings in a national landscape; in time, such idealized memory grows as natural to the eye as the landscape in which it stands.

The relationship between a state and its memorials is not one-sided, however. On the one hand, official agencies are in position to shape memory explicitly as they see fit, memory that best serves a national interest. On the other hand, once created, memorials take on lives of their own, often stubbornly resistant to the state's original intentions. In some cases, memorials created in the image of a state's ideals actually turn around to recast these ideals in the memorial's own image. New generations visit memorials under new circumstances and invest them with new meanings. The result is an evolution in the memorial's significance, generated in the new times and company in which it finds itself.

With these thoughts in mind, we might compare, for example, monuments erected at the sites of destruction with those built at geographical remove. In addition, we can examine the place of these monuments in contemporary artistic and political discourse, the meanings memorials take in new regimes, how materials and media influence a memorial's conception. We ask how memorials blend traditional religious and national iconography with more contemporary forms like performance and conceptual art, how artists balance the needs of

viewers against the occasionally obscure sensibilities of contemporary art—all of which may depend on the funding of state institutions.

These questions lead us, in turn, to refine the distinctions between high and low, public and popular art in our evaluation of Holocaust memorials. It may no longer be sufficient, for example, merely to identify the traditions and forms out of which memory is constructed; or to ask whether or not these monuments reflect past history; or whether they do so accurately or fashionably. This is not to make public monumental art immune to aesthetic judgment and evaluation, but to suggest that other criteria now be considered as well. Rather than dismissing a monument for its mass appeal, or for its kitschiness, we examine all parts of its performance as monument, the many ways its figures continue to suggest themselves as the bases for political, religious, and communal action.

For neither a purely formal nor a historicist approach accommodates the many other dimensions at play in public monuments. 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, I pursue what Peter Burger has called a "functional analysis of art," adapted here to examine the social effects of public memorial spaces.[7] This is to suggest that the "art of public memory" encompasses not just these memorials' aesthetic contours, or their places in contemporary artistic discourse. It also includes the activity that brought them into being, the constant give and take between memorials and viewers, and finally the responses of viewers to their own world in light of a memorialized past. Indeed, we remind ourselves here that it is the visitors to monuments who necessarily complete the memorial act, who animate the memorial in their visits. In this way, we might keep in mind the fundamentally dialogical, interactive nature of all memorials and exhibitions. By reinvesting these memorials with the memory of their own origins, I hope to highlight the process of public art over its often static result, the ever-changing life of the monument over its seemingly frozen face in the landscape.

Germany

On the one hand, no one takes their memorials more seriously than the Germans. Competitions are held almost monthly across the "Fatherland" for new memorials against war and fascism or for peace; or to mark a site of destruction, deportation, or a missing synagogue; or to remember a lost Jewish community. Students devote their summers to concentration camp archaeology at Neuengamme, excavating artifacts from another, crueler age. Or they take up hammer and nails to rebuild a synagogue in Essen, or to build a monument at the site of Dachau's former satellite camp at Landsberg. Brigades of young Germans once again report dutifully to Auschwitz, where they repair dilapidated exhibition halls, tend shrubs around the barracks, and hoe weeds from the no-man's-land strip between formerly electrified fences. No less industrious than the generations preceding them, German teenagers now work as hard at constructing memorials as their parents did in rebuilding the country after the war, as their grandparents did in building the Third Reich itself.

Nonetheless, Holocaust memorial work in Germany today remains a tortured, self-reflective, even paralyzing preoccupation. Every monument, at every turn, is endlessly scrutinized, explicated, and debated. Artistic, ethical, and historical questions occupy design juries to an extent unknown in other countries. Germany's ongoing "Denkmal-Arbeit" simultaneously displaces and constitutes the object of memory. Though some, like the Greens, might see such absorption in the process of memorial building as an evasion of memory, it may also be true that the surest engagement with memory lies in its perpetual irresolution. In fact, the best German memorial to the fascist era and its victims may not be a single memorial at all—but simply the never-to-be-resolved debate over which kind of memory to preserve, how to do it, in whose name, and to what end. Instead of a fixed figure for memory, the debate itself—perpetually unresolved amid ever changing conditions—might be enshrined.

Given the state-sponsored monument's traditional function as self-aggrandizing locus for national memory, the essential, nearly paralyzing ambiguity of German memory comes as no surprise. While

the victors of history have long erected monuments to recall their triumphs, and victims have built memorials to recall their martyrdom, only rarely does a nation call upon itself to remember the victims of crimes it has perpetrated. Where are the national monuments to the genocide of American Indians, to the millions of Africans enslaved and murdered, to the Kulaks and peasants starved to death by the millions? They barely exist.[8]

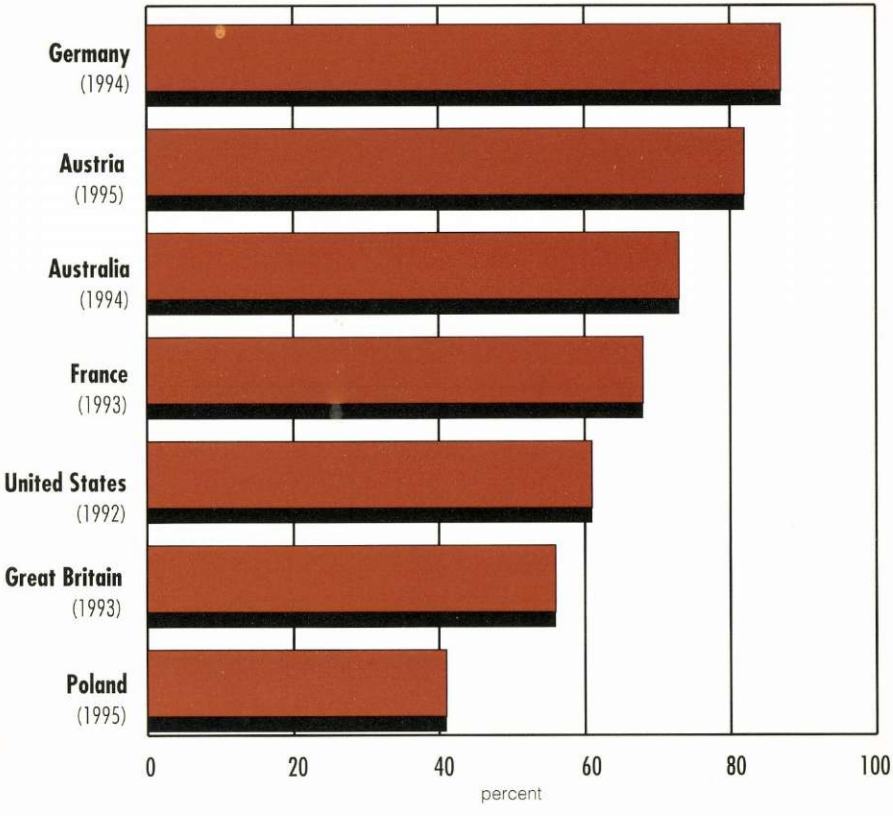
What then of Germany, a nation justly forced to remember the suffering and devastation it once caused in the name of its people? How does a state incorporate its crimes against others into its national memorial landscape? How does a state recite, much less commemorate, the litany of its misdeeds, making them part of its reason for being? Under what memorial aegis, whose rules, does a nation remember its own barbarity? Where is the tradition for memorial mea culpa, when combined remembrance and self-indictment seem so hopelessly at odds? Unlike state-sponsored memorials built by victimized nations and peoples to themselves in Poland, Holland, or Israel, those in Germany are necessarily those of the persecutor remembering its victims. In the face of this necessary breach in the conventional "memorial code," it is little wonder that German national memory remains so torn and convoluted: it is that of a nation tortured by its conflicted desire to build a new and just state on the bedrock memory of its horrendous crimes.

