Stolpersteine: Challenges of Remembrance from Berlin to Ground Zero

by

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Preface

My fascination with how Germany became reconciled with its 20th century past began amongst the pages of Gunter Grass’s *The Tin Drum*. I followed Oskar Matzerath, the novel’s protagonist, and his fellow countrymen as they witnessed daily atrocities, and were swayed by Nazi propaganda. At the end of the book, however, the tearless country managed to confront its past and shed a human tear. Gunter’s characters learned “to cry properly, without restraint, to cry like mad. The tears flowed and washed everything away.”¹ I wanted to understand how this human tear was shed, and how Germany became transformed from a “tearless country” into one in which apology became central in the commemoration of the Shoah. It was not until I lived in Berlin long enough to see that one could not walk one block without encountering a reminder of the Third Reich, that I began to understand this transition and the intricate memory work it entailed.

This thesis, like my newfound realization, began during my first visit to Berlin. In Berlin, I was faced with indifference at the many memorials I visited. I realized that I could no longer remain neutral and must take sides. Having memory thrown at my feet, and not a memory that sits well, made it so I could not leave with feelings of catharsis. I needed to examine my emotions, which included not only my own memory of my visits, but also the tumultuous German past and how I chose to remember it.

During my first trip to “The Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe” I was angry at what I saw. I did not understand why people were playing, drinking and eating on what was supposed to be a memorial to the Shoah. I also could not understand why I was leaving the memorial in a disturbed rather than cathartic state. I expected to encounter a place of history and instead discovered a place of memory. I began to inquire about what the pillars of Berlin brought to the German people and how important the debates were in imbuing the stones with meaning.

I left for Germany expecting to discover how a nation of perpetrators should mourn its victims. When I arrived, however, I realized I needed to take one step back and ask whether a nation of perpetrators should in fact mourn its victims. These questions lingered as I began to explore other aspects of Berlin’s landscape. I realized that I needed to form my own opinions in order to fully comprehend the central memorial. In doing so, I had to come face to face with many of the memorials that dot Berlins’ haunted landscape.

During my visits to these sites, I explored how the rich memorial culture in Germany was represented by many different forms of memory. Track 17, a Holocaust Memorial at the Berlin-Grunewald Train Station where thousands of Jews were deported to the camps, is to me the most effective and emotional memorial in Berlin. This site of memory stands among one of the “most bourgeois, most saturated quarters in the capital.” The people of Grunewald destroyed this memorial twice in an effort to divert their memory of the horror that had occurred so close to their homes, preferring instead to claim their own ignorance of the events.

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When visiting Track 17, I remember being overcome with anger at my Leo Baeck University classmates. While walking down the tracks that showed the numbers deported each day, they continued to discuss what they were going to do later that evening. I did not understand how they could besmirch memory in that way. After researching the German peoples intricate relationship with memory, I began to understand that the memorial must mean something different to each visitor.

After returning to the US, I wanted to understand the difference between memorials in Germany and those far away from the site where the crimes were committed (in America, China and Israel). As I continued my research I realized that the architecture found in Berlin affected other events of trauma: From the graveyard in Shanghai, to Maya Lin’s “Vietnam Veterans Memorial” to Michael Arad’s “Reflecting Absence” at Ground Zero. During my second trip to Germany, with the memorial process at Ground Zero in mind, I began to look at Berlin’s landscape through different eyes.

My new lens afforded me the opportunity to recognize a silence that spread throughout Berlin. It became a deafening presence on tours, which left out key parts of Germany’s memory problem. This silence began to mean everything to me. I questioned not only the German past but my own family’s past as well. I encountered

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3 Track 17 in Berlin, June 2012. Photo taken by author.
our resistance in speaking about to the Shoah, and my own grandparent’s survival in Morocco. They came close to death and this affected their vision after the war of what it meant to be a healthy citizen of Israel. They came to Israel to rebuild the country. As they worked together to “amass fortunes and keep erecting castles,”4 they saw themselves also as the ghost-like survivors who inhabited a landscape left behind.

As I heard my family’s testimonies, and walked around Berlin encountering memorial work, I had to find a balance between listening and telling. I had to define my own role as a listener who hears what is not said, and the importance of unspoken words. I witnessed a “search for language” and sought a “middle voice” between the themes and questions I encountered.

In finding that middle voice, I am indebted to the memory experts whom I was privileged to interview—especially Clifford Chanin and James Young—who shared their writing, narratives, and opinions about various memorial processes. These men, both giants in the field of memory studies, helped me to recognize my own voice, one that must play a role in relating these stories.

I realized my stake in this process. I needed to speak and to write because I was now part of the story. They taught me that every voice matters, every person willing to try to evoke a faint echo of narrative from the dense soundscapes of debates, history and lessons that these stones embody becomes important.

As I complete this research process I want to express my gratitude to my mother and father who taught me the importance of remembering those before us and telling their stories. I am indebted to them for their countless drives from Connecticut

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to NYC with me and my hundreds of books. My sisters have been constant companions and supporters throughout my thesis process, both editing and reviewing themes with me. I will always remain grateful to both my Saba and Safta in Israel and America who have taught me to love the past through stories and keepsakes from far away lands. I thank my housemates for always being there, and keeping the mood light. I also want to thank my many friends who have helped me edit including: Nathan Jacobs, Tacie Maskowitz, Dru Marion, Ivy Johnson, Lily Haje, Henry Molofsy, and Sara Mendelson. I am also grateful to Thorsten Wagner, the teacher who first brought me to Berlin and encouraged me to question and explore the feelings I had at “The Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe.” I thank my thesis advisor and mentor Professor Vera Schwarcz, who showed me new ways of engaging with both history and memory. These mentors helped me to understand that stone structures do not have to be “another explanation of what we have lost” but can become an “exploration of what we may find.”

Introduction

Save the Word Back:
Opening Windows of Memory

Eisenman’s “Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe” consists of 2,751 pillars on a 19,000 sq feet of land. Though it is a memorial to the Shoah, Peter Eisenman’s design does not have a visible plaque telling visitors what the memorial is for. Only a few weeks after the memorial was inaugurated in 2005, both tourists and Germans were seen sitting, walking and eating on the pillars. Simon Mangos took this photo in the summer of 2007, for her dissertation A Monumental Mockery which questions whether the central memorial has become a memorial to bury the past or a site of wide ranging memory.
Though my thesis began as a process of research, it also became part of memory work itself. My anger at the lack of remembrance occurring at “The Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe” in Berlin triggered an attempt, which echoes Paul Celan’s effort “to save the word back.” The word Yizkor in Hebrew represents the Israelites’ promise to God to be “committed to historical memory.”

The very word Yizkor became the scaffolding of my work.

Memory work may be defined as the process of interacting with the past both in its ethical and historical dimensions. I did not understand the complex meanings of this concept until I traveled to Berlin in 2011. For me, memory work had always seemed the same as remembering. After my time in Berlin, and after reading many works in the field of memory studies, I realized that acts of remembrance and memory work are worlds apart. Pierre Nora, a French historian, defines memory work in his study Realms of Memory, as an interaction between memory and history. A key part of Nora’s definition is the will to remember.

This will is central for Lieux de memoire since it embodies a capacity for change. Nora argues that there can be many arrangements and objects that foster memory work including: cemeteries, museums, and commemorations. My thesis builds upon this variety of possible vehicles, as I seek to enlarge a conceptual window

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6 Vera Schwarcz, Bridge Across Broken Time: Chinese and Jewish Cultural Memory (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 72.
and to gaze at what a memorial can be: It does not have to be bronze or marble. Memory studies and memorials must be as dynamic as memory itself. Past events, according to Nora, should be represented through a number of forms rather than “confined to discrete objects and realms of remembrance.”  

**Stumbling Stones**

During my research process in Germany, the actual memorial called “Stumbling Stones” came to represent and define memory work for me. These rocks labeled *Stolpersteine* in German—represent a de-centralized memorial project created by the German performance artist Gunter Demnig. The memorial effort consists of small bronze stones placed at the homes of those who were murdered throughout many cities in Germany and Europe.  

The project of *Stolpersteine* came to represent my own tripping over memory in Berlin and beyond. These Stumbling Stones force one to engage in memory work, to think about the crimes of the Third Reich and the void it left behind. The stones become both a gravestone and a testament to the lives of those lost. They can tell the stories of those who have perished as well as the entire process of commemoration that Germany has gone through since the end of the war. But they can also mean nothing to those passing by. I saw many pass over the stumbling stones as if they mere cobblestones on the sidewalk.

The Stumbling Stones symbolize memory work itself: if you have the initial will to remember, the small stones will engage the many questions and absences that

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the Shoah creates in the present. Without the will to remember, however, you will pass over them as the stones fade into the urban landscape. They can mean everything, or nothing.

After redefining the many precepts of how we remember, I began to ask more questions. In German memory work is translated a *Erinnerungsarbeit* and is described by memory scholars as not only the way our landscape provides haunting reminders of our past, but the “powerful and difficult process of working through the losses and trauma resulting from past national violence.”

My definition of what memory means developed during my time in Berlin, as an outsider, one who was both Jewish and American. Living and studying in Germany, I often asked myself if a perpetrator nation should mourn its victims. Do such sites of memory in Germany breach the divide between persecutor and victim? Do the Germans have a right to speak in the voice of the victims?

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Traveling Back To New York

When I returned to New York the lines I had drawn between Berlin and other sites of memory began to crumble. My thesis evolved into a comparison between the Berlin memorial, which consisted of 528 designs, two memorial competitions and 10 years of debate, and the 9/11 site which had an astonishing 5,201 designs, 2 years of debate and was still in the process of being built. In tracing the memory work in Berlin and New York, I encountered two very different forms of recollection. This thesis attempts to show the changing perceptions and definitions at each site while also exploring the differences between the two memorials processes.

When comparing these two distinct and unique sites of commemoration, two new concepts became incorporated into the lexicon of this thesis: the memorial arc and the memorial vernacular. James Young coined both these terms when a reporter asked him whether Ground Zero was just another Holocaust memorial. This led to Young (who sat on the jury for both “The Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe” and the National September 11th Memorial) to write about the similarities between these two sites of memory that he helped to shape. Young denied the claim that Ground Zero was another Holocaust memorial site, but did concede that Arad’s “Reflecting Absence” does in fact have a formal “preoccupation with loss, absence and regeneration” that “may well be informed by Holocaust memory.”

Regardless, the connection made between the two sites created two terms that have since entered the arena of memory studies.

After this initial connection was made, Young began to imagine an arc between Berlin and Ground Zero with visual and conceptual echoes flowing back and forth. The memorial arc, Young defined as the similar facets of memorialization, which encompass those post World War I and II memorials that have evolved and led to the monuments we see being built today. The memorial vernacular was defined within the memorial arc as the similar language of architecture across different representations of traumatic events.

The rise of counter memorials in Berlin plays a significant role in the memorial arc and vernacular. The counter-monument is one that is self-effacing and ironic, which strikes back against the nationalistic and victorious monuments of earlier centuries. Today scholars will trace the specific counter-memorial vernacular from post World War II memorial’s, to Maya Lin’s Vietnam Memorial in D.C. My thesis aims to take this idea of a memorial vernacular a step further, and make connections between the counter-memorials of Berlin and the absences of the reflecting pools at Ground Zero.

As my research continued I utilized Young’s definition of the memorial vernacular and the memorial arc as a jumping off point for my own questions and changing definitions of these concepts. How extensive is this memorial arc and the vernacular that it creates? Does it mean that these sites are more similar than we think, or do their very differences destroy the memorial arc altogether?
In examining these concepts, my thesis engages with overarching questions, including: Is the need to memorialize in stone a modern predicament? What is it that makes us want to create permanent markers of violence and trauma?\(^\text{13}\)

To fully comprehend these connections and the arc that I saw extending from memorialization of the Shoah to Ground Zero, I needed to delve more deeply into the complex literature of memory.

**Landscape And The Silent Historian**

Edward Casey, a philosopher who studies commemoration and memory helped me to understand the importance of the physical settings. For him the memory of what we experience is place-specific and “bound to place as to its own bases.”\(^\text{14}\)

Place takes on the role of upmost importance for visitors to recall the past. Memory will seek out places as their habitats and therefore, we cannot choose when or where we encounter places of remembrance.\(^\text{15}\) Casey’s definition of place helped me to grasp the difference between inauthentic and authentic landscape. In doing so, however, I questioned whether landscape has as much power as Casey argued or if the visitors themselves brought to the landscape the echo of memories?

Reading Dori Laub’s book *Testimony* as well as interviews about his own past, I learned that the listeners, like the visitors, are critical for remembrance to occur. Laub was a child survivor who had the urge to know and bear witness to the

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experience of others in the camps. In order for remembering to occur, he insists, there is not only the need for a remember, but a co – remember and a listener to be a “guide and an explorer, a companion in a journey onto an uncharted land, a journey the survivor cannot transverse or return for alone.” The listeners have become equally important in perceiving memories and testimony. Without us, the words, the mausoleum, and the stumbling stones would mean nothing. Laub provided a crucial lens through which I began to inspect the importance of both the listener and the visitor.