Perhaps the most stunning and inflammatory response to Germany's memorial conundrum is the rise of what we might call its "countermonuments": brazen, painfully self-conscious memorial spaces conceived to challenge the very premises of their being. Ethically certain of their duty to remember, but aesthetically skeptical of the assumptions underpinning traditional memorial forms, a new generation of contemporary artists and monument makers in Germany is probing the limits of both their artistic media and the very notion of a memorial. They 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 distinguish their generation from that of the killers through memory.[9]

Knowledge and Remembrance of the Holocaust

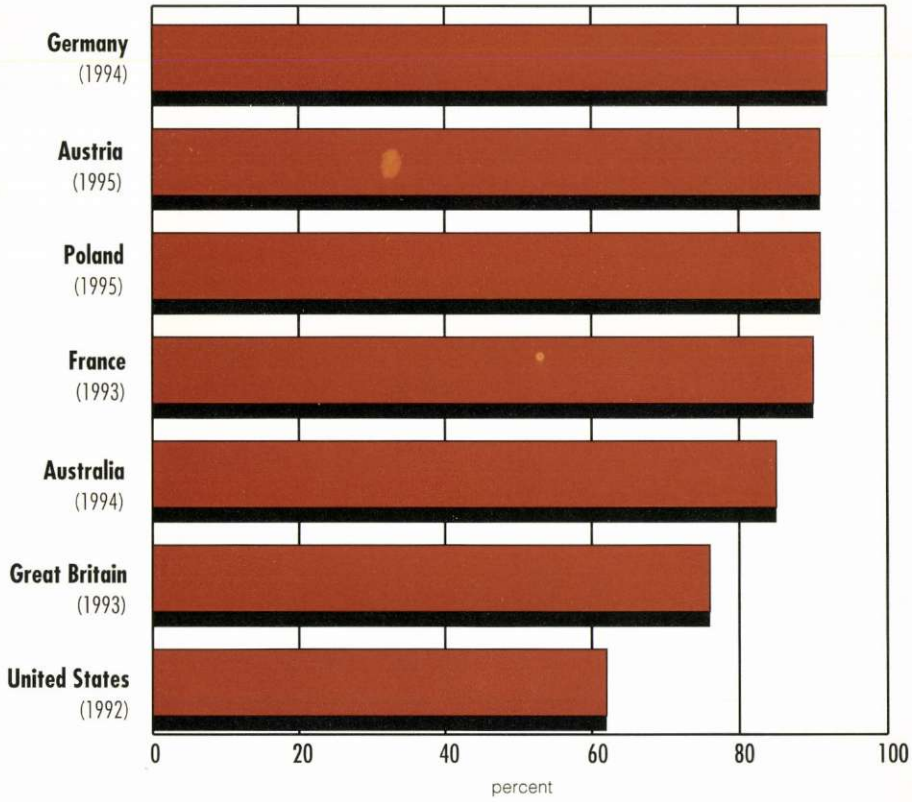
Select Data from
American Jewish Committee-
Sponsored Surveys

Percentage of Respondents with Some Awareness of What the Term "the Holocaust" Means



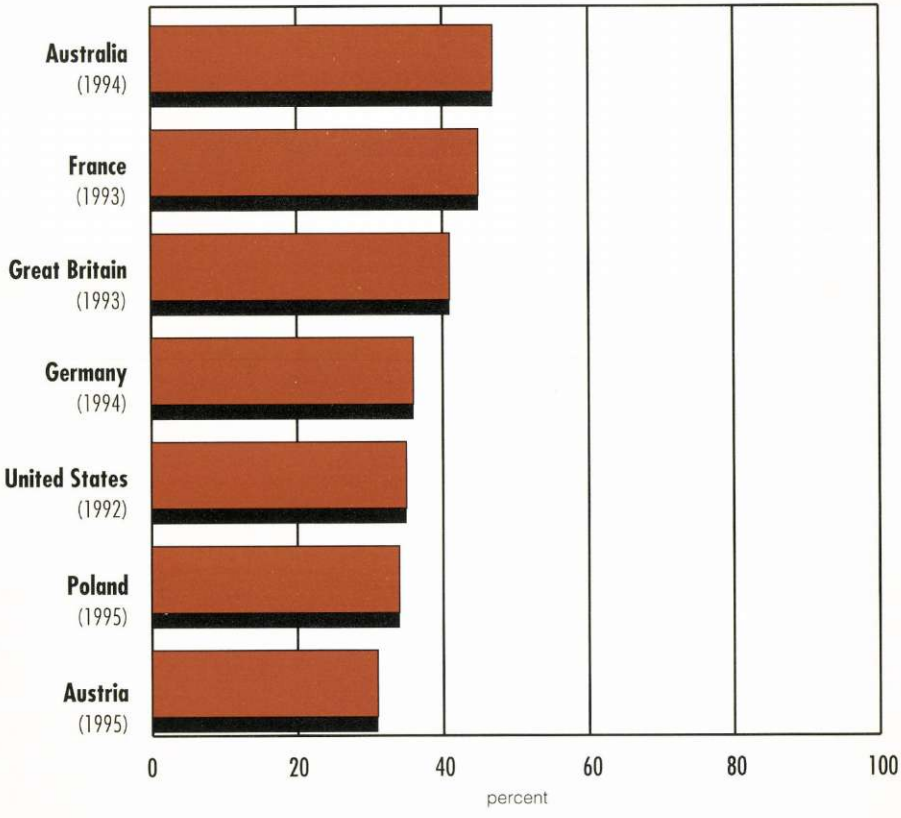
Note: The low figure for Poland reflects lack of usage of the English term "Holocaust."

Percentage of Respondents Who Know That Auschwitz, Dachau, and Treblinka Were Concentration Camps

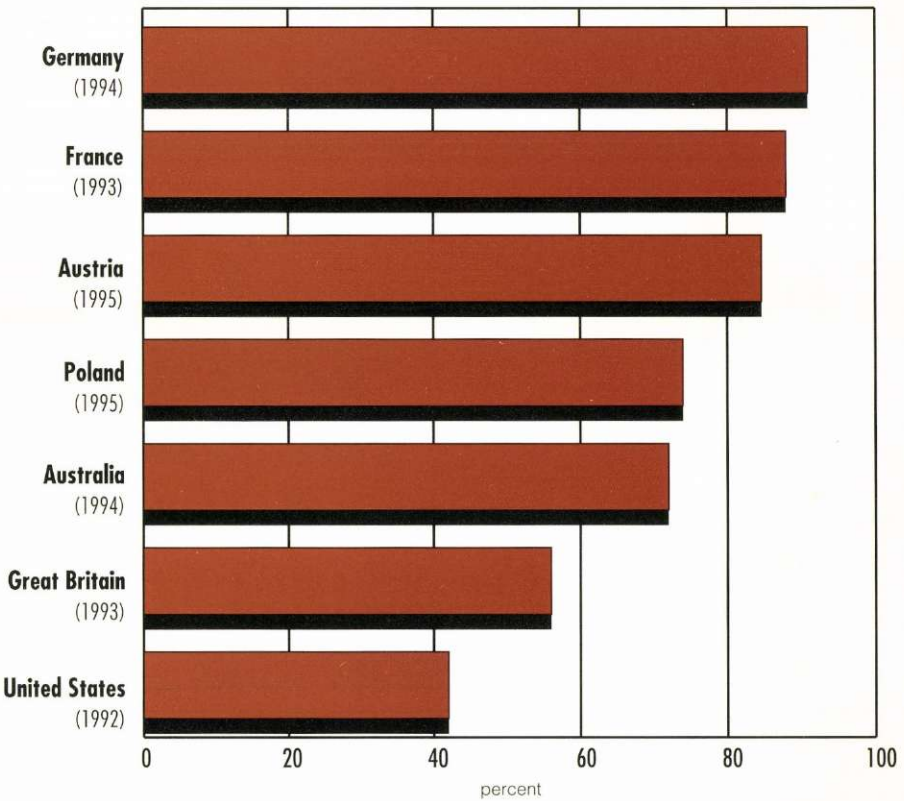


Note: This question was asked in a multiple-choice format in France, Australia, and the United States, and in an open-ended format in Germany, Poland, Austria, and Great Britain.

Percentage of Respondents Who Know That Approximately Six Million Jews Were Killed by the Nazis

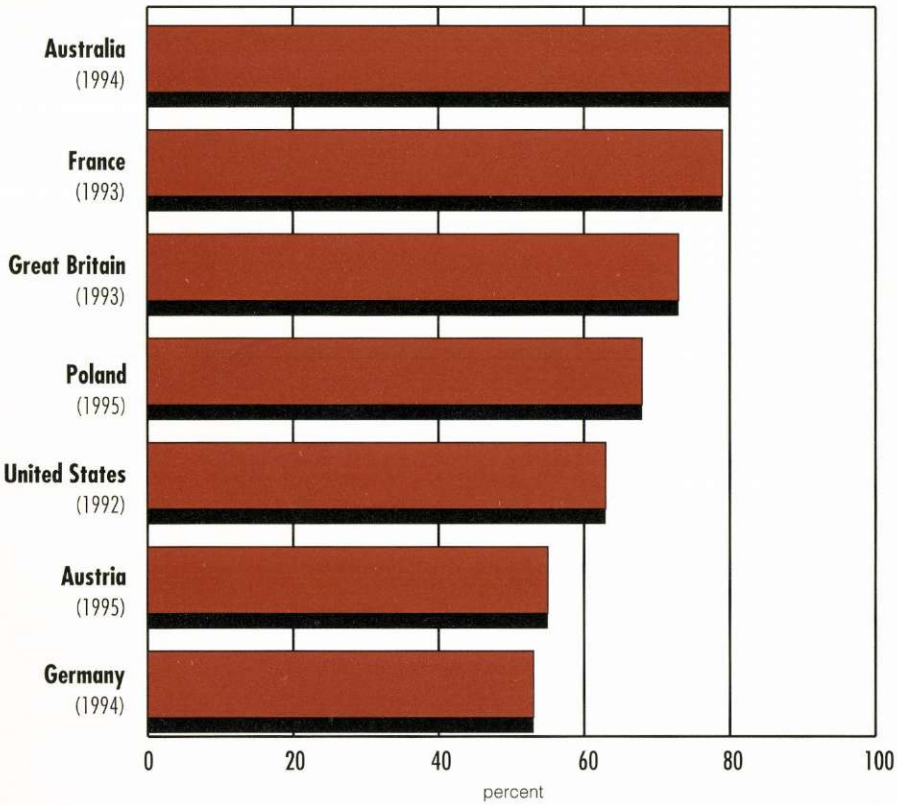


Percentage of Respondents Who Know That Jews Were Forced to Wear a Yellow Star/Jewish Star During the Second World War

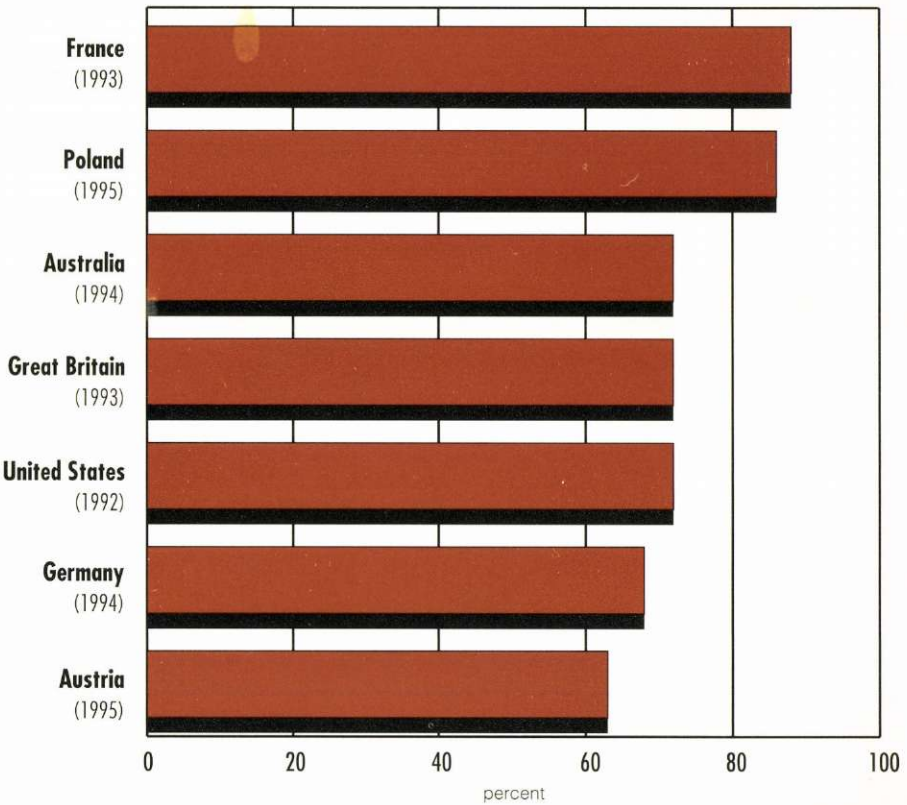


Note: This question was asked in a multiple-choice format in France, Australia, and the United States, and in an open-ended format in Germany, Austria, Poland, and Great Britain.

Percentage of Respondents Who Believe That the Holocaust Is Still Relevant Today



Percentage of Respondents Who Consider It Essential or Very Important for People in Their Country to Know About and Understand the Holocaust



Detailed survey-research data on knowledge and remembrance of the Holocaust in various countries are reported in the following American Jewish Committee publications:

Golub, Jennifer, and Renae Cohen. *What Do Americans Know About the Holocaust?* New York: American Jewish Committee, 1993.

Golub, Jennifer, and Renae Cohen. *What Do the British Know About the Holocaust?* New York: American Jewish Committee, 1993.

Golub, Jennifer, and Renae Cohen. *What Do the French Know About the Holocaust?* New York: American Jewish Committee, 1994.

Golub, Jennifer. *Current German Attitudes Toward Jews and Other Minorities.* New York: American Jewish Committee, 1994.

Golub, Jennifer, and Renae Cohen. *What Do Australians Know About the Holocaust?* New York: American Jewish Committee, 1994.

Golub, Jennifer, and Renae Cohen. *Knowledge and Remembrance of the Holocaust in Poland.* New York: American Jewish Committee, 1995.

Golub, Jennifer, and Renae Cohen. *Current Austrian Attitudes Toward Jews and the Holocaust.* New York: American Jewish Committee, 1995.

Smith, Tom W. *Holocaust Denial: What the Survey Data Reveal.* New York: American Jewish Committee, 1995.