**A Monumental Mockery**

The most important literature I discovered was written by those who came to the sites as visitors. As they breathed life into the memorials, their written works became memorials and tangible forms of memory work. It was in this way that Paul Celan’s poetry impacted my study, as he offered a testimony from the perspective of one who witnessed the camps and spent the rest of his life struggling to put his experiences into words. Michael Hamburger’s evocative translation of Celan helped to shed a new light on my thesis, encouraging me to engage with new and difficult questions. In tribute to Celan, I decided to thread his poetry throughout my work.

Simon Mangos in her dissertation, *A Monumental Mockery* represents another tangible form of memory created by a witness in present day Berlin rather than a survivor of the camps. Mangos raises important questions about the controversy surrounding the construction of “The Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe” that

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would in turn provide changing definitions of land and memory work in my thesis. Mangos critique emerges from her own visit to the memorial’s construction site. Her dissertation is centered on the unearthing of Goebbels bunker during the construction process of the central memorial, and the subsequent silencing of this information.

Her discovery of Goebbels bunker would bring up the paradox of how a nation can “erect a memorial – to remember while simultaneously suppressing knowledge and authentic historical evidence? How can one practice sincerity along with deliberate deceit?” The finding and hiding of Goebbels bunker impacted my view of the German people “wrangling with their past” and the uncovering of this knowledge was a question I would ask in interviews. This question that was answered in silence or the claim that ‘it did not happen here’ led to my examination of inauthentic landscape. In her writing, Mangos inspects how Germany is one of the only places in the world that actively runs from authenticity.

Karen Till also explored the Germany people’s intricate relationship with their dark past in her dissertation, The New Berlin. Till, like Mangos, comes across her findings as a visitor to “The Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe” in June of 1999. She

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20 Photographs taken by Simone Mangos in A Monumental Mockery (Berlin).
described the fence around the construction site as an “everything montage of graffiti and newspaper articles that support and oppose the debate,” with one large poster reading, “here is the place.”\textsuperscript{21} The fence commenced her study on the importance of land in Berlin, as well as the changing meanings that visitors bring to central memorial. Much of Till’s work was based on her personal experiences in Berlin coupled with interviews of those who were part of the memorial debates. Her work demonstrates the importance of listening to those who participated in these processes and recognizing the varied understanding of what Germany’s relationship to it’s violent national past should look like. Young and Till saw the German peoples relationship with their past as one that should be an everlasting debate. The memorials must tell the stories of their genesis in order for them to remain effective and not grow stagnant. I examined Berlins buildings and the stories of their genesis, and encountered an eeriness about Berlin.

I often wondered whether the city lacked the vibrancy of life that existed before the war. Everything seemed swallowed up at moments. In order to truly understand the absence that the Third Reich left amongst the nation and its citizens, one must comprehend the greatness which once filled that void. My thesis, in turn, became a study not only of the void, but of the former greatness. I studied vibrant pre-war German Jewish historians, I read the works of Haskallah thinkers, Moses Mendelssohn and Martin Buber, two men who considered themselves proud German citizens. I imagined all the voids I came across, real and imagined, filled with vibrant culture and the lives of Jewish German society. I imagined the bookshelf at

\textsuperscript{21} Karen Till, \textit{New Berlin: Memory, Politics, Place} (Minneapolis: Random House, 2005), 1.
Babelplatz filled with books that were once written for posterity. The empty apartments of the “missing house” filled with families who were loving, teaching and living as Germans.

I brought these German poets, thinkers, and historians back to New York and used them as filters, as I turned my lens toward Ground Zero.

**Memory Work At Ground Zero**

The trajectory of my thesis began to shift after speaking with Clifford Chanin, Director of Education and Public Programs at the National September 11th Memorial and Museum. Chanin’s speech at the opening of the Ground Zero Memorial allowed me to imagine the arc from Shoah memorialization in Berlin to downtown New York as he brought to the forefront the importance of the stages of mourning.

The memorials transformation and Chanin’s description of it, led me to question the different local, national and global narratives of 9/11 and how these narratives had shifted over the past few years. Chanin’s work on the process at Ground Zero showed that by the time 9/11 occurred, memory of the Shoah created an expectation to remember in stone. Chanin inspired me to explore if we have been educated to “understand memorialization as an appropriate response to mass killing.”

This was not always so. On September 16th, 1920 in downtown NYC, a horse drawn wagon filled with explosives was abandoned and exploded on Wall Street. The attack killed 39 and wounded 300 individuals. There are still visible pockmarks on the buildings from the event, but no memorial or plaque has ever been erected in its’

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22 Clifford Chanin, “First Thoughts on the Opening of the National September 11th Memorial” (2011): 16.
memory. Today a similar act of terrorism would have undoubtedly been made the subject of a memorial.\textsuperscript{23}

In New York City I watched the freedom tower rise and visitors flock to Michael Arad’s memorial pools. Many of the lessons and memorial facets I had noticed in Berlin created meaningful connections at Ground Zero. I encountered an increased number of architects and historians who straddled both worlds. I started to trace the memorial arc between Berlin and Ground Zero. In doing so, I began to question whether I was wrong about the immediate desire to rebuild at Ground Zero. Did New Yorkers in fact adhere to the stages of memory?

To inspect and understand the immediacy of the site, I began examining articles in \textit{The New Yorker} and \textit{The New York Times}, the literary gatekeepers of the memorials progress and public opinion throughout the past twelve years.

David Dunlap of \textit{The New York Times} was the chief journalist to document the long road of memorialization in downtown New York. During our interview in January, Dunlap shared with me his journey, which began a year after the towers fell, with the question: “What does tomorrow hold for the World Trade Center site?”

Through Dunlap’s work and interviews with key figures about the importance of the name arrangement, the argument of aesthetics, and the controversy of the timetables, I realized that the debate did not end with the choosing of Arad’s design. In fact, it had just begun.

Dunlap and Chanin both explored the tipping point when memory yields to history. As I read these “greats” in memory studies in both Berlin and New York, I

\textsuperscript{23} Williams, \textit{Memorial Museums: The Global Rush to Commemorate Atrocities}, 164.
tried to position my own tipping point. The *New York Times* and *The New Yorker* archives as well as the complete compiling of David Dunlap’s articles, provided me with the building blocks as I traced the process of the 9/11 memorial over the past twelve years. When tracing the memorialization process at Ground Zero, I was surprised to find that a small booklet from a Colombia Seminar in 2002 provided me with the most probing questions.

Though this booklet looked small and unassuming, it contained thoughtful reflections on memorialization at Ground Zero. I discovered that the actual panel session began with Richard Brilliant, an art historian, asking every one to rise for a moment of silence and remember. Brilliant’s request for silence, occurring only a few months after September 11th and amongst panelists who were prepared for the session’s content, was significant in that it didn’t specify what to remember. Richard explains that he does not tell the audience what to remember because memory is so complex, therefore the particular choices of what to remember—he leaves to us.

At this same seminar, Daniel Libeskind spoke about his views on architecture of trauma. He described how stone has a language that visitors experience through “walking, looking touching and feeling where one is.” Libeskind’s advice allowed me to hear voices rise out of the landscape and facades and recognize how and where silence can be found in architecture. I also become influenced by Wieseltier’s assertion that Americans’ “commemorative imaginations are too poor for anything except architecture.”

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culture forced me to question whether needing stone to remember is an American problem or a modern predicament? I spent much of my research on the memorial process, trying to defend American memory work.

**Interviews: Listening Afresh To Memory Work**

While my thesis itself focused on the process of listening and visiting these memorial sites, my most important sources ultimately became the experts whom I was privileged to interview. Testimonies and interviews provide the historian with a “value of richness, which we may infer what it is that people believe significant enough to remember and recount about the past.”

My research in Berlin and NYC and interviewing those who were part of these memorial processes, led me to understand the intricate questions at the heart of the memorial debates. The individual voices that made up the collective memory were able to provide “symbols and stories that helped define and explain the public memory” and gave a vibrancy and special meaning to my research.

Through my conversations I realized I needed to decide for myself what was at stake and assume the position of not only the researcher, but also of the visitor and listener. My opinion and personal stake would become a valuable resource. Every interview allowed me to hear and explore concepts I would not have heard otherwise and recall my own work in the memory process.

Clifford Chanin was the first memory expert I interviewed on this topic. Our interviews on the Berlin memorial brought up the notion that Shoah memorialization has spread beyond European Holocaust monuments and to the 9/11 site. Chanin

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helped guide my thesis beyond the memorial arc that connected various European Shoah memorials and across the Atlantic to Ground Zero.

In Berlin I had the opportunity to speak with many of those who were part of the memorial debates. Michael Cullens, a journalist and historian, relayed to me the complexity of the debates and the silencing of microphones that occurred. My meeting with Gunter Schlusche, the head manager and coordinator of the “Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe,” provided me with many of the counter points to those who critiqued the walling up of Goebbels bunker and the debates that followed. He explained that although the first competition was not open, the process changed in later rounds.

Gunter’s argument about the separation between Goebbels bunker and the topography of the memorial led to my research on unscarred and scarred landscapes in Berlin. I continued to interview many experts about the memorial process in Berlin including Ulrich Baumann, the Assistant Director of “The Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe,” Roman Kroke a German artist who creates graphic illustrations of Jewish German memory during World War II, and Ulrich Tempel, the head archivist at the Topography of Terror. These Germans provided me with valuable insights and helped to change the trajectory of my thesis many times over during the course of my summer in Berlin.

Once I came back to New York, I began to examine other Shoah memorials outside of Berlin’s haunted landscape. I gained insight on these very different sites of memory through conversations with David Marwell, the Director of the “Museum of Jewish Heritage- A Living Memorial to the Holocaust” in NYC, as well as Dvir Bar
Gal, who is currently building a memorial to those who survived and died in Shanghai during World War II in the Jewish district of Hongkou.

Our conversations became invaluable in that they provided me with the threads that string this thesis together. In doing so, they gave me the confidence to discover and direct my own voice. Taking a step away from James Young, and Clifford Chanin, who were my mentors throughout my thesis process, I found what I think is the true “gift” of the memorial arc.

Through both my metaphorical and actual stumblings I became “a curious excavator stumbling over something protruding from the surface of the common places of contemporary life.”28 My curious excavation of the different layers of history under a seemingly normal everyday landscape began by examining the ghosts that inhabit places of memory in Berlin.

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Chapter 1

*Eyes, World-Blind:*
Holocaust Memory in the Land of Perpetrators

6,000,000 minus 54 years of “we didn’t know anything” minus 1 Germany minus 1 memorial = O. Initiativkreis gegen den SchuBstrich (Initiative against Drawing a Final Line with the Past), Photograph courtesy of Karin Joggerst, in Karen Till’s *The New Berlin*. This sign hung on the fence surrounding the memorial terrain of “The Memorial Murdered Jews of Europe,” and expressed the fear of what a finished memorial would do to German memory work.
Augen, weltblind: Ich komm,  
Hartwuchs im Herzen.  
Ich komm.  

Eyes, world-blind: I come,  
callous growth in my heart.  
I come.  

Paul Celan, *Schneebett* (Snow-Bed)

In his inaugural speech on July 1st 1969, the newly elected President of the Federal German Republic, Gustav Heinemann declared, “Some fatherlands are difficult. Germany is one of them.”¹ When tracing German comprehension of their Nazi past, it is evident that at first the German people turned their backs on historical facts and denied the knowledge, participation, and most notably, responsibility for the atrocities that occurred. Many Germans became what Celan termed “world blind” to the terror they committed as they shut out their past and grew a callous heart around memories of the horror. The German people succumbed to the idea of victimhood and the Holocaust became one example of the general inhumanity of the 20th century. With this the German people closed the doors on the past in order to move swiftly into the future. The government adhered to Socrates’ advice at the end of the Peloponnesian war, “Let us govern collectively as though nothing bad had taken place.”²

Even though the German people strove to start at zero hour and put their energy into rebuilding, their past would not and could not be forgotten. Throughout the 1960's and 1970's Germany made the transition from being a nation of forgetting to one beginning to reconcile with its Nazi past. Germans not only accepted the

burden of their forefathers’ crimes, but they also attempted to write a new chapter of remembrance within their national narrative. Berlin alone is home to hundreds of memorials and monuments to remember the victims of the Third Reich.

Even though a "distinct move has taken place in public culture to remember the Nazi regime, many individuals still fear that as Germany moves into the future, the atrocities of World War II will fade into the background."³ Michael Geyer and Konrad Jarausch, the authors of Shattered Past argue, “the mark of having unleashed wars that challenge the very foundation of civility and the stain of having plotted the murder of every person of Jewish descent will not disappear.”⁴

There are many catalysts that lead to the memory of the Shoah being kept alive. First, the consequences of World War II were so universal in scope that the narrative itself has become part of the national identity of many nations, thus making it impossible to forget. In fact, a speech given at the inauguration of the Florida Holocaust Museum by Clifford Chanin starts off stating that the terrible murder of millions “must never be forgotten, and they must never go silent. What happened back then made the world that we live in today.”⁵

The "memorial art" Chanin speaks of is as important as the sprawling historiography because it provides a "multiplicity of representation and history" that keeps debates and conversations going. Both the historiography and memorial art

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contribute to a "diversity and history" that is the "single most important guarantee against forgetting."