Germany's struggle with memory of its Nazi past is reflected in nearly every aspect of its national being: from its deliberations over the government's return to Berlin to its ambivalence over a national holiday; from the meticulously conceived museums on the former sites of concentration camps to a new generation of artists' repudiation of monumental forms, still redolent of Nazi art. On the former site of Hamburg's greatest synagogue at Bornplatz, Margrit Kahl has assembled an intricate mosaic tracing the complex lines of the synagogue's roof construction: a palimpsest for a building and community that no longer exist. Norbert Radermacher bathes a guilty landscape in Berlin's Neukölln neighborhood with the inscribed light of its past. Alfred Hrdlicka began but never finished a countermonument in Hamburg to neutralize an indestructible Nazi monument nearby. In a suburb of Hamburg, Jochen and Esther Gerz have erected a black pillar against fascism and for peace designed to disappear altogether over time. The very heart of Berlin, former site of the Gestapo headquarters, remains a great, gaping wound as politicians, artists, and various committees forever debate the most appropriate memorial for this site.

At home in an era of earthworks, conceptual and self-destructive art, these artists explore both the necessity of memory and their incapacity to recall events they never experienced directly. For German artists and sculptors like Jochen Gerz, Norbert Radermacher, and Horst Hoheisel, the possibility that memory of events so grave might be reduced to exhibitions of public craftsmanship or cheap pathos remains intolerable. They contemptuously reject the traditional forms and reasons for public memorial art, those spaces that either console viewers or redeem such tragic events, or indulge in a facile kind of *Wiedergutmachung*, or purport to mend the memory of a murdered people.

Public memorialization of the war era began in Germany, as it did elsewhere, with every group remembering its own fate: as victims, heroes, or bystanders. Within days of their liberation, former concentration camp inmates at Dachau, Buchenwald, and Bergen-Belsen had fashioned makeshift memorial towers from the bric-a-brac of their dismantled prisons. Soviet, American, and British soldiers erected

stone markers throughout Germany's battle-scarred landscape, inscribed to the memory of their fallen comrades. Jewish, Catholic, and Protestant clergy gathered around their own, specially designated spaces to mourn their respective dead—and to begin organizing their return to life. Memory of terror at the hands of the Nazis both energized and constituted the very raison d'être for Social Democrats, Communists, and other formerly persecuted parties, whose memorial ceremonies and political rallies immediately after the war often became one and the same.

Because there were no killing centers per se in Germany and so few non-Jewish Germans were interned in the death camps, the mass murder of Jews has entered German memory as more a figurative than a literal experience. Had it not been for the massive, last-ditch evacuations of Jewish prisoners from death camps in Poland, who died by the tens of thousands at the end of their forced marches back into Germany, in fact, the mass murder might have remained a foreign experience altogether. German experiences of the prisoners' plight in the camps was limited largely to either helping Jewish neighbors or watching quietly as they disappeared, guarding the camps or being forced by Allied soldiers to march through them after liberation. As a result, what we call Holocaust memorials in Germany tend to be highly stylized when remembering the Jews and oriented toward all victims of fascism when remembering the Germans.

As the first concentration camp in Germany, Dachau epitomizes now the German memorialization of their "KZ-Zeit." 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 Church, and the Jewish community.

As the name "The Trustees for the Monument of Atonement at the Concentration Camp Dachau" suggests, however, the very reasons for the memorials at Dachua differ for each group of victims. It was not to mourn the loss of a Jewish population that either of the Christian memorials was established, but rather to atone for Nazi sins against humanity. Stylized and cerebralized, all of the monuments 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 tells us, from nine to five), cleanliness and order now govern the "remembrance" of filth and chaos. Given the almost antiseptic cleanliness of the grounds and of the two replicated barracks, the tasteful symbolism of the other barracks' foundations, and the excellent museum, it is not so surprising to hear visitors complain that this memorial aesthetisizes the past as if to vanquish it, rather than to recall it. Where the seemingly unadorned ruins of memorial camps in the East compel visitors to take them literally as the physical artifacts of the Nazi-era, the freshly painted, efficiently organized icons at Dachau openly invite metaphysical speculation.

Over the years, Dachau's town council has, if begrudgingly, come to accept the village's notoriety. In a slightly defensive, if well-intentioned, welcome to guests at Dachau, a colorfully printed pamphlet issued by the town's tourist office greets guests with glossy photographs of pastoral views and a local beer garden. Confronted with the most intractable of public relations dilemmas, local authorities have put the best possible face on matters. Mayor Lorenz Reitmeier opens the brochure with a letter of welcome. "Dear Guests," he writes

> You have come to Dachau to visit the Memorial Site in the former Concentration Camp. I should like to welcome you on behalf of the Town of Dachau. Innumerable crimes were committed in the Dachau Concentration Camp. Like you, deeply moved, the citizens of the town of Dachau bow their heads before the victims of this camp.
>
> The horrors of the German concentration camps must never be repeated! After your visit, you will be horrorstricken. But we

> sincerely hope you will not transfer your indignation to the ancient 1200-year-old Bavarian town of Dachau, which was not consulted when the concentration camp was built and whose citizens voted quite decisively against the rise of National Socialism in 1933. The Dachau Concentration Camp is a part of the overall German responsibility for that time.
>
> I extend a cordial invitation to you to visit the old town of Dachau only a few kilometers from here. We would be happy to greet you within our walls and to welcome you as friends.[10]

Seemingly torn between his position as standard-bearer for civic pride and knowledge of the town's past, the mayor is in the perverse position of welcoming tourists to his town and apologizing for their having to come here in the first place—a public relations nightmare.

The memorial at Bergen-Belsen, on the other hand, is conceived of and approached by visitors as a cemetery, a great burial ground. Except for an exhibition that briefly chronicles Nazism and the concentration camps in a one-room stone and glass museum here, little of what transpired specifically at Bergen-Belsen until the liberation is represented. The principal theme here instead is the prisoners' deaths and their mass graves. Signified now by rows of burial mounds, each grave is marked by a small stone and mortar facade, inscribed with the number of dead buried: "Here rest 5,000 dead," or 2,000 dead, or 1,000 dead. Amid burial mounds and scattered individual tombstones inscribed in Hebrew, a four-meter stone-block marker inscribed in English and Hebrew condenses Jewish memory. More general memory of anonymous victims is represented in a thirty-meter-high, all-white marble and granite obelisk standing in front of a free-standing wall 100 meters removed. Deathly quiet now except for the singing of birds and planes flying overhead, the land now has covered itself modestly with shrubs and flowers; the surrounding forest acts as a kind of natural barrier between this place and the outer world, again a result of the Nazis' own efforts to keep the camp hidden.

In West Germany, memory work is 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 a number of

remnants from the Nazi period that might have been left behind as reminders. With the encouragement of its Allied occupiers, the Federal Republic strove to begin anew, to put its Nazi past behind it.

In East Germany, however, the Soviet occupiers ensured that as much of the debris of Germany's destruction as possible remain before the eyes of East Germans 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. On the other hand, bullet-pocked facades, weedy no-man's-lands, even the destroyed Reichstag on the dividing line between West and East Berlin would serve to remind a vanquished nation precisely how it arrived at the present moment.

From the end of the war to the present day, sites of persecution and resistance have been assiduously marked and preserved in the East. It was not only the Soviets who had an interest in preserving a few well-placed ruins, but so too did the German Communist Party, politically vindicated by its ordeal under Nazi rule and now propped up by the Soviet army. Because of its role during the war as Germany's only coherent resistance organization, the Communist Party could define itself afterward as the premier antifascist party, Hitler's first victim. If in the West, wartime resistance is recalled largely in the images of the 20th of July officers' plot against Hitler, or in the "white rose" students' campaign, in the East resistance was recalled primarily in the figure and deeds of the German Communist Party, in the martyrdom of its leaders. When the party, with the help of its Soviet comrades, took control of the East, the new state proclaimed itself the primary symbol of resistance to the Nazis.