This sculpture at the Jewish Museum in Berlin occupies one of the voids in Daniel Libeskind’s museum design. The screaming faces as well as the void where the sculpture is placed exemplifies how art is one of the few forms that can show that which seems impossible to exhibit: “humanity reduced to ashes.”

**Memory Not Simply Preserved**

Memorial art is able to create memory that ensures we do not forget. In 1988 Lea Rosh and Eberhard Jackel proposed the idea of a central Holocaust memorial in Berlin. After the fall of the wall, the plan received backing from the Federal Government and the Berlin Senate. The competition began in 1994 with hundreds of submissions and Peter Eisenman’s plan, entitled “Field of Stelae,” won in 1999. The memorial became public in May 2005 and consisted of 2,751 uneven pillars on 19,000sq ft of land.

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When the competition for “The Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe” began, the German public and many academics agreed, “you have to build a memorial out of nothing and have the responsibility of creating a memory, and creating an address for memory work. Memory must be created not simply preserved.” Gunter Schlusche, the head planner for the memorial, explains:

This memorial is absolutely necessary. Not only to have the perpetrators but also to have the victims in mind. And therefore this memorial creates a very sensitive but a very good and important equilibrium between all these aspects.

Many Germans agree the central memorial was necessary along with the many “history” sites in Berlin that tell the narratives of the genocide that occurred. Just as the Germans needed to remember their dark past, they also needed to mourn the victims of their forefathers’ crimes. Simone Mangos asked whether Germans memorializing their victims collectively was necessary:

It is not the task of the ‘persecutor’ to talk in the place of those they persecuted. There is a given distance in this relationship that should never be breached, and is constituted by basic respect. Bluntly breaching the divide between persecutor and victim represents a type

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9 Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe in Berlin, June 2012. Photo by author.
10 James Young, Personal Interview. Amherst (11/11/12).
11 Günter Schlusche, Personal Interview. Berlin (08/14/2012).
of violation…. What right do they have to talk in the voice of victims?\textsuperscript{12}

Like Mangos, many critique German memorial culture because it is not the task of the Germans to talk in the voice of those murdered. Meanwhile, others dislike the German culture of self-aggrandizing memorials because they believe no one should be constantly forced to remember:

There is a haunting and there is discarding; and it is not always within our gift to decide which is which. And it is this, perhaps above all, what makes forcing people to remember—rather like forcing them to eat—at once so implausible and so morally problematic.\textsuperscript{13}

Aside from the many critiques of whether the German nation should try to remember its victims, or if forcing any nation to remember is “morally problematic,” memorials for both the victims of the Third Reich and the perpetrators were erected.

It is extremely important for there to be both memorials about what the perpetrators did (such as the Topography of Terror) and those for the victims themselves. But these two memorials cannot be combined. The parliament tried to provide a space to appease both the victims and the Germans who died during the war. The memorial was entitled the Neue Wache also known as the “Memorial to the Murdered Victims of Fascism and Militarism” and was criticized as besmirching the memory of those who survived the camps.

\textsuperscript{12} Simone Mangos, \textit{A Monumental Mockery: The Construction of the National Holocaust Memorial in Berlin} (Berlin: Dissertation.de, 2007), 276.

The controversy and demands exemplified in the Neue Wache show the many problems of remembrance in Germany today. Nonetheless, Michael Cullens explained how Germany is one of the few countries that engage in such extreme commemoration:

It’s difficult to make parallels because no country that I’m aware of has every raised a monument to its bad deeds. The Americans aren’t interested in building monuments to decimating NA populations. But the Germans did it, and that is much in their favor.\

Though there are questions of how a nation such as Germany will remember the victims of the Shoah, the German peoples “self conscious, deliberate attempt to preserve memory” is admirable. Germany is no longer referred to as the “tearless country” Gunter Grass described his homeland as in 1959 in *The Tin Drum*.

As the German nation attempted to sink pillars of remembrance into its landscape, it had to confront its forefathers’ attempt to exterminate a 1000-year-old civilization off the face of Europe. This created a “wounded psyche” in which the German people did not have the “Jewish eye” or perspective in how they should remember World War II. By voiding itself of Jews, Germany had forever “voided

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itself the capacity for a normal, healthy, response to Jews and their ideas. Instead it was all bending over backwards, biting ones tongue wondering what ‘they’ really thought of Germans.”17 This sense of nervousness led to the German peoples fear of memorials that commemorate acts of heroism by German citizens on behalf of Jews.

The fear of heroic memorialization is exhibited the fact that the memorials that speak of those who saved the Jewish victims, such as the “Otto’s Workshop for the Blind” and “The Silent Heroes Exhibit” are less frequently visited than the central memorial, the Topography of Terror, and Sachenhausen. Though the sites of memory that exhibit “heroism” are tourist attractions for those visiting Germany, I found that Germans themselves, especially students, do not frequent these places. They do not want to risk making it seem as if their memory work is geared toward heroism rather than guilt.

This overall nervousness of heroic monuments leads to the over-memorialization of the horrors of the Holocaust all across the Berlin landscape. The widespread memorial obsession was critiqued by a wide audience during the debates on “The Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe.” This is best exemplified in an article by Rudolf Kraft, written in 1992, depicting a fictive bus tour to a memory landscape in the New Berlin:

As the tallest building in the park, you can immediately make out the Holocaust Memorial to the Murdered Jews in the Middle… No Madam not Hitler’s Bunker, that was ten meters deeper and stood further to the right. On the left side you can see the Holocaust Memorial II for the murdered Sinti and Roma. On the right side, right above the bunker of Hitler’s driver, with the original SS Painting, stands the Reich Chancellery memorial center. Over there, diagonally to the right, the thirty meter tall triangle of rose granite—No, I don’t

mean the star of David, that belongs to the Holocaust Memorial—also
not the six pointed star, but rather the five pointed star, commemorates
the murdered communist resistance fighters. And if you look every
closely, between the red star and the Star of David, you will see the
Brandenburg Gate, a 1792 classical structure by Langhans…\textsuperscript{18}

This newspaper article represents a fictive bus tour of a “dystopian Holocaust tourism
landscape” that portrays the many fears of the obsessive memorial culture of the
German nation.\textsuperscript{19} The memorials within the fictive bus tour are landmarks for the
victims of the Third Reich. These memorials haunt Berlin’s landscape as the
Brandenburg gate, a symbol of German unity and victory fades into the background.

Do the fictive memorials outlined by Rudolf Kraft replace the memory work
of Germans, both collectively and individually? Primo Levi discussed this fear in the
following words:

A memory evoked too often and expressed in the form of a story tends
to become fixed in a stereotype, in a form tested by experience,
crystallized perfected, adorned, installing itself in place of raw
memory and growing at its expense.\textsuperscript{20}

Once a memory of an event is evoked too often, the truth of the raw memory begins
to slowly be erased. Primo Levi’s fear of memory being fixed in a stereotype is the
same apprehension represented by Rudolf Kraft in his fictive bus tour. Both Kraft and
Levi argue that memories evoked too often replace the individual obligation to
remember.

\textsuperscript{19} Karen Till, \textit{New Berlin: Memory, Politics, Place} (Minneapolis: Random House, 2005), 190.
Fear Of Forgetting

This scorn of the monumental, presented by Primo Levi and Rudolf Kraft, is hardly recent and can be traced as far back as Plato in Greece. Lewis Mumford in his book *The Culture of Cities* argued:

Stones give a false sense of continuity, a deceptive assurance of life… they write their boasts upon their tombstones, they incorporate their deeds in obelisks; they place their hopes of remembrance in solid stone, joined by other solid stones, dedicated to their subjects or heirs forever, forgetful of the fact that some stones that are deserted by the living are even more helpless than life that remains unprotected.²¹

Mumford’s argument that stones give a deceptive assurance of life, shows that as early as the 1930’s the effectiveness of monuments in order to remember became a concern at the heart of memory studies.

Pierre Nora warns about monuments’ ability to displace memory: “the less memory is experienced from the inside, the more it exists through exterior scaffolding and outward signs.”²² He explains the reason why we speak so much of memory is because there is very little of it left. Do monuments really relieve viewers from their memorial burden? Memorials have the power to shed “the responsibility of remembering, as a snake sheds its skin.”²³ Nora relates a snake shedding its skin to a memory tourist coming to these sites and shedding their obligation to remember.

Though monuments are meant to be seen, they also become impregnated with attributes that repel attention.²⁴

²³ Ibid., 13.
Mark Godfrey, in his study of abstraction and the Holocaust, explains: “Only that which has been inscribed, can in the current sense of the term be forgotten.”

We must inscribe in words and images, however, we cannot escape the necessity of representation. Godfrey brings up the paradox that we must face in our modern times. We need the outlet of memorials and stones in order to remember while at the same time there is the inherent fear that once we assign memory to stone we begin to forget. This paradox becomes the center of the debates around “The Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe.”

The question asked today is: did the memorial succeed in provoking reflection or did it become a playground where Germans expressed a fake willingness for the purpose of looking better? The scholar Andreas Huyssen went so far to argue that there is an inverse proportion between memorialization of the past and the amount of contemplation people do. Huyssen sees the central memorial in Berlin as a burial slab that will seal memory, for it leaves “nothing to remember, nothing to forget.”

Brian Ladd, a historian, traveled to the city in the early 1990’s while the memorial was just beginning to be constructed. Ladd sees the future of the memorial either being “condemned as an effort to repress the past” and move on or “praised as a gesture for coming to terms with their past.” He ends his study with conclusion that it will presumably represent a combination of these two outcomes. These fears and aspirations for the monument led to ten long years of debate and discussion over what this central monument in Berlin would become. It remains to be seen how the

memorial will impact German society, but it is clear that every generation of Germans that visits this memorial will find its own signature.

**No Site Speaks For Itself**

The narrative of the pre-memorial debates of the Berlin memorial is as important as the stone structure itself. The "Memorial to the Murdered European Jews" is the story of how "social activity can transform empty lots and forgotten buildings into places of powerful and wide ranging collective memory and symbolism."

In June 1999, after 10 years of debate, the German Bundestag voted to build “The Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe” on a five acre piece of real estate between the Brandenburger Tor and Potsdamer Platz. The ten years of tortured debate are the most useful tool in understanding the meaning of this memorial and Germany’s relationship with its past. The debate makes up the body of the iceberg while the finished monument only makes up the tip.

The debate started in 1988 with a proposal by a citizen group initiative led by journalist Lea Rosh and historian Eberhard Jackel. The first public art competition was declared for “The Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe” in 1994, though it was considered a failure. The winner of the first competition was Christine – Jakob Marks, Hella Rolfes, Hans Scheib and Reinhard Stangl. Their plan proposed an enormous tilted plate with 18 broken stones from Masada on which the 4.5 million known names of the murdered Jews would be engraved. After this plan won the competition it was immediately criticized by the public due to the architects

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misunderstanding of the Jewish principle of *chai* and its linkage to Israel. Therefore, a new competition was started.

The Brudestag called for a series of public colloquia in January, March and April of 1997 to help solve Germany’s memorial problem. They invited a number of historians, artists, critics and curators to help with the process, including James E. Young. In April of 1997, Young told his audience “if the aim is to remember that this great nation once murdered nearly six million human beings solely for having been Jews, then this monument should remain uncompleted, un-built, an unfinished memorial process.”

For Young and many other German academics, the “unresolved debates” were the true memorials that should be enshrined. Researching the history of this competition and the different plans that were submitted tells historians a lot more about Germany memory during this time period than any finished memorial ever could. There was a wide variety of competition plans submitted ranging from Rudolf Herz’s and Reinhardt Matz’s proposal to pave a half mile stretch of the autobahn in cobblestone, to Horst Hogeisel’s design to blow up the Brandenburger Tor, and Renata Stih’s and Frieder Schnock’s design ‘Bus Stop!’ that was a plan to have red buses leaving the memorial site to take people to authentic sites of memory in and around Berlin. The concept of ‘Bus Stop!’ and Hogeisel attempt to blow up the Brandenburger Tor attests that the question of what the Berlin monument should look like was inseparable from whether there should be a monument.

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It seemed to many that the 528 plans that were submitted provided more memory work than any finished memorial ever could. I did not fully understand the questions at the heart of Germany’s memorial process until I looked at the controversial ten years of debates that led to Eisenman’s winning design. The growing importance put on the debates in Germany is exemplified by the changing names for the memorial itself.

The first petition in 1988 referred to the memorial as *Gedenkstatte*, which is a memorial that exhibits documents characterized by their arrangement. The name soon changed to *Mahnmal* in order to convey a memorial that tells a narrative with a moral message to prevent future discrimination. Finally “The Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe” obtained the name *Denkmal*, which refers more generally to different representations and narratives of events. *Denkmal* exhibits the importance of debate by encouraging the plurality of representation within the monument. Historians must try to pull out these different representations of narratives from the

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bronze, stone and glass before us. To do this, we must investigate the relationship between the architecture and the narrative it tries to tell.

An Architectural Interrogation Of Culture And Civilization

One narrative that is no longer found beneath the surface of the stone is that of victory of war and nationalism. The German people could no longer build ancient heroic monumental forms such as the Brandenburg Gate. Instead, they started to build counter-monuments. The counter-monument is defined as self-effacing, contradictory memorials that not only showed the uncertainty of the 20th century, but also the predicaments surrounding consigning memory to stone today.

These new memory forms challenge the morality of building a stone obelisk to represent any form of conflict, let alone a genocide such as the Shoah. Edward S. Casey in his book, *Remembering: A Phenomenological Study*, sees sites of memory as grids on which “images of items to be remembered are placed in a certain order.” The new counter monument, however, rails against this order and creates an open process where visitors are forced to rise to remember themselves. They are no longer images placed in a certain order, but an open space in the landscape for us to fill in any way we choose.

At the heart of these memory sites the wider crisis of representation was to “formally articulate this terrible loss, the void, without filling it in with consoling meaning.” The many counter-memorials today that try to create absences without filling them in mirror the stance of contemporary German artists who find he

34 Ibid., 89.
possibility that the memory of events so horrible might be reduced to “exhibitions of craftsmanship, symbolic pathos” intolerable.\textsuperscript{35} Thus, counter-memorials became an architectural interrogation of civilization and culture. With this the counter monuments in Germany completed their transition from places of national values and ideals to hot seats of debates as they relay messages of cultural conflict and the crisis of representing trauma accurately and truthfully.

Brian Ladd attributes the counter-monument to the desire to escape the previous forms of memorials that were a key part of Nazi ideology. The fear of previous monumental forms stems from the fact that the symbolic gestures of the old German memorials “encouraged the very nationalism exploited by the Nazis.”\textsuperscript{36} Even the Nazi idea of “ground” is railed against in the Berlin Denkmal when Eisenman physically interrupts the topography of Berlin.

These sites of memory tell many different narratives and stories: of artists who want to instill doubts; of the government officials who want to provide a national narrative; of the families of victims who want to remember their loved ones, and of complete strangers who want to create new memories for themselves. The openness of the sites and the different narratives becomes the way in which the interrogation of memorialization is formed. Many scholars attribute the rise of this interrogation to the “father” of the counter-monument culture, Jochen Gerz.

\textbf{Jochen Gerz—Father Of The Counter-Memorial Movement}

Jochen Gerz’s work began with \textit{EXIT/Dachau} in 1972 and expanded to other counter-memorial projects in Germany and Europe over the past three decades. Gerz

\begin{footnotes}
\item[36] Ladd, \textit{The Ghosts of Berlin}, 168.
\end{footnotes}
brought this new form of memorialization into fascinating relief by opening the eyes of a new generation to the limitations of museums and monuments. Though memory is not static, museums attempt to “solidify memory’s meaning.” Gerz argues that because of the dynamic force of memory, museums no longer serve as adequate sites of Germany’s tortured memory. *Exit/ Dachau* was an exhibit of a long hall with 20 tables and albums of images taken of the signs of rules and regulations at Dachau earlier that year.

![Exit/Dachau, 1972. Jochen Gerz](image)

The exhibit attempts to stimulate the Holocaust Visitor Center at the former concentration camp. Sounds of someone running away and panting plays on repeat throughout the gallery. The albums portray not a memory of the past but the experience of the present moment as it challenged the “capacity of the museum to dictate terms of remembrance.”

Gerz argued that we cannot know history outside of the ways it is shaped for us in a museum. Do we need memorials and museums to remember? He attempts to create monuments where we, the visitors, can only remember. Exit/Dachau affected

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38 Exit/Dachau exhibition in Dachau, May 1972. Phototaken by Jochen Gerz in *At Memory’s Edge*.
39 Elena Lamberti and Vita Fortunati eds. *Memory and Representing of War: The Case of World War I and World War II* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2009), 203.
subsequent sites of memory that questioned the role of memorials in how we view history.

These counter-monuments multiplied throughout the streets of Berlin. Examples include Michel Ullman’s “Burning Book Memorial, Bibliotek,” which is a void in the ground at Bebelplatz of rows of white empty bookshelves to represent the loss of books during the Nazi Book burnings.

Other voids include the “Missing House” on Gross Hamburger Strasse that represents not only the destruction of the buildings throughout Berlin during the war, but also the missing families who used to live within the destroyed walls.

Counter-monuments throughout Germany utilize empty space to show that the past exceeds our ability to represent it truthfully. Therefore, we need another mode of representation. Counter-memorials “return the burden of memory to visitors themselves by forcing visitors into an active role.” ⁴¹ The artists force us to find memory within ourselves. Thus, these memorials put memory where it actually belongs—“within the people for whom it was created.” ⁴²

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⁴⁰ The Missing House, and Burning Book Memorial in Berlin, June 2012. Photo taken by author.
“The Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe” in Berlin is a counter-memorial in that it refuses to provide a central focus of memory or “route towards the center.” The pillars show the vastness of what was lost and explore the impossibility of representing it. With no plaque and no inscription on the stone, the memorial not only shows absence, but also refuses to provide a fixed reading or nationalistic narrative. Eisenman’s memorial is thus able to recognize the difficulty of Holocaust representation. Eisenman explains there is no nostalgia for past narratives, but only the living memory of the “individual experience.” This memorial acknowledges the bankruptcy of “former modes of commemoration, by never proposing a fixed solution to the task.”

**Hundreds Of Diverse Buildings**

The counter monumental attributes present in Eisenman’s memorial are found in many other memorializations of trauma; what has been done in Germany has affected the world (including Maya Lin’s Vietnam Memorial, Pungusson’s “Memorial to the Martyrs of Deportation” and countless other memorials in Germany). James Young writes:

> Preoccupied with absence and irredeemable loss, and with a broken and irreparable world, German artists and architects would now arrive at their own, counter-memorial architectural vernacular that would express the breach in their faith of civilization without mending it.

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This connection can best be seen through the counter-memorial use of voids in the landscape. Maya Lin attributes her famous “Vietnam Veterans Memorial” to Pungusson’s “Memorial to the Martyrs of Deportation” in Ile de la Cite, in Paris. Pungusson was a precursor to the negative form by portraying loss and absence represented by carving out pieces of landscape (visitors must descend down into his memory site).  

Lin’s memorial exemplifies the counter-monument culture Holocaust memorials have helped create, as well as the literal act of carving out a landscape of loss. “The Vietnam Veterans Memorial” black walls are angled at 125 degrees to point to the Lincoln Memorial and Washington Monument (addresses for memory in the US) in “apparent honor, yet accusation to.” Lin’s negative form monument works as an accusation because it is in direct opposition to the victorious narratives the other Washington monuments embody. Lin describes her memorial as, “taking a knife and cutting it into the earth, opening it up, an initial violence and pain that in time would

These “wounds in the landscape” show the importance of the visitor as the memory artists carve out spaces of land to open up spaces within the visitors themselves. Jochen and Esther Shalev-Gerz’s memorial in Harburg, Germany entitled, “Monument Against Fascism, War and Violence—and for Peace and Human Rights” and Horst Hogeisel’s “Aschrott Brunennen Fountain” were both described as wounds and gaping holes in the landscape.

Both of these monumental forms became the ‘epitome of the counter monument’ as they “literally invert the traditional erect monument.” Hogeisel won the competition that was set to rescue the town of Kassel’s destroyed monument “The Aschrott Brunennen.” This was a pyramid fountain funded by a Jewish entrepreneur, Sigmund Aschrott, and was destroyed by the Nazis on April 8th 1939. Hogeisel proposed a negative monument to mark the fountain that had been lost. He designed a new fountain as a “mirror image of the old one, sunk beneath the old place in order to rescue the history of this place as a wound and an open question, to penetrate the consciousness of the Kassel citizens.”

![The preliminary sketch for the inverted memorial fountain and the Aschrott fountain.](image)

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54 Preliminary sketch and Aschrott Fountain in Kassel, 1987. Photo by Horst Hoheisel in *The Texture of Memory*. 
“The Monument Against Fascism, War and Violence,” which was a joint project between Esther-Shalev Gerz and Jochen Gerz, began with Shalev questioning, “what do we need with another monument? We have too many already. What we need is one that disappears.”

The vanishing monument designed to disappear was unveiled in 1986. It was 12 meters high and every time the visitors and citizens of Harburg covered 1.5 meters with their signatures a section would be lowered into the ground. The faster visitors participated, the faster it would disappear. It was completely lowered into the ground by November 10th, 1993.

“The Monument Against Fascism” brings aspects of counter-memorialization into fascinating relief. The Gerzs’ did not want visitors to leave the memorial with a feeling of catharsis but wanted to demand memory work. This site of memory invites its own violation by allowing visitors to inscribe signatures, graffiti and anything else they wanted to ‘memorialize’. The Gerzs' created a monument that did not give visitors a narrative, but threw the burden of German memory at the town’s feet.

Germany has been credited for finding this vernacular due to its revulsion against traditionally authoritarian memorials. For those who have worked within the memorial world, this vernacular even extends to 9/11 memorialization:

The monuments have changed and memorials have been forced to confront its own limitations as a contemporary aesthetic response to

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55 Esther-Shalev Gerz, *Personal Interview with James Young*. Israel (June 1989).
56 The disappearing monument in Harburg, 1986-1993. Photo by James Young in *At Memory's Edge.*
recent past events, such as the 9/11 attacks and further past events such as the Holocaust. \textsuperscript{57}

The argument that art and architecture, including that of 9/11, has been influenced by Holocaust memory is a strong argument. I plan to examine the connections and disconnections within these comparisons and not only explore what has changed, but also the ongoing impact of these changes. In order to begin to study these connections, I had to understand the controversial site of 9/11.

\textsuperscript{57} Richard Crownshaw, Kilby Elizabeth and Antony Rowland, eds. \textit{The Future of Memory} (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010), 99.
Chapter 2

Stone Made an Effort to Flower:
Recollections at Ground Zero

Front cover of The New York Post on the 9th anniversary of September 11th, describing the building process at Ground Zero. The article focuses upon the difference facets of hope and loss in Arad’s and Libeskind’s designs and urges both a slow building process as well as the immediate memorialization at Ground Zero.
Es ist Zeit, daß der Stein sich blühen bequemt,
daß de Unrast ein Herz schlägt.
Es ist Zeit, das es Zeit wird.

It is time the stone made an effort to flower,
time unrest had a beating heart.
It is time it were time.

Paul Celan, *Corona* (Corona)

The World Trade Center, a series of seven towers, officially opened on April 4th 1973. The Twin Towers became the tallest buildings in the world reaching 1,727 ft. The *Book of Remembrance* for Ground Zero prefaces the descriptions of the towers’ destruction with a vision of their greatness:

At the turn of the 21st century, the World Trade Center maintained an indomitable presence in New York City. The signature Twin Towers, rising over a quarter a mile into the sky, had been fixtures on the city skyline for three decades.¹

The events of September 11th, 2001 left a sixteen acre void that had once formed the center of a community of Battery Park City, “including hotels, restaurants, offices, apartment houses, and parks—a powerful economic engine that would pour life into somnolent downtown.”² The void that replaced the towers in the New York City skyline also came to represent one of the biggest terrorist attacks our world has ever witnessed. There were nearly 3,000 victims, and millions of witnesses around the world who needed to remember a space that was once vibrant with life.

New Yorkers and the rest of the world slowly began to pick up the pieces and mourn. Like Paul Celan envisions in his poem *Corona*, New Yorkers argued that it was time for stones “to flower” into a site of memory. The desire to rebuild the WTC was an extremely important part of the mourning process. When the towers came

down, one of the immediate reactions was to pick up pieces of the glorious past of the
towers. Finding objects that recalled both the past and destruction of the towers,
allowed the citizens to enact a kind of memorialization that Edward Casey had
focused upon decades earlier: To “put the past in place; they are the primary sources
of its concrete emplacement in memory.”

The Twin Towers  
The Tribute of Light  
Libeskind’s and Arad’s memorial plans

The transformation of the World Trade Center from 1989- today.

The journey to memorialize the Twin Towers began with putting objects in place, and
led to many makeshift memorials, which is defined as public markers of death that
contain an assortment of items (eg. missing posters, candles to remember those lost in
the doorways of families). One of the most fascinating aspects of mourning at Ground
Zero was the immediate desire for a physical memorial. History and living memory
began to clash just a few days after the towers fell.

Unlike memorials that were being erected to the Shoah after sixty years, the
idea for a memorial at Ground Zero began immediately after the attack occurred. In

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the wake of 9/11, memorializers emphasized the importance of documenting the moment as it was being lived. Historians’ sense of obligation to remember was combined “uneasily with the sense that they were still too close to the event to judge clearly what is truly historically important.” After 9/11, there was a meeting at the Museum of the City of New York entitled “The Role of the Museum in a Time of Crisis” at which museum workers met to discuss this intersection between history, events and memory. The entire process was concerned with the question of how to best envision a memorial soon after the events it was supposed to memorialize.