A whole German nation self-defined as an antifascist state was born, thereby self-absolved of responsibility for fascist crimes. Once thus defined, the German Democratic Republic needed to take only a small step to commemorate itself as a victim state as well. In this sense, the national identity of the German Democratic Republic

(GDR) 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, we are told, 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 German Democratic Republic'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, however, Holocaust memory at Buchenwald is now being assimilated to the ideals of the new governing authority. Shortly after Germany's reunification on 3 October 1990, the museum at Buchenwald closed in order to undergo both physical and ideological renovation. It is now recalled, for example, that shortly after the war, some 130,000 Germans—some Nazis, some SS, some Social Democrats regarded as enemies by the Soviets—passed through eleven 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 in the immediate postwar era of shortages and famine.

But in recalling the forgotten Soviet takeover of the Nazi camps at Buchenwald and other places, the new German government has created a new order of memorial as well. Now when Prime Minister Helmut Kohl lays flowers at Buchenwald to the victims of Nazi terror, he saves a wreath for the six new memorial crosses there marking an estimated 8,000 to 13,000 Germans who died at Buchenwald during Stalin's reign here. The accretion of memory at Buchenwald now includes Stalin's terror as well as Hitler's; it is becoming a place where Germans were victimized by both sides. With a little updating, Buchenwald may begin to serve as a national memorial for the new Germany, as it did for the GDR. More generally, the opening of a new chapter of German history in the aftermath of reunification raises the possibility that Germans will now seek to, as the current phrase has it , "draw a line under the past."[11]

Poland

Of Jewish life and death in Poland, only the fragments remain. Forty-five years after the Holocaust, a new generation comes to know a millennium of Jewish civilization in Poland by its absence and the rubble of its destruction: dilapidated synagogues, uprooted and plowed-under cemeteries, warehouses piled high with religious artifacts, concentration camp ruins. Whether suggested in the glimpse of a doorjamb's missing mezuzah or synagogue turned into granary, or in the growing number of tombstone-fragment monuments in otherwise abandoned Jewish cemeteries, absence and brokenness emerge as twin memorial motifs indigenous to a landscape of shattered *matzevoth*.

For when many of the 270,000 returning Polish Jews went out to their cemeteries to mourn lost brethren, they found that even the mourning places had been destroyed by the Germans. Almost all of Poland's Jewish cemeteries had been vandalized, their tombstones broken into chunks and carted off by the Germans to pave roads. Before the survivors could mourn, they had to rebuild the memorial sites, often out of the broken shards of their destroyed cemeteries. In places

like Kazimierz on the Vistula, Lukow, Sandomierz, Siedlce, and the cemeteries in Warsaw and Krakow, survivors gathered the fragments of shattered *matzevoth* into great memorial cairns, obelisks, and retaining walls. Even after survivors left these towns in the face of anti-Jewish pogroms a few years later, many of these memorials remained to commemorate both the murdered communities and the destruction of traditional memory sites themselves.

As do the Holocaust memorials of other lands, those in Poland reflect both the past experiences and current lives of their communities, as well as the state's memory of itself. But in a land until recently shared by Poles and Jews, such memorials also remain bitterly contested. Before turning to the terribly complex interpenetration of Jewish and Polish memory of the Holocaust, therefore, we might first consider a particularly emblematic moment for the Poles.

Within days of the German invasion and occupation of Poland in September 1939, whole Polish towns and communities were obliterated. Polish professionals and intelligentsia were rounded up, imprisoned, and often executed—solely as Poles. The treatment of Poles was so brutal at the outset of the war that many of the especially desperate members of the intelligentsia actually donned the Jewish star as a means of protection from the Nazis.[12] At this point, even the so-called "special handling" of the Jews seemed preferable to summary deportation and execution. Later, when the Jews were singled out, non-Jewish Poles grasped the deportation and murder of Jews in light of their own recent suffering. In Polish eyes during and immediately after the war, before the full measure of the Jews' loss became clear, both groups seemed persecuted equally.

The significant place of national martyrdom in the histories and identities of both Poles and Jews further complicates the delicate memorial equation in Poland. For ironically, Poland's identity as a nation perpetually under siege may actually compete with the Jews' own traditional sense of themselves as the primary victims of history. As self-perceived "Christ among the nations," Poland has exalted its martyrdom to an extent that rivals the place of catastrophe in Jewish memory.[13] As Iwona Irwin-Zarecka makes clear, Polish romanticism

extolled the memory of national martyrs so effectively as to turn their memory into a central pillar around which national identity would be built and defined. Not so unlike the Jews, Poland had become a nation whose destructions would occupy as central a role in national memory and identity as its relatively few triumphs.

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 the Polish mind, 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 remnant after the Kielce and other pogroms 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, all remaining memory of this past would now be left in Polish hands and would thus reflect a characteristically Polish grasp of events, Polish ambivalence, 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 significant in Polish memory only insofar as it is perceived as precursor to the Poles' own, narrowly averted genocide.

Unfortunately, one of the consequences of this memorial exchange has been the steady erosion of Polish awareness of the vast historical differences between Jewish and Polish fates during the war. A new generation of Poles is hardly aware, for example, that Auschwitz-Birkenau was a place of primarily Jewish martyrdom. Indeed, few Poles realize that nearly 90 percent of Polish Jewry had been murdered during the war. It is becoming clear that over time, a nation's memory of the past comes to displace altogether its recorded history.[14]

In addition to the Polish nationalization of concentration camps like Auschwitz and Majdanek, the ruins at these camps also generate their own memorial dynamic. Between the rhetoric of ruins and Polish experiences during the Holocaust, it is worth pursuing briefly the ways memory has been shaped at a place like Auschwitz—and how it will likely be shaped in the future.

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. All these camps had been evacuated and abandoned, but not destroyed by the Germans in their hasty retreat. When we recall that the Germans had rounded up 250 local Jews from Oswiecim to build the camp there, we also realize that the memorial at Auschwitz was, in effect, built by the victims it would later commemorate.

One's first visit to the memorials at Majdanek and Auschwitz can come as a shock: not because of the bloody horror conveyed, but for the unexpected, even unseemly beauty of these places. Saplings planted along the perimeters of these camps, intended to screen the Germans' crimes from view, now sway and toss in the wind. Local farmers, shouldering scythes, lead their families through waist-deep

fields to cut and gather grass into great sheaves. Beyond their pastoral facade, however, 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 fifty years ago. Guard towers, barbed wire, barracks, and crematoria —mythologized elsewhere—here stand palpably intact. In contrast to 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 would now suggest themselves as fragments of events, inviting us to mistake the debris of history for history itself.

More specifically, what do we understand of the killers and victims through the figure of their remains? In one way, all we see here can be construed as remnants of the killers and their deeds. The dynamited ruins of gas chambers at Birkenau, for example, recall not only the fact of the gas chambers, but also the German attempt to destroy evidence of this fact: a monument both to events and to the guilt of the killers. But in a perversely ironic twist, these artifacts also force us to recall the victims as the Germans have remembered them to us: in the collected debris of a destroyed civilization.