Clifford Chanin, in his speech at the 10th anniversary of September 11th and the opening of the National September 11th Memorial, attempted to describe the boundary between history and event as follows:

We are experiencing the vivid distinction between memory and history: the one, driven by the immediacy and of all the urgency that flowed from it; the other, by ten years of decision made out of that moment, and the whisper of alternatives in the passage of time.

Those who were part of the rebuilding process realized the immense challenge set out before them as to what the memorial would become. The immediacy and “all the urgency that flowed from it” became a source og debate during the months, and even years, after the towers fell.

The debate started with the desire to rebuild and to sustain the hollowed ground where the towers once stood. This compulsion to memorialize came hand in hand with the desire to remember and mourn those who died.

The boundary between these needs, however, began to collapse. The need to put memory into stone and rebuild was as powerful as the mourning process itself. The widespread desire to rebuild as soon as possible may best be demonstrated by numbers. By the deadline for the memorial competition on June 30th 2003, 5,201 individuals and firms from 63 countries and 49 states submitted designs. If the competition boards were set side by side they would have stretched 2.5 miles. The total number of entries were three times more than any other memorial competition in history. Michael Arad won with his design, “Reflecting Absence”. Arad’s plan consisted of two reflection pools at the footprints of the tower, each “nearly 65 meters square, with thin veils of water cascading into the pools below”, each surrounded by a continuous ribbon of names.

In New York the process seemed to occur at a faster pace than in Germany. Did downtown New York have the full expression of debates which had been evident in Germany? Has the way we define debates and controversy surrounding these memorial processes changed over the past two decades?

**Expectation Entrenched**

The question of whether or not there was room for the full expression of different views during the rapid memorialization process came up during an early interview with Clifford Chanin. We were discussing Holocaust memorialization in Berlin and how it influenced memorialization worldwide. During our conversation Chanin explained how 9/11 is linked to the Shoah as follows:

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Part of memorial culture in the post Holocaust world, one of the outcomes or gifts of that culture is the expectation that such an event will be memorialized and that has taken decades to get to as an expectation. By the time we get to 9/11 that expectation is completely entrenched so there is this sense what do you do about something like this? You build a memorial. So we did not have any opportunity for delay. People genuinely had the expectation that you couldn’t do anything down here if you weren’t incorporating the memorial into the plan.\(^\text{11}\)

In Germany it took ten years of debate until the first memorial stone was laid. At Ground Zero the expectation was so entrenched that there was no opportunity for delay. Ingra Saffron in a review for *The Inquirer* wrote about this response as well:

> If Americans were certain about anything in the days after the World Trade Center towers were flattened before our eyes, it was this: there would be a memorial to the dead, and it would acknowledge the footprints of the two banished sky scrapers that dominated the skyline for 28 years.\(^\text{12}\)

In the days after September 11\(^\text{th}\) there was doubt there would be a memorial upon the footprints of the towers.

When the Holocaust memorial debate began in Berlin, there was no expectation that a memorial like Eisenman’s would be built. It took years of competition in order for it to be created. Today we live in a different world. Part of this world is the expectation that after a trauma occurs, society must build stone edifices in order to remember those who were lost. I attribute Americans certainty in rebuilding Ground Zero to the long debates of memorialization in Germany.

As I explored the effect of immediacy upon Berlin and Ground Zero, the first question I asked was what might be lost in this need for immediate memorialization?


Was the immediacy with which it was created a good thing? As I continued my research, I began to see problems with the urgency to memorialize.

It seems that the pace of rapid commemoration made New Yorkers (and others from around the world) feel as if the event was already a memory rather than something that was still happening and needed attention. Setha Low, former president of the American Anthropological Association asked: “why did commemoration happen so immediately rather than dealing with the messy ongoing public input into the commemoration process?”13 David Simpson, in his book 9/11: The Culture of Commemoration, agreed with Low’s critique and used the example of the naming of 9/11 to epitomize the lack of public input.

The Holocaust and other catastrophes had been followed by long debates and conversations as their memorialization took on many forms. In the case of September 11th, however, the terms “Ground Zero” and “9/11” were coined within a few hours. What do the term 9/11 and Ground Zero actually mean? Who first coined the terms “9/11” and “Ground Zero” and “how did they spread so quickly across the airwaves and into the lexicon?”14 Through my investigation into this lexicon, however, I found that Ground Zero and 9/11 took on many meanings over time. They became terms that embodied “deconstruction and reconstruction, of intense emotional and political investments, a highly over determined space.”15 To continue to answer the question if

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anything was lost in the rapid commemoration of September 11th, I needed to trace
the stages of memory that we use in the process of memorialization.

Stages Of Memory

Only a few days after the towers came down, Governor Pataki asked
memorial expert James Young how to commemorate at Ground Zero:

So I was asked, almost weeks after the attacks into the governor’s
house, ‘How do we remember, how do we commemorate?’ I replied,
we don’t know what it means. It’s not memory yet. It’s unfolding right
now. We just have no idea.16

Young advised New Yorkers to engage in a slower memorial process, rather then
trying to set into stone how they felt right away. It is important to remember and
memorialize at a slower pace. To remember, the world first had to understand what
the loss meant. When the towers came down the whole world began to change and so
did the “conditions of analysis” which needed time to be understood.17

I want to suggest that we should not automatically consign memory to stone
and that Jewish mourning and memory helps us understand why this is so. In the
Jewish tradition, one undergoes a year of mourning before a gravestone is unveiled
for the deceased. Jewish cultural memory gives mourners the time to make sense of
their loss, and find meaning in it before they mark their grief with stone. Leon
Wieseltier, an American writer, explored the intervals of the Jewish mourning process
and in his book Kaddish (the Jewish mourning prayer). Wieseltier’s book Kaddish, is

16 James Young, Personal Interview. Amherst (11/11/12).
a journal of a his year long mourning period for his father. This work shows the importance of taking time to mourn and understand the loss of a loved one.\(^\text{18}\)

Without this “decent interval,” we are unable to understand the trauma of loss. By collapsing time too much, we are in danger of foreclosing a process that we actually need.\(^\text{19}\) We need space and time because it gives us the knowledge to understand loss, and “when knowledge comes, memory comes too, little by little.”\(^\text{20}\)

The process of gaining understanding and guiding memory step by step, as we internalize and mourn, is just as important as the finished memorial or gravestone. There are men like Leon Wieseltier, however, who argue that in order to remember in the modern day and age, we need physical memorials.

Do We Need Stone To Remember

Wieseltier makes the provocative argument that maybe Americans are too weak to remember in anything but stone. In modern times we have become so used to expressing collective memory in hard matter, that Wieseltier argues that monuments are erected even before memory work can begin. This brings up the question of whether or not we can remember without having a physical memorial. Perhaps the most enduring monuments are not the material ones but the “everlasting debates” and cultural paradigms of remembering. Wieseltier begins his examination of American memory culture by looking to Jewish civilization:

This is a conclusion, certainly, that may be drawn from the experience of a civilization that was for millinei too weak politically to dream of

\(^{19}\) James Young, Personal Interview. Amherst (11/11/12).
incarnating itself in marvelous edifices, and so had to devise an immaterial home for memory, an incorporeal substance.  

For Jews the imperative to remember is strong, because commemoration is an extremely important facet of Jewish religion. The idea of remembrance goes back as far as the covenant of memory between Abraham and God, which has become a cornerstone of the Jewish religion. This is one reason Jewish people read Megilat Esther and the narrative of the deliverance from Egypt into freedom every year. In a sense, these readings are memorials to Jewish suffering and survival. As Yerushalmi argues in his book Zachor, it seems that cultural memory is crucial to the Jewish faith and “ultimately to its very existence.” The importance of cultural memory is best exemplified during the Passover Seder where the Israelites exodus from Egypt is remembered in ritualized form.

At the Passover Seder, we retell not only the stories of our forefathers, but we also take on their roles through ritual. We eat the bitter herbs and drink salt water as a representation of the pain and suffering our forefathers went through. Those at the Seder table see themselves as the Israelites escaping Egypt; they say that it is was “god did for US when we went out of Egypt.” The Passover rituals and the sense of community it brings exemplifies how “collective memory is transmitted more actively through ritual than through chronicle.” In fact, even a group of Jews very

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22 Vera Schwarcz, Bridge Across Broken Time: Chinese and Jewish Cultural Memory (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 72.
23 Yosef Yerushalmi, Zachor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1982), 9.
24 Ibid., 15.
far away in China were able to feel the connection to their people through the ritual of the Passover Seder.

Words and rituals such as the Passover Seder became the monuments of the Jewish tradition, because without the power and money to build memorials, Jewish tradition gave preference to culture over stone. The Seder, Megilat Esther, the Kaddish prayer and the yahrzeit candle burning in the night—all these became Jewish memorials. Wieseltier asks: “We have the option of stone, but I wonder whether we have the option of culture?” Is the option of remembering culturally gone from us now?

I used the example of the Passover Seder to grapple with Wieseltier’s argument. At the end of the Seder another very important ritual is to say aloud, “next year in Jerusalem.” When Jews lived mostly in Diaspora and were outnumbered by their surrounding populations, they could not build statues for their national memory. Thus, they created rituals and stories. What happens when we do find ourselves “next year in Jerusalem?”

Once settled in Israel the Jewish and these national memorials were built did we lose the importance of cultural memory that had kept the Jewish memory alive for so long? Today, there is a fear among some scholars that the importance placed on cultural remembrance will fade. This is attributed to the fact that Jews are no longer in Galut (exile), and have the money and land to build their own marble edifices. With this transition many of the rituals and stories are no long solely about the survival of the Jewish people, but they also become about victory.

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25 Wieseltier, Monument and Memory: The Columbia Seminar on Art and Memory, 35.
One can see this when looking at the ways Israel has placed the Shoah in a central position within its national memory. Instead of the Shoah being solely a story of suffering, it has become inextricably tied to the creation of the state of Israel and to the courage of its first pioneers. Is this because we now have a place to build and no longer need the ritual as much as before? In looking at the transformation of Jewish and Israeli memory, as well as the forms of memory in NYC after 9/11, I wondered if we still have a healthy relationship with memory.

**Too Poor For Anything Except Architecture**

Days after the tower fell, a question arose of whether there was something inherently unhealthy in the way Americans deal with memory. The article in the New York Times entitled “The Meaning of 9/11’s Most Controversial Photo” had an interesting take on how Americans remember today and the immediacy of history and memory. The picture depicts five people in Brooklyn enjoying a sunny day, as the towers are falling behind them

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The article quoted columnist Frank Rich, who wrote about this image in *The New York Times*. Rich saw in this picture an allegory of America's failure to learn any deep lessons from that tragic day and its failure to change as a nation:

The young people in Mr. Hoepker's photo aren't necessarily callous. They're just American. In other words, in a country that believes in moving on they have already moved on, enjoying the sun in spite of the scene of mass carnage that scars the fine day.²⁷

In this photograph it looks as if these five New Yorkers are carrying out their daily lives and conversations, oblivious to the backdrop. I asked myself if one of the negative side effects of rapid commemoration is the inability to understand the extreme nature of an event. Through examining the photo, as well as the public opinion surrounding Mr. Hoepker's stolen moment in time, I realized that Frank Rich’s critique is not completely true. Though it appears that the people in this photo have already moved on, we do not know what they are talking about. Furthermore, it is human nature to move on after trauma.²⁸

Perhaps New Yorkers did not lose anything in the way they went about re-building Ground Zero. During our second interview, when discussing the effects of immediacy, Clifford Chanin explained:

In the heat of the moment, as things were, the construction had a certain aspect, that probably would not be the case if we had waited longer. Those are the trade-offs. I don’t know if it’s a loss but it’s definitely a trade-off.²⁹

Through examining the “trade offs” that Chanin brought to the forefront, I discovered that New Yorkers did in fact adhere to distinct stages of memory. Hundreds of

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impromptu memorials appeared overnight, and the amount grew as people began to understand and mourn at these sites. The transition from mourning to memorialization began with the posters of those who were missing after the towers came down.

In the eyes of memory scholars, the makeshift memorial of the missing posters makes the stages of remembrance tangible. The missing posters became a shared stage of mourning among those who lost loved ones. When the makeshift wall of posters began to crumble down, The New York Historical Society photographed as many of these personal tributes for posterity. When NYHS tried to put together the missing posters into an exhibition entitled, “Missing: Streetscape of the City in Mourning,” they found that people weren’t ready to have “their loved ones historicized so quickly.” The NYHS decision to listen to the families and stop this exhibition shows how the stages of mourning were adhered to in many cases.

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32 Williams, Memorial Museums: The Global Rush to Commemorate Atrocities, 68.
Perhaps there was time for the stumblings and contemplation that are so vital for understanding the magnitude of the day that changed the world. Paul Goldberger also argued that there was not an immediate need to build in stone. In his book *Up From Zero* he explained:

> In the immediate aftermath of the tragedy of September 11th, almost no one was talking about rebuilding. Mourning the dead, comforting their survivors, and observing the painful process of searching for human remains and clearing the site—not to mention the shock—was preoccupation enough for most people.\(^{34}\)

Goldberger continued his study of the immediate aftermath of September 11\(^{th}\) to show that putting memory into stone was the last thing on the minds of those who experienced some sense of loss. I agree with Young and Goldberger that New Yorkers were provided decent intervals to understand their loss. I also came to realize that the debate is far from over.

Today it is apparent that not only did the government officials make it possible for the public to participate in the commemoration process, but the public debates lasted longer than I had previously acknowledged. Beyond the initial memorial competition and design choices these debates continued throughout the ten years it took to build the memorial. In our interview about the Ground Zero memorial process, Chanin explained:

> It was not so neat and tidy over here. It was not like hospital corners on a bed. To this day, there is debate. The thing got built, so it tends to make the debate move. But it’s not over, and it keeps cropping up in all kinds of ways.\(^{35}\)

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\(^{35}\) Clifford Chanin, *Personal Interview*. New York (10/12/12).
For Chanin who works at the site everyday, the debate has certainly not ended. Though it may change in form, the debates are ongoing and can crop up in all kinds of ways. Since he works so closely with the museum, he knows that once the museum is opened, there will be different facets of the debate that nobody can anticipate. Chanin is “not worried about a shortage of debate.”\textsuperscript{36} The debates in New York are not so “neat and tidy” as previously thought and as of now they have no fixed endpoint.

David Dunlap, a New York Times correspondent who has described the Ground Zero building process in extreme detail, argued that the “battle ground has shifted largely from the offices and conference rooms to the 16 acres itself.”\textsuperscript{37} Dunlap, along with the rest of the world, watched as debate erupted at the building site due to various controversies over the construction of the memorial. After years of tracing the development at Ground Zero, Dunlap described the slow progression through various stages of memory. Only as the 9\textsuperscript{th} anniversary approaches, has “Reflecting Absence” begun to sound like a memorial.\textsuperscript{38}

**Whisper of Alternatives In Time**

Today, as the 12\textsuperscript{th} anniversary of September 11\textsuperscript{th} approaches, the debates have become part of the activity that brought them into being and continue after the memorial is set in stone: “the constant give and take between memorial and viewers, and finally the responses of viewers to their own world in light of a memorialized

\textsuperscript{36} Ibid.,
past.” I so perturbed by the fact that a memorial plan was chosen in only two years, that I did not realized that the debates continued long after Michael Arad won the competition. Although the pace of debate did not pick up until after the design was chosen, there was room for conversation and public input, just not in the same context that I had expected.

The debates about the memorial at Ground Zero endured long after the planning and construction process, and even after the design plans were set in stone. For only when we have enough time to understand and to discuss an event are we able to understand what was lost and learn to rebuild ourselves again. A memorial is only successful if it is able to recall the stages of memory and the genealogy that brought it into existence. No memory is ever shaped in a vacuum. As James Young pointed out: “monuments are of little value, mere stones in a landscape.” Once public input dies out, memorials run the risk of becoming mere markers in a landscape, which will crumble with the passage of time.

As the memorial and the museum continue to be constructed, and the freedom tower stands 1776 feet tall, our understanding of the memorial continues to change. Something in the balance is shifting. Paul Goldberger points out that the perception of the site changes over time. He explains this phenomenon using the void as an example of what was lost and the transitions the symbol went through:

For a while a void was what was needed. But what was right for the end of 2001, or the beginning of 2002 would not be right three of four or ten years on. When people looked downtown and still felt a sense of shock or surprise at the absence of the towers, it was clearly not time to build again, or even to know precisely what to do. But that feeling

40 Ibid., 2.
would ebb month by month, and there would come a time when people were no longer shocked by the void.\footnote{Paul Golberger, \textit{Up From Zero: Politics, Architecture and the Rebuilding of New York}, 53.}

This description of how the void of the towers affects viewers and how their idea of absence begins to change shows the whisper of alternative temporalities. The changes in the memorial process over time as well as the ten years of decision making continue to affect our understanding of 9/11. The massive national debate about memory and memorialization in relation to history, which had previously been focused upon Holocaust memorials, has been reinvigorated on the site of 9/11.\footnote{Simpson, \textit{9/11: The Culture of Commemoration}, 15.} Both these events and memorials have created important cultures of commemoration that span across disparate temporalities.
Chapter 3

_So Much Ash to be Blessed:_

The Memorial Arc between Berlin and Ground Zero

The "You Are My Witnesses" wall in the Hall of Witness at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Washington, DC, January 2003. The message greets visitors as they enter the museum and brings up the complexity of the visit that is about to ensue: How to become a witness to something as inexplicable as the Shoah, as well as the need be a witness to the testimonies of those who have survived and those who have perished to keep memory work alive.
In “Trauma, Memory and Transference,” Saul Friedlander writes that the Nazi past and the events of the Shoah remain “an unmastered past” that refuses to go away.\(^1\) Study of the Shoah is foundational, specifically in the area of memory studies. For once we witness something as traumatic as the Shoah, it will raise new fundamental questions. It affects the way we see and think of the world and other traumatic events, and its changes the way we create art, build memorials and live out our daily lives. Primo Levi writes about this world inheritance from the perspective of a survivor who concludes that the “Shoah is irrevocably introduced into the world of existing things,” and after this, nothing is the same.\(^2\)

My thesis provides links between the memorial of the Shoah and the recollection and memorialization of September 11\(^{th}\). I attempt to make sense of these sites of memory in relation to each other. Like Paul Celan grapples with in his poetry, I aim to understand how both societies “bless the ash” of the many that were lost.

The linkages between Berlin and Ground Zero began to emerge at the very start of the memorialization process in NYC. In February 2006, Alice Greenwald became the Director of the World Trade Center Memorial Museum. As the former Associate Director of Programs at the U.S Holocaust Memorial Museum, she seemed

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perfect for the job because she was well schooled in how to create a museum that represents such an inexplicable tragedy.³

The overlap of the two sites of memory also extends to the memorial attributes that Michael Arad chose to utilize. Arad’s memorial has a preoccupation with the language of loss that is informed by Holocaust memory. As I started to research the connection between Shoah memorialization and Ground Zero, I began to see that the most important aspect of these sites was the need to individualize the deaths of those who were killed. This was done through individually naming those who have died.

The Names Become The Monuments

The building of the WTC site began with two demands: that the footprints remain intact and that the names of the victims be preserved on the site.⁴ This use of names as a symbolic tombstone for the victims can be traced from Shoah memorialization to 9/11. For example, Jerusalem’s Yad Vashem’s Daf Ed project (Pages of Testimony) attempts to honor the memory of millions of those whose graves are unknown and unmarked by registering their names.⁵ In Shanghai, there is an effort to put back together the tombstones of those who found refuge and died in Shanghai. The importance of names extends outside the realm of Holocaust memorials to Maya Lin’s “Vietnam Veteran’s Memorial” where the “the names become the monument.”⁶ Both “The Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe” and

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⁴ David Dunlap, Personal Interview. New York City (01/23/2013).
⁵ Avner Shalev, "Unto Every Person There is a Name," in Materials on the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe (Berlin: The Foundation for the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, 2009), 135.
“The Vietnam Veterans Memorial” show “war as a series of human sacrifices and give each [victim] a special place of history.”

In central Berlin, the absence of inscription on the pillars provides a meaningful message about the horror of the final solution. Mark Godfrey in his study *Abstraction and the Holocaust* wrote:

It is not the case that the pillars are blank stones simply devoid of inscription. Rather, this absence of inscriptions signifies a reflection on the nature of the death of the final solution.

Victims of the Shoah had no remains and no stone inscription; rather, they were made into dust or left in unmarked mass graves.

What do we do for those who have evaporated into dust? The lack of inscription is extremely important, for it magnifies the multitude and the extent of the murder that took place. Only blank pillars can memorialize the unknown names of the dead.

In order to understand the significance of making the deaths of Shoah victims “one by one by one,” the importance of naming those who have perished within the Jewish faith must be explored.

The oldest and most common form of naming those who have perished is through a gravestone. Having a name and something to leave behind is an important injunction in Judaism, for this is the last thing we can give the victims. In laying the tombstone and naming the dead, we not only commemorate and celebrate life, but also allow loved ones to understand their loss and move on.

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The very name *Yad va Shem* (the most extensive and famous Holocaust Museum in Israel) helps to explain the importance of naming those who have passed. This appellation is drawn from Isaiah:

> So says the Lord to the eunuchs who will keep my Sabbaths and will choose what I desire and hold fast to my convent. I will give them my house and in my walls a *Yad va Shem*, better than sons and daughters; an everlasting name I will give him, which will not be discontinued.  

*Yad va Shem* is translated as “a place and a name.” Having a place to call home and to be buried is the greatest gift God can give to the Eunuchs, thus many Shoah memorials attempt to give victims a semblance of a place and a name—a *Yad va Shem*. One way to do this is to inscribe names and create burial sites that put the victims to rest. What about the martyrs, however, “who have no graves?”

How do we memorialize the victims who went up in smoke? How do we remember them? We may wonder whether it is feasible to actually give all victims of these tragedies the graves and peace they deserve.

Jochen Gerz challenges the notion that it is possible to truly give the victims a place and a name through his memorial site, “2,146 Stones Against Racism.” Gerz, who taught a class at The Saarbrucker School of Fine Arts, enlisted his students to help uproot and replace stones in front of the university as a form of guerilla memorial action. Students researched the different gravesites throughout town and found two thousand graves that had been vandalized, abandoned or had simply disappeared. They carved the missing names of the Jewish people who had once lived in Saarbrucker into the stones. The stones, however, were placed facedown giving no

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11 Isaiah 56: 4-5.
indication that any memorial had been put into place. This monument not only insists on the “insufficiency” of many modern memorials, but it is also a “poignant metaphor” for the inability of any memorial to lay these ghosts to rest. Gerz created a memorial in order to perplex visitors with unsolvable questions that lie at the heart of the memorial process. Perhaps it is impossible for these victims to ever rest. Andre Schwarz-Bart writes:

So this story will not finish with some tomb to be visited in pious memory. For the smoke that rises from the crematoria obeys physical laws like any other: the particles come together and disperse according to the wind, which propels them. The only pilgrimage, dear reader, would be to look sadly at the stormy sky now and then.

The narrative of the “2,146 Stones against Racism” is important in studying the significance of names within the memorial’s vernacular of trauma. This project shows that it is up to the visitor to decide what these names will mean. Names can be grave markers to celebrate life or to mourn a death.

The utilization of names and tombstones became so important in recollection after the war, that we can even recognize the phenomenon in places as distant as China.

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13 Elena Lamberti and Vita Fortunati, eds. Memory and Representation of War: The Case of World War I and World War II (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2009), 194.
Unearthing The Past In Shanghai

Shanghai is a unique place for a Holocaust Memorial, for it is dedicated to those who escaped to Shanghai, rather than the victims who died in the camps. The Shanghai Jewish Memorial process started in November 2001, when Dvir Bar Gal, the creator of the memorial, received an email stating that there were two old Jewish gravestones for sale in an antique shop in Shanghai. Since then, he has begun a journey to locate other tombstones from the four Jewish cemeteries that were destroyed during the Cultural Revolution. Many of these tombstones have been found in small remote villages, buried in pathways as stepping-stones or parts of walls. Some are even used to help clean clothes. My research and communication with Bar-Gal, helped shed further light on the contrast between memorials to Jews who died in the Shoah versus the Jews who survived in Shanghai.

The commitment to remember those who were lost and to give them a tombstone appeared to be just as important in Shanghai as it was in many of the other memorials I came across in Europe and the United States. Dvir Bar Gal explained that the commitment that pushed him and his colleagues forward was, “Jewish sentiment combined with Jewish history and treasures.”

By using tombstones as a central component to the memorial, Dvir Bar Gal is rescuing “singular fragments from the totalizing impulse” Each tombstone works as a “singular fragment” that rescues the dead refugees from the abstraction of becoming one unit. The website (which, as of now, works as the virtual memorial) lists each

17 Schwarcz, Bridge Across Broken Time: Chinese and Jewish Cultural Memory, 2.
tombstone found, and the facts historians have gathered about the life of the individual remembered on it.

Collecting Tombstones for the Shanghai Holocaust Memorial 18

Much like Bar-Gal, Maya Lin also set out to bring individuality to the totalizing impulse experienced after the Vietnam War. Lin explained that she got her inspiration for “The Vietnam Veterans Memorial” from other Holocaust memorials that utilized names and carved out pieces of landscape, in order to encourage the visitor descend downwards and inward into memory. 19 This thesis argues that by the time we get to the Ground Zero Site commemorating 9/11, the need for names and a gravesite is so entrenched in memorial building that the names become the entire monument.