For by themselves, these remnants rise in a macabre dance of memorial ghosts. Armless sleeves, eyeless lenses, headless caps, footless shoes: victims are known only by their absence, by the moment of their destruction. In great loose piles, these remnants remind us not of the lives once animating them, so much as the brokenness of lives, now scattered in pieces. For when the memory of a people and its past are reduced to the broken bits and rags of their belongings, memory of life itself is lost. What of the relationships and families sundered? What of the scholarship and education? The community and its traditions? Nowhere among this debris do we find traces of what bound these people together into a civilization, a nation, a culture. Heaps of scattered artifacts belie the interconnectedness of lives that actually made these victims a people, a collective whole. The sum of these dis-

membered fragments can never approach the whole of what was lost.

At Auschwitz-Birkenau today, memory is a mix of ruins and sculpted art. Surrounded by a seemingly endless field of countless barracks' chimneys and piles of dynamited crematoria, a long row of blocklike sarcaphogi mark the end of the rail line, the beginning of the death zone. In concert with the relics nearby, this monument remembers and provides material evidence for the simple message that used to be inscribed on twenty stone tablets in twenty 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."

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 remainng 200,000 victims were comprised of Polish Catholics, Gypsies, and Russian POWs.[15] 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, Poles' perceptions of their great losses, and the Soviet occupiers' desire to create socialist martyrs. With Poland's change of regime in 1989, the old inscriptions were removed. New ones are now in place, with a revised estimate of the numbers who died and the added explanation that they were "mainly Jews."

How then to create a commemorative space large enough to accommodate the plural memories and symbols of disparate, occasionally competing groups? How are the correct proportions of space and significance allotted? Is this, or should this be, the function of a memorial site? On the one hand, it seems intolerable that Jews should be buried beneath the crosses of the Carmelite order, a sign of Christian triumphalism in Jewish eyes. But on the other hand, were we to deny Christians their traditional forms of remembrance, we might also thwart their memory of Jewish victims. By dint of its location, Auschwitz will be a Polish memorial to both Polish and Jewish victims, a shared shrine to both Jewish and Polish catastrophes.

The hazards of such shared shrines have been all too evident: one

set of markers erected by young Polish volunteers continues to provoke incredulous headshaking by touring Jewish groups. Arrayed across a great green meadow, site of former burning pits and mass graves that were the burial sites of tons of human ashes, were large, whitewashed Stars of David and crosses. In two spots, the young Poles had attempted to create a symbol of solidarity between Jewish and Polish martyrs by nailing Stars of David to the crosses—in effect, crucifying the Jewish star. The memorial volunteers had hoped to perform an egalitarian "marriage" of Jewish and Christian symbols, but Jewish eyes found an ironic and bitter reference to the martyrdom of Jews at Christian hands.

In this regard, even Jewish groups need to resist turning Auschwitz-Birkenau into so many stations of the cross, its remains into so many pieces of the cross. In meetings of the International Auschwitz Council, members have debated whether to conserve the artifacts as historical evidence or as remnants of the past, meant to evoke in visitors the sense of having been there. When one member asked whether we ought to restore the remnants of Auschwitz to their historically accurate, original forms to convey the full horror of the Holocaust, I answered that it would be better to let the ruins age gracefully in order to show the ever-widening gulf of time between ourselves and the past terror.

Indeed, given the overwhelming proportion of Polish and Christian visitors to Auschwitz, we have had to recognize that Auschwitz-Birkenau would necessarily function as a shared memorial space, where Polish Catholics will remember as Polish Catholics, even when they remember Jewish victims. As Jews, we do not locate the victims in a Polish Catholic martyrological tradition. But neither can we expect Polish Catholics to recite the mourners' Kaddish. As Jews recall events in the forms of our tradition, so will Poles remember in the images of their faith. The problem may not be that the Poles deliberately displace Jewish memory of Auschwitz with their own, but that in a country bereft of its Jews, these memorials can do little but cultivate Polish memory. In this light, we realize that Auschwitz is part of a national landscape of suffering, one coordinate among others by which

both Jews and Poles continue to grasp their present lives in light of a remembered past.

With all this in mind, it is clear to me that any prescription for institutional memory at Auschwitz would be, like memorials themselves, provisional. Most of the Council's proposals will be adopted, others debated further, refined, augmented, or perhaps elided altogether. Indeed, the process itself reminds us that as much as we desire it, no memorial is really everlasting: each is shaped and understood in the context of its time and place, its meanings contingent on evolving political realities. Perhaps the wisest course, therefore, will be to build into the memorial at Auschwitz a capacity for change in new times and circumstances, to make explicit the kinds of meanings this site holds for us now, even as we make room for the new meanings this site will surely hold for the next generation. Once it is made clear how many people died here, for what reasons, and at whose hands, it will be up to future commemorators to find their own significance in this past.[16]

Israel

Unlike European memorials, often anchored in the very sites of destruction, those in Israel are necessarily removed from the "topography of terror." Where European memorials located *in situ* often suggest themselves rhetorically as the extension of events they would commemorate, those in Israel must gesture abstractly to a past removed in both time and space. In this sense, memorials in both Israel and the United States, remote from the sites of destruction, seem not to be anchored in history so much as in the ideals generating them in the first place.

It is precisely this emphasis on Jewish life before and after the Holocaust, however, that distinguishes Israeli Holocaust museums and memorials from those in Europe. Where monuments and museums in Europe 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 Yizchak, Givat Chaim, and Yad Mordecai, and at Yad Vashem Heroes and Martyrs Memorial Authority in Jerusalem, Jewish life is given first priority. In Israel, the Holocaust marks not so much the end of Jewish life as it does the end of viable life in exile. It is thus integrated into Jewish history: it may be a turning point, a confirmation of Zionist ideology, but it is linked nevertheless to Jewish life before in Europe and to Jewish life after in Israel.

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, in both its name and memorial configuration, the kibbutz commemorates less the dying of Jews during the war and more their fighting during the war and surviving after the war. Of the twelve halls of the museum there, 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, "the Jerusalem of Lithuania," and "The Shtetl, Olkieniki." If in this layout the path to Holocaust lay through the centers and shtetls of Diaspora life, then the road from Holocaust leads through resistance to survival, to the kibbutz itself and to the vibrant new self-sufficiency of Jews in their own land. In this way, not only is the Holocaust contextualized to include aspects of life in exile, but also to remind us that Jewish life preceded and will now follow it. In its conception and design, the theme at Holocaust Remembrance Day ceremonies at Lohamei Hageta'ot is always the same: "From Destruction to Redemption."

In fact, Holocaust memory is performed throughout Israel on a number of different levels on Holocaust Remembrance Day—Yom Hashoah v'Hagevurah. Initially established by a law of Knesset in 1951 as part of the mandate for a Holocaust Martyrs and Heroes Remembrance Authority (Yad Vashem), Yom Hashoah was not officially activated until 1959. In many ways, it is significant that a separate day

for remembering the Holocaust was decreed at all—and that it was to denote both Holocaust and heroism (*gevurah*). Some Orthodox congregations have incorporated the Holocaust into the liturgy of lamentations recited on Tisha b'Av to recall the destructions of the First and Second Temples. But by giving the Shoah its own day and linking it to heroism—that is, the Jews' (not God's) deliverance of themselves—the government has effectively pulled it out of the continuum of other destructions traditionally mourned on the Ninth of Av. In fact, the date chosen for Yom Hashoah was not a day of destruction at all: the 27th Day of Nissan falls midway between the end of Pesach and Yom Hazikkaron (remembrance day for Israel's war dead) and Yom Ha'atzma'ut (Israeli Independence Day). Holocaust Remembrance Day in Israel simultaneously recalls—and thereby links—biblical and recent historical liberation, modern resistance and national independence.