Michael Arad’s use of names in the 9/11 Memorial can be traced to the missing posters that were put up days after the towers fell. The transition of the missing posters into tombstones began with the recognition that the people in the photos were not simply missing, but murdered. Missing poster ‘memorials’ sprang up everywhere in downtown Manhattan. In the words of Andreas Huyssen, the author of a work on political amnesia:

Flowers at many of these sites indicated that there was not much hope to find any of the missing. A whole part of Manhattan had been turned

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into a cemetery, but a cemetery without identifiable bodies and without graves.\textsuperscript{20}

These missing posters came to play the role of gravestones for the families of loved ones, and they led to the names surrounding Michael Arad’s memorial pools.

Arad and his team worked on an intricate programming system, which ordered the names of the victims, entitled “Meaningful Adjacencies.” Arad explained that one of the considerations was how “to differentiate first responders from others killed in the attacks, and how to group family members, friends and co workers.”\textsuperscript{21} A woman named Clair Angell Miller expressed her expectation that married couples would be placed together, as follows: “it would break our hearts to see them separated, even though it is only in their names.”\textsuperscript{22} For many, these names were the final resting place for their loved ones and a place where they could go to pay their respects. The controversy of how to list the victims resulted in an emotional impasse that threatened the entire memorial project.\textsuperscript{23}

The grouping of names was considered to be unfeasible until June 2009 when the 9/11 memorial staff sent packages of information and response forms to the kin of all 2,982 victims. These forms asked where relatives wanted the name of their loved ones to be grouped, and if they wanted the name to be listed near a friend, a family

\textsuperscript{22} Allison Blais, \textit{A Place of Remembrance: Official Book of the National September 11th Memorial} (New York: National Geographic, 2011), 163.
member or co-worker. Over 1,200 requests were “made and honored for specific names to be inscribed next to one another on a memorial.”

How did the names become so important by the time we get to 9/11? Not only do names represent the final resting places of the thousands of victims of September 11th, but they also celebrate the individual lives of the victims, just as the missing posters did. The missing posters became transformed into something else, because “as the hopes of reunion were extinguished, a fierce determination to remember the victims—as they were, in the eyes of their loves ones—took hold.” The missing posters, “Meaningful Adjacencies” and the memorial itself all exemplify not just grave markers but also celebrations of life.

Daniel Libeskind makes the intersection of loss and life tangible in many of his building projects. During a memorial competition for the Sachenhausen Camp Memorial, Libeskind (who ended up being the architect of the master plan at the Ground Zero site) submitted a plan called the “Incision of Hope.” Libeskind explained his plan for “Incision of Hope” in the following way:

There are so many sites of this sort in the world—where evils have taken place, where human lives were destroyed, where perpetration of crime we cannot fathom took place—and yet each one of these sites has to have a future.

Memorials recalling the victims of the Shoah throughout Europe have come to represent loss and life, as does the memorial that is now rising in lower Manhattan to remember those who died on September 11th. This thesis explores how the “incision

24 Blais, A Place of Remembrance: Official Book of the National September 11th Memorial, 168.
26 Daniel Libeskind, Monument and Memory the Columbia Seminar on Art and Memory, 16.
of hope” in Holocaust memorials started a dimension of memorialization visible at the September 11th site as well.

**Loss And Life In Central Berlin**

The Berlin Denkmal represents both the loss of 6 million European Jews and of Germany moving swiftly into the future. The central location, the use of trees on the outer edges and the openness of the site brings a sense of life into what is otherwise a place marking death. We must build sites of memory that do not paralyze the stone with loss but acknowledge the needs of the living. Only if this is done, can we truly keep the sites of memory fully functional. For example, the Soviet War Memorial at Sachsenhausen represents the victory of the Soviets in liberating the camps, “The Cold War legacy” in the nation’s capital and the gravesites of those who were murdered at the camps.27 The soviet monument in the center of the camp has become both a representation of victory and of mourning, as visitors that come to Sachsenhausen continue to place rocks (a Jewish tradition for gravesites) on this ‘victorious’ monument.

After tracing the memorial building process at Ground Zero, it becomes evident that these sites become both places of mourning and of moving on. In New York, some of the questions the architects had to ask themselves were: How do you measure emptiness? Loss? Memories? How do you balance [loss] against life and regeneration?28 Like the Denkmal Berlin, one of the key features of Arad’s memorial plan is that it is at ground level, ensuring that New Yorkers have easy

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access to the memorial from the city streets. After the jury decided on Arad’s plan, Maya Lin described “Reflecting Absence” as making “something positive out of the void.”²⁹ Though Arad beautifully represented the loss of the victims, the plaza itself was missing a sense of life and regeneration. Peter Walker, a landscapist, was added onto the team to implement trees and a “Survivor Tree” (a tree for those who survived the attacks) into the memorial’s design in order to represent regenerative forms of life.

The local community made it clear that they wanted the memorial to serve as more than an acropolis. The people of lower Manhattan also wanted a park: “Kids could fly kites and people could mourn—it must be understood that the memory sites of this size and nature must have multiple dimensions. We have this capacity.”³⁰

Arad ended an interview with the Yale News with two photographs for the memorial’s opening:

One of a man touching the inscribed name of a loved one and another of two young girls playing in the plaza...there are two pictures of the same day, and it’s important for these to occur side by side for me.³¹

Arad’s description of the memorial site as both a place of life and loss is best exemplified through the Room of Remembrance at the 9/11 Memorial and Museum offices. This room is filled with mementos of the loved ones that are missing. These mementos range from flowers, reports cards the children would have shown their parents, birthday cards, and soccer trophies. It is a place to feel connected to loved ones. From the 20th floor, visitors are able to look at the building of Ground Zero

and watch the memorial rise. This room is both a graveyard and a celebration of life, just like the memorial itself.

A family member who has lost a loved one explains:

I think it should be a place of reflection and contemplation. But it should also resonate with life and color. I want it to be a place that can make me smile… I think my brother would have wanted me to be able to pray and cry, but smile in his memory.

Both the Room of Remembrance, and the view of the rising freedom tower over the memorial site reflect how family members mourn the loss of a loved one and also smile in memory of the lives once lived. Just as our memory of loved ones fill our thoughts, we seek to fill the absence found in architectural spaces.

**Silence As A Medium**

Like what is achieved in the Room of Remembrance, Daniel Libeskind’s projects attempt to depict and fill in the haunted silence in the cityscape. He puts his aim in the following words:

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32 The Freedom Tower and The Survivor Tree in New York, 2013. Photos from the National September 11th Memorial and Museum Website.
33 Blais, *A Place of Remembrance: Official Book of the National September 11th Memorial*, 123.
Buildings are flesh. They are transformations of inert-material stone, concrete, glass into something living and in that sense they speak a language, both communicative and silent.\textsuperscript{34}

When Libeskind begins any building process he sets out to make structures speak.\textsuperscript{35} Buildings can tell and not tell us things, their stories can change, and the same stories can fall on deaf ears. The void becomes the spatial equivalence of silence. Libeskind describes how this “absence is structured in the city, in the topography of a country, in the topography of Europe and the world.”\textsuperscript{36} There is a special history and meaning that can be found in the “haunting quality” of vacant spaces by “walking, looking, touching and feeling.”\textsuperscript{37}

Tobi Kahn, a Jewish artist, also brings silence and absence into his art in a show entitled “Embodied Light: 9-11 in 2011.” Kahn’s exhibition shows how silence and absence have become artistic mediums. The different facets of the exhibit show how sometimes trauma is beyond words, and you “need another mechanism to express what you’ve been through.”\textsuperscript{38} Some modes of expression are so deep that they are unspeakable. Nonetheless, one way to understand this silence and loss is to integrate loss into our life stories. Kahn draws visitors to “the material index and absence,” and he attempts to fill in the empty spaces in a cityscape that is “haunted by what is not there.”\textsuperscript{39} Eisenman shows how Berlin becomes haunted by what is not

\textsuperscript{34} Libeskind, \textit{Monument and Memory the Columbia Seminar on Art and Memory}, 17.
\textsuperscript{37} Ibid., 45.
\textsuperscript{38} Helen Chernikoff, "Blocks of Remembrance," \textit{The Jewish Week} (2011): 3.
there, not through a “material index of absence,” but rather through blank concrete slabs.

Peter Eisenman constructs a “book of stone, whose absolutely illegible pages can neither be described nor read.”\textsuperscript{40} The Berlin Denkmal is able to provide this book of stone by using a language that we neglect to hear—that of silence. Eisenman embodies the “emptiness and silence” in an attempt to make tangible the silence that existed after the war. \textsuperscript{41}

**Let The Memorial Hill Remember**

The inability to talk after the war had ended inhabited the bodies of those who witnessed what happened. They found it impossible to speak of what they had experienced, so they decided to forget. Amichai, an Israeli poet, writes, “Let the memorial hills remember instead of me/ let them all remember so that I can rest.”\textsuperscript{42} Amichai represents many survivors’ feelings after the war. They wanted to forget and move on into the future. Dori Laub, Psychologist and founder of Yale’s Holocaust Video Archives, describes this need for silence and its connection to fear: “the desire not to read, and not to talk, stems from the fear of hearing, or of witnessing oneself. The will to silence is the will to bury the dead witness inside oneself.”\textsuperscript{43} This notion is also exemplified in the destruction of the rooms of torture at the site of the Topography of Terror:

\textsuperscript{40} Godfrey, *Abstraction and the Holocaust*, 248.
It was we not others who demolished the stone witnesses of the Nazi dictator site after 1945… we wished to erase them from our memory, because we could no longer bear to see them.\textsuperscript{44}

It is surprising to many that it was not the perpetrators that destroyed the rooms of torture but rather the victims, who made it so the “stone witnesses” would not remain to tell the story of what they had endured. Instead survivors chose to be silent. It is not just a want for silence but as they “amass fortunes and keep erecting castles,” it is the fear that if they were to remember, then those erected castles would soon crumble.\textsuperscript{45} Laub looked back to his own childhood memories of the camps and explained that he kept the memories separate from his present life “as though belonging to a world of their own, which has ended and it is no longer mine.”\textsuperscript{46}

In Dori Laub’s study Testimony, he writes about theme of silence in a way that encompasses not only the concentrationary universe (the universe of the camps) but everything before the war: “It was the silence that swallowed up the past, all the past, the past before the death, before the destruction.”\textsuperscript{47} After the war it became evident that the vibrancy of life before the war also began to disappear from the lives of those who survived. For many post-war writers, this also meant the silencing of their mother tongue. Ruth Kluger, a German writer explained that after the war she started to write to lure German people into conversation about their dark past.

However, she would never again be able to write and speak in her mother tongue. The

\textsuperscript{44} Reinhard Rurup, ed. Topography of Terror: Gestapo, SS and Reichssicherheitshauptamt on the Prinz-Albrecht Terrain- A Documentation (Berlin: Verlag Willmuth Arenhovel, 2005), 10.

\textsuperscript{45} Laub, Testimony: Crisis of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis and History, 73.


\textsuperscript{47} Laub, Testimony: Crisis of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis and History, 64.
language she loved and held dear to her heart as a German citizen was swallowed up along with the horror of the camps.

The Jewish Museum in Berlin makes an effort to try to stop the silencing of the Jewish life. The Museum shows the vibrancy of Jewish culture and how Jewish people grew in Europe, instead of just suffering the slaughter. Many sites of memory forget the time when Jewish Germans saw themselves as truly German.

You cannot understand how much was lost until you dig into the culture that could have prospered. Shimon Attie brings the vibrancy of Jewish culture before 1939 to life through his project “Writing on the Wall: Projections in Berlin’s Jewish Quarter in 1992-1993.”

“Writing on the Wall” was a multimedia exhibit project in the Jewish quarter of Berlin that brought Jewish life back to the streets by utilizing pictures of the past. Shimon Attie found and projected the images of those buildings: “with all the signs of life that then inhabited them: the bearded faces, the Hebrew lettering on the windows.”

Attie urged people to remember the rich Jewish culture that once existed

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in Berlin by introducing the past into the present onto spaces that had long forgotten the vibrant culture that dwelled there. He explains in his book *The Writing on the Wall* that he was inspired to begin this project while walking the streets of Berlin. He asked himself, “Where are the missing people? What has become of the Jewish culture and community which had once been at home here?” He writes:

> The ‘Writing on the Wall’ grew out of my response to the discrepancy between what I felt and what I did not see. I wanted to give this invisible past a voice, to bring it to light, if only for some brief moments… I wanted to peel back the wallpaper of today and reveal the history buried underneath.  

For the next year Shimon Attie projected the Jewish past onto the forgotten stone structures of what had once been the Jewish quarter, forcing Berliners and visitors to remember what had once been.

In NYC one of the tragedies of 9/11 was the loss of the archives, documenting the lives of the World Trade Center, when the towers fell. Today, many historians have begun not just to write about the tragedy of September 11th, but also the life of 1 World Trade Center. David Dunlap’s writes:

> I for one, may never again look at the annual tribute of light without recalling that the observation deck once advertised itself with this admonitions: “and in the evening, please don’t touch the stars.”