On the one hand, many of Israel's early founders regarded the Holocaust as the ultimate fruit of Jewish life in exile; as such, it came to represent the impossibility of life in exile. On the other hand, the state also recognized its 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. Indeed, as Saul Friedlander and others have shown, the early leaders found little reason to recall the Holocaust beyond its direct link to the new state.[17]

Finally, prodded by relatives of the murdered and by comrades of the ghetto fighters, Israel's parliament first passed a day of remembrance resolution in 1951, and then a national memorial authority act in 1953, which mandated the construction of Yad Vashem in Jerusalem. Although the destruction of European Jewry was still regarded by many both as incompatible with Israel's vision of the "new Jew" and as too recent and raw an experience to assimilate culturally, small memorials and plaques did begin to appear across Israel's rough landscape. In keeping with Israel's plan to make the desert bloom, forests were planted in memory of the victims, whole kibbutzim established. The state itself would become, in the words of a *Davar* editori-

al in 1951, "the one suitable monument to the memory of European Jewry."

To some extent, the essential paradox between remembering the Holocaust and forgetting it was resolved in Israel by the ubiquitous twinning of martyrs and heroes in Israel's memorial iconography. In this mixed figure, 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. When placed against the traditional paradigmatic backdrop of destruction and redemption, the memorial message in this dialectic comes into sharp relief: as destruction of the martyrs is redeemed by those who fought, the Shoah itself is redeemed by the founding of the state.

In every community, in every corner of Israel's landscape, one is reminded of the Shoah by a plaque, a building's dedication, an inscribed tablet. Streets are named after ghetto fighters like Mordechai Anieliewicz, schools after martyrs like Janusz Korczak. A granite harp in a Kiryat Gat park is entitled "Shoah 1933-1945" and stands beside a stone etched with a list of victims. German-Jewish refugees who arrived to build a moshav at Shavei-Zion near Nahariya erected a memorial in their synagogue to 134 of their former townspeople who did not leave Germany in time. A wall sculpture on the front of Jerusalem's Great Synagogue is dedicated both to the 6 million martyrs and to Israel's war dead: all of whom "died so that we might live." Denmark Square, with its skeletal boat sculpture, recalls the Danish rescue of Jews to residents of Jerusalem's Beit Hakerem neighborhood. In Haifa, the actual hull of one of these rescue boats on the former site of a refugee center reminds us that the rescue voyage begun in Denmark did not end in Sweden at all, but in Israel's Sha'ar Ha'aliya reception camp in 1948.

At Yad Vashem, Israel's vast and multilayered national Holocaust memorial and museum, the Holocaust marks not so much the end of Jewish life as it does the end of viable life in exile. Indeed, as the Baal Shem Tov's words remind visitors on their exit from the museum, "Forgetting lengthens the period of exile. In remembrance lies the secret of deliverance." In the narrative created by Holocaust Remem-

brance Day's placement on the national calendar, the end of the Shoah came not in the liberation of the camps, but in the survivors' return to and redemption in the land of Israel. In all cases, the Holocaust is integrated into a long view of Jewish history, to a millennium of Jewish life in Europe before the war and to Jewish national rebirth afterward.

The United States

If memorials in Germany and Poland composed of camp ruins invite visitors to mistake them for the events they represent, those in America inevitably call attention to the great gulf between themselves and the destruction. The "meaning" in American memorials is not always as self-evident as those constructed at the camps, places of deportation, or destroyed synagogues. In this sense, American memorials seem not to be anchored in history so much as in the ideals that generated them in the first place.

In the United States, the motives for Holocaust memory are as mixed as the population at large, variously lofty and cynical, practical and aesthetic. Moreover, in an immigrant-nation like America, with its many competing constituencies, it is nearly impossible to decide upon a single memorial shape for the Holocaust. Some communities build memorials to remember lost brethren, others to remember themselves. Some build memorials as community centers, others as tourist attractions. Some survivors remember strictly according to religious tradition, while others recall the political roots of their resistance. Veterans' organizations sponsor memorials to recall their role as liberators. Congressmen propose monuments to secure votes among their Jewish constituency. Even the national memorial to the Holocaust in Washington, D.C., was proposed by then-President Jimmy Carter to placate Jewish supporters angered by his sale of F-15 fighter planes to Saudi Arabia. All such memorial decisions are made in political time, contingent on political realities.[18]

In this context, therefore, we might explore not only the pluralistic definitions of the Holocaust in America (Which Holocaust? Whose Holocaust?) but also the ways other American ideals—such as liberty and immigration—constitute the central memorial motifs here.

At the same time, we must ask: what role does the Holocaust play in American thought and culture, in American religious and political life, in relations between Jewish Americans and other ethnic groups? To what extent will it necessarily be universalized in a society defined by pluralist and egalitarian ideals? To what extent has it become a defining preoccupation for Jewish Americans, a locus of memory and identity? The answers to these questions are complicated and ever changing.

Of all Holocaust memorials in the United States, none can begin to match in scope or ambition the national memorial and museum complex that opened in 1993 in the heart of the nation's capital. Situated adjacent to the National Mall and within view of the Washington Monument to the right and the Jefferson Memorial across the Tidal Basin to the left, the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum is a neighbor to the National Museum of American History and the Smithsonian Institution. It has enshrined, by dint of its placement, not just the history of the Holocaust, but American democratic and egalitarian ideals as they counterpoint the Holocaust. That is, by remembering the crimes of another people in another land, it encourages Americans to recall their nation's own, idealized reason for being.

Yet other levels of meaning can be found in the very design of the museum itself. "It is my view," the museum's architect, James Ingo Freed, has 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."[19] 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.[20]

Other memorials and museums in the United States, both those built and forever unbuilt, are no less accountable to a broad cross section of American civic groups. In keeping with its memorial mandate, but now answerable to the large black, Hispanic, and Asian communities nearby, the Simon Wiesenthal Center's Beit Hashoah—Museum of Tolerance in Los Angeles thus broadened its mission of Holocaust education and commemoration. It is now designed to educate the diverse population of Los Angeles about the dangers of race hatred and bigotry by teaching about its most extreme form, the Holocaust. In its high-tech dioramas, state-of-the-art design, and sophisticated mutilmedia presentations, Beit Hashoah (Hebrew for "House of the Holocaust") also reflects the ethos of its community, its place in the center of America's entertainment capital. As reflected in the two parts of its name, Beit Hashoah—Museum of Tolerance hopes to provide an American model for tolerance education based on the memory of a particular people's suffering.

Because the "American experience" of the Holocaust in 1945 was limited to the grisly moments of liberation, it may not be surprising that one of the most widely visited monuments to this era in America—entitled "Liberation"—would be located in Liberty State Park, New Jersey, within sight of both America's greatest ideological icon, the Statue of Liberty, and Ellis Island, our shrine to immigration. In this work by Nathan Rapoport, a young, solemn-looking GI walks forward, his eyes on the ground, cradling—almost pieta-like—a concentration camp victim. Such a figure seems not only to emblematize America's self-idealizations as rescuer and refuge for the world's "huddled masses," but thus located, it becomes part of a geographical triad commemorating liberty, immigration, and tolerance.

Yet another Holocaust memorial to be built in downtown Boston will become in effect one more stop on the Freedom Trail: two stops after the Paul Revere House on a trail wending its way from the Boston Common to the Bunker Hill Monument. No matter what shape the memorial here finally takes, it will be located both spatially and metaphysically in the continuum of American revolutionary history, integrated into the very myth of American origins.

Even the reasons for an "unbuilt monument" can be instructive. When a group of Warsaw ghetto survivors proposed the "Scroll of Fire," a monument by Nathan Rapoport, for a site in New York's Riverside Park, it was rejected by the city arts commission for three main reasons: its questionable aesthetic taste, its depressing theme, and its memorialization of what was called "foreign events." An incensed survivor community, all American immigrants, was left to wonder where the borders of American history and memory began: after all, weren't the events that drove these immigrants to American shores part of their memory? Or were the histories of America's immigrants to begin only in America? As a land of immigrants, wasn't America also a land of immigrant memories? With the recent dedication of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C., it could be said that America has finally recognized the survivors' experiences as part of a national experience—and has in this way made the Holocaust part of American history.

Indeed, in America's culture of assimilation, where explicitly religious differences are tolerated and deemphasized, it is almost always the memory of extreme experience that serves to distinguish the identity of minority groups from the majority population. On the one hand, with the rise of a newfound ethnic pride among African Americans, Jewish Americans, and Native Americans during the 1960s, the power of a vicariously remembered past to bind otherwise alienated groups grew increasingly attractive. As African Americans recalled their enslavement and Native Americans their genocide, Jewish Americans began to recall the Holocaust as the crux of their common heritage. But even as the memory of mass suffering was binding together the members of these communities, it also set the stage for an implicit competition between the various cults of victimization. Two-dimensional identities constructed solely around the memory of past suffering began to clash as groups asserted the primacy of their tragic pasts over those of others.

One of the results has been a narrowing of each group's experience, a dividing of these groups' histories from one another. Instead of learning about the Holocaust through the larger study of Jewish histo-

ry, many Jews and non-Jews in America now learn the whole of Jewish history through the lens of the Holocaust. Likewise, all many Americans know about African Americans is their degraded condition as slaves, or about Native American history its grisly end. In each case, entire centuries of rich life and culture are reduced to the detritus of destroyed civilizations.

Today, the Holocaust continues to occupy a central place in both Jewish and non-Jewish consciousness. In a plural and diverse society, it has also entered a universal realm, becoming a standard and currency by which many disparate groups measure their pasts, even as they come to know a part of Jewish history. Over time, however, Holocaust memorials and museums in America will also be asked to invite many different, occasionally competing groups of Americans into their spaces. At the same time, such museums will inspire other persecuted minorities to demand national museums commemorating their catastrophes, as well. In the most ideal of American visions, the memory of competing "holocausts" will not continue to divide Americans from one another but may lead each community to recall its past in light of another group's historical memory. In this way, each group might also come to know more about their compatriots' experiences in light of their own remembered past.

Finally, we must recognize that the "art of memory" neither begins in a monument's groundbreaking nor ends in the ceremonies conducted at its base. Rather, this art consists in the ongoing activity of memory, in the debates surrounding these memorials, in our own participation in the memorial's performance. For in the end, we must also realize that the "art of memory" remains incomplete, an empty exercise, until we who remember the Holocaust have grasped—and then responded to—current suffering in the world in light of a remembered past.

Notes

1. This essay draws freely on the author's work on Holocaust memory, including three book-length studies: James E. Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1993); *The Art of Memory: Holocaust Memorials in History* [Catalog for the Jewish Museum Exhibition] (Munich: Prestel Verlag, 1994); and *Writing and Rewriting the Holocaust* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1988).

2. Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1982), p. 9.

3. From "Forwort," in *Sefer Yizkor le-Kedoshei ir (Przedecz) Pshaytask Khurbanot ha'shoah*, p. 130, as quoted in Jack Kugelmass and Jonathan Boyarin, eds., *From a Ruined Garden: The Memorial Books of Polish Jewry* (New York: Schocken Books, 1983), p. 11. This is an excellent guide and introduction to the memorial books and their significance.

4. David Roskies, *Against the Apocalypse: Responses to Catastrophe in Modern Jewish Culture* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1984), p. 7.

5. See William B. Helmreich, *Against All Odds: Holocaust Survivors and the Successful Lives They Made in America* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992).

6. See James E. Young, "Because of That War," *Jewish Quarterly*, Spring 1990, pp. 12-15.

7. See Peter Burger, *The Theory of the Avant Garde*, trans. Michael Shaw (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984). Burger defines the "functional analysis of art" as an examination of the artwork's "social effect (function), which is the result of the coming together of stimuli emanating from within the work itself and a sociologically definable public . . ." (p. 87).

8. In the rare event when a state does commemorate its crimes, it is nearly always at the behest of formerly victimized citizens. The memorial unveiled 30 October 1990 in Moscow, for example, to "the millions of victims of a totalitarian regime" was instigated by a group calling itself "Memorial," composed of scholars, cultural figures, dissidents, and former victims of Stalin's terror.

Likewise, a new monument by Maya Lin to the Civil Rights movement in Montgomery, Alabama—inscribed with the names of those who died for the cause—was commissioned and constructed by the Southern Poverty Law Center there, which had chronicled and prosecuted civil rights cases. In neither the Soviet nor American case did the state initiate the monument, but in both instances representatives of the state later endorsed these memorials—a move by which both current governments sought to create an official distance between themselves and past, guilty regimes.

9. For a full-length discussion of Germany's "countermonuments," see

James E. Young, "The Countermonument: Memory Against Itself in Germany Today," *Critical Inquiry* 18 (Winter 1992): 267-96.

10. From "Grosse Kreisstadt Dachau," an unpaginated tourist pamphlet, published by the County Town of Dachau.

11. A recent American Jewish Committee-sponsored survey makes it clear that more than one in three Germans fail to show an interest in maintaining the memory of the Holocaust. See Jennifer Golub, *Current German Attitudes Toward Jews and Other Minorities* (New York: American Jewish Committee, 1994).

12. See Jan Tomasz Gross, *Polish Society under German Occupation: The Generalgovernment, 1939-1944* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), pp. 185-86.

13. I am indebted here to Iwona Irwin-Zarecka's fine discussion of Poland's martyrological tradition in *Neutralizing Memory: The Jew in Contemporary Poland* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 1989), p. 27.

14. A new American Jewish Committee-sponsored survey confirms the author's characterization of Polish attitudes toward the Holocaust. See Jennifer Golub and Renae Cohen, *Knowledge and Remembrance of the Holocaust in Poland* (New York: American Jewish Committee, 1995).

15. See Georges Wellers, "Essai de Determination du nombre de Morts au Camp d'Auschwitz," *Le Monde Juif*, Fall 1983, pp. 127-59; and Yehuda Bauer, "Fighting the Distortions," *Jerusalem Post International Edition*, 9 September 1989, p. 6.

16. For more on the process of deciding the fate of memory at Auschwitz, see James E. Young, "The Future of Auschwitz," *Tikkun* 7 (November/December 1992): 31-33, 37.

17. See Saul Friedlander, "Memory of the Shoah in Israel: Symbols, Rituals, and Ideological Polarization," in Young, ed., *Art of Memory,* pp. 48-57.

18. For more on the Americanization of Holocaust memory, see Michael Berenbaum, *After Tragedy and Triumph: Modern Jewish Thought and the American Experience* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 3-16.

For further details on the controversy surrounding the establishment of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Commission, see Judith Miller, *One by One by One: Facing the Holocaust* (New York and London: Simon & Schuster, 1990), pp. 255-66.

19. James Ingo Freed, "The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum: What Can It Be?," printed by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (no date).

20. For a full-length study of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, see Edward T. Linenthal, *Preserving Memory: The Struggle to Create America's Holocaust Museum* (New York: Viking, 1995).

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