In both Dunlap’s remembering of the past of the towers, as well as Shimon Attie’s project of bringing pictures of the past to the forgotten landscapes of Berlin, an important component of the process is the agency of the artists and the visitor.

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51 Ibid., 73.
Shalev-Gerz explores the importance of the listener and visitor in her installation in 2005 entitled “Between Listening and Telling: Last Witnesses, Auschwitz, 1945-2005.” Shalev-Gerz’s exhibition was opened on the 60th anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp and is a culmination of the testimonies of 60 survivors living in Paris. The interviews were unedited as visitors watched the witnesses search for language and how it was verbally articulated. At the end of the room the testimonial videos were played on repeat silently and in slow motion. Shalev-Gerz captured the silent moment that occurs between words as well as “the crucial acts of witnessing.” Part of the navigation “Between Listening and Telling” is to listen to the silence in order to “enable” testimony.

Today we must try to bring words to the silence and speak the unsayable because our ancestors before us could not. Marilynn Robin wrote an essay entitled “Imagination & Community: What holds us together.” The essay focuses on “the apophatic” – a kind of reality that cannot be described. For Robin the greatest challenge is to find words that can capture indescribable events. In this there is a paradox. Language has a power because it can “evok[e] a reality beyond its grasp,” but how can it when

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54 Jason Bowman, *Between Listening and Telling Exhibition Website:* http://www.shalev-gerz.net/EN/index.html#/home
traumatic events are impossible to describe? We must try to reach the “Frontier of the unsayable and the avenues of approach to those frontiers.”

We must listen to the silence of those who experienced the camps, tell their stories, but not try to fill in the absence. This kind of listening is exemplified in a conversation between two characters in *Maus* by Art Speigelman:

> How to show a necessary silence? Pavel suggests that because "life always takes the side of life . . . the victims who died can never tell THEIR side of the story, so maybe it’s better not to have any more stories.” To which Art responds in the next panel, “Uh-huh. Samuel Beckett once said: ‘every word is like an unnecessary stain on silence and nothingness.”

This scene is accompanied with a panel that is completely blank, exemplifying that the only way to show the absence of testimony is though the absence of the words and pictures altogether. Speigalman portrays the same heavy burden of “transmission and reception of a testimonial narrative” in his newest graphic novel, *In the Shadow of Two Towers.* In this book that represents the aftermath of the “sky falling,” Speigalmen shows the inability to describe the smell of smoke. The smell of the ash and smoke the few days after September 11th refer to “a perception outside the realm of the word and image.”

In recounting these stories, how do we show our inability to put absence into words? Shalev-Gerz does this by having the testimonies of the survivors in silence so our eyes are drawn to their faces while they search for memory and language. In this “profound space between listening and telling,” we become witnesses:

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59 Ibid., 58.
Witnesses to their inability to find such language. Silence that cannot exist in print except in blank pages is now accompanied by the image of one who is silent, who cannot find the words, who may have no words for such memory.\textsuperscript{60}

Many of the memories of these survivors will always “remain unverbalized” and the silence is the only way to show this. In becoming witnesses to “their search for language” (just as we become witnesses through Paul Celan’s poetry) we are finally able to understand unrepresentability, and also the pain that comes with re-living the events inflicted upon our suspects. We must “feel the victims silence…so that they can assume a form of testimony.”\textsuperscript{61}

Without the viewers and the listeners, however, none of these revelations are feasible. The beauty of deafening silence is that it allows viewers to inscribe our own meaning and language into the speechlessness of testimony and the vacancies of architecture. The spaces in these structures “are where memory takes hold.”\textsuperscript{62} This thesis argues that the most significant attribute acquired from Holocaust memorialization and testimony is the importance of the visitor.

A Companion In A Journey Into Uncharted Land

Not only must we as visitors put our sanity at risk as we go along on these journeys of re-memory, but we are the only ones able to unfold various echoes that resound around memory sites. We need to be a “guide and an explorer on a journey fraught with danger.”\textsuperscript{63}

\textsuperscript{60} James Young, ”Spaces for Deep Memory: Esther Shalev-Gerz and the First Counter monuments,” in Nicole Schweizer, ed. The Memory Works of Esther Shalev-Gerz: A Retrospective (Lausanne: Musee des Beaux-Arts, 2012), 86.
\textsuperscript{61} Laub, Testimony: Crisis of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis and History, 58.
\textsuperscript{63} Laub, Testimony: Crisis of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis and History, 59.
The importance of the visitor runs so deep that the sites of memory “make artist rememberers and self memorializers” out of each of us. Gerzs’ “2,146 Stones against Racism” as well as the sunken monument in Harburg represents the need for the visitors themselves to rise up and remember themselves. When describing the creation processes of the memorials Esther Shalev-Gerz declared: “What we did not want, was an enormous pedestal with something on it presuming to tell people what they ought to think.” While the “2,146 Stones Against Racism” represents the importance names, they are also turned face down. It is up to us to make these names important. The Gerzs’ create memorial that are “transformed and redefined” by the tourists themselves. The importance of the visitor can be seen in both the site of 9/11 and the Holocaust memorial in Berlin.

Peter Eisenman created the field of pillars in “The Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe” in order to invite visitors to engage with our own memory work. When walking through the pillars the space between them is just big enough to allow one individual to pass through. Thus, we have our own trajectories of experience. By having this individual experience, the memorial resists an impulse toward closure in the memorial act and heightens the role in anchoring memory in ourselves. Eisenman creates a memorial that values “experience and emotions over historical understanding.”

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66 Moira Jeffrey, “There is No Together Place Here: A Conversation between Esther-Shalev Gerz and Moira Jeffrey,” in Esther Shalev Gerz: A Thread (Glasgow: Centre for Contemporary Arts, 2008), 45.

This phenomenon continues up until the 9/11 memorial site where not only is the importance of visitor evident in Arad’s architecture, but the need for the public input in giving the memorial meaning is entrenched by the time we get to the building of Ground Zero.

The importance of public input begins with the creation of the Lower Manhattan Development Cooperation (LMDC) on November 2nd 2001, less than two months after September 11th. The LMDC was created to work specifically on the 9/11-memory site, and conduct dialogue between the city, the government and the architects. In July 2002, a process began when LMDC’s urban planner, Alexander Garvin set up an open dialogue “between downtown residents and agencies involved in the rebuilding.” Soon the expectation for visitor and public involvement became so entrenched that in that same year the LMDC and the Port Authority sponsored an event, entitled “Listening to the City.” This event had 5,000 citizens and another 800 joining online, which made it the largest planning dialogue in history. In fact, after the mission statement for the competition was written the LMDC invited the public to give feedback through mailing it to 3,000 victims’ families and open hearings. They allowed these forums to help them revise the mission statement and to develop a set of principles to guide the memorial design.

The importance of the memory tourist extends to the actual site itself, as Arad explains:

Everything we did up to that day was half complete. It was like a stage that had scenery and props and lights but needed actors. Those

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69 Blais, A Place of Remembrance: Official Book of the National September 11th Memorial, 109.
70 Ibid., 120.
are the visitors to the memorial. All of these people bring the memorial to life and instill meaning in it.\footnote{Gonzalez, "Architect for 9/11 Memorial, Tells the Story of its Creation," 3.}

Arad’s comment on the importance of the visitor in instilling the memorial with life and meaning extends from the many architects who created Shoah memorials where the visitors reign in importance. As I write about these two memorials I realize the different meanings I bring to these sites of memory. The visitors themselves begin to grow in importance, as we stumble, stop and rethink. In addition, all the space for contemplation between these stumblings, gives meaning to these solid and stolid stones. The analytical opportunity of my research project lay in tracing the memorial arc between Berlin and Ground Zero. As a result, I was able to see how memorial attributes have radiated from Shoah memorialization, as well as to trace important differences between these sites of memory.
Chapter 4

The Wind that Rebuffs You:
The Language of Absence from Berlin to Ground Zero

Bill Glucroft, an American Jew living in Berlin, chats with visitors from his glass box in the most controversial portion of the Berlin Jewish Museum’s exhibition “The Whole Truth: Everything you always wanted to know about Jews.” This exhibition includes absurd questions such as: “Are there still Jews in Germany?” and “How do you recognize a Jew.” The exhibit brings to the forefront the German peoples’ complicated relationship with their dark past and Judaism as well as many questions about the way Germans remember today.
In an interview, a reporter asked James Young: “Knowing that you have written much about negative form monuments in Germany and that you were also on the jury that chose Peter Eisenman’s design for the Berlin Denkmal, it seems you’ve chosen another Holocaust memorial at Ground Zero. Is that true?” The reporter argued that Jewish architects were somehow predisposed to articulate memory of trauma and catastrophe in their work. The reporter felt bound to this argument because of the many direct references of the memorial vernacular between Berlin and Ground Zero that have been previously discussed in this paper. Both the Berlin Denkmal and Ground Zero have many similarities in the way they make tangible the language of absence. The finished memorials, however, take on different forms. Like Celan’s imagery in his poem *Mit Wechselndem Schlussel* shows, the finished memorials differ because of the “wind that rebuffs” them.

Saul Friedlander in his study of trauma and the Shoah anticipates the problems that could arise if the world begins to compare traumatic events:

\[\text{Will further musealization of negative events of all kinds aid in the separation and clarification of events, or will they become seen as different examples of a single genre of tragedy, perhaps clouding important differences.}\]  

Friedlander’s anticipation becomes a reality as the reporter compares the Holocaust memorial in Berlin with the September 11th Memorial. The phenomenon of seeing

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different traumatic events as examples of a single genre of tragedy is also apparent in historians’ comparisons between the Cultural Revolution in China, and the Shoah. In fact, when Stephan Feuchtwang, an anthropologist who has been doing research on Taiwan and China since 1966, interviewed Chinese survivors for his comparative study, *After the Event*, he was bombarded with accusations that the Holocaust should not be compared to anything else.

The contemporary transnational cross-referencing of atrocities is a problem because by doing so we are “self consciously pulled away from their periodicity, and as a moral historical lesson are made to dwell in the present.” This is evident in many museum slogans that repeat the terms “Never Forget” and “Never Again.” Although these moral lessons are important, we must also understand specific events within their own context and not create a generalization of what trauma is and how to memorialize that trauma. My thesis argues that although these events are different, the memorial at Ground Zero is informed by the generation of memorializers of the Shoah in Germany. When we examine the events critically we can understand them and their respective commemoration in relation to one another by describing a common memorial vernacular between the two. Williams in his study *Memorial Museums* writes:

> The World Trade Center project as a whole seems, however, already to have preempted most of the options of deconstructive architecture: irony, skepticism and above all self implication are unlikely to be welcome here, especially in the memorial segment.

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6 Ibid., 162.
Although Shoah memorization in Berlin has impacted the building of the 9/11 memorial, it does not contain many of the key attributes of a “counter memorial” in Germany; there is no irony, skepticism or self-implication. The reason for these differences is that we are looking at two very different recollections of events: one by the ‘guilty’ nation sixty years later and the other by a nation of victims whose memorial process began days after their world changed.

The beauty of these monuments and their vernacular is that the same attributes can mean different things, and can tell different stories. For example, the absence of inscription in Berlin represents the inexplicability of the Shoah and presses the question of how Germany should deal with its Nazi Past. Meanwhile, Arad’s void represents the disappearance of the towers and the loss of 3,000 victims. Though the counter memorials in Germany informed Arad, he does not create a void that represents a self-aggrandizing counter memorial culture.

To understand these differences, we must first begin to trace the distinct motivating questions for the building of these memory sites. In Berlin, the architects and politicians, asked themselves how to articulate the loss and terrible absence of the Shoah? Those who began to conceptualize the 9/11 memorials were asking very different questions. New Yorkers asked themselves how to commemorate and articulate the loss of “3,000 victims at the hands of terrorists.” 7 In NYC these questions began a process that would build a site of memory that different from any Holocaust memorial, especially the memorial in Berlin. It was a different landscape, a different traumatic event, and a different way of remembering.

7 Young, "The Memorial Arc: Tracing the Articulation of Loss over the Last 50 Years," 3.
While these places of memory may look alike in terms of their architectural attributes that extend from Friedrichstadt in Berlin to Ground Zero, we must not conflate the two. For example, though both sites of memory contain controversy in the use of aesthetics and abstraction, the core fear of “the image” and the role of art is unique to each memorial.

**Giving Memory Wings**

A similar fear of aesthetics and abstraction at these sites of memory is born out of the same need for art that is best described by Aharon Appelfeld, a Holocaust survivor. Appelfeld wrote: “Sometimes memory demands a dynamic element to make it move and give it wings.” ⁸ This dynamic element is abstraction and aesthetics, and for Appelfeld these two facets come together to be called art. He continues to explain the importance of art:

> What is the place of art: who can redeem the fears, the pains, the tortures, and the hidden beliefs from the darkness? What will bring them out of obscurity, and give them a little warmth and respects, if not art? ⁹

For survivors like Appelfeld, we must use aesthetics and abstraction to describe the horror of the camps.

Perhaps, the biggest advocates against abstraction and aesthetics in representation of trauma were the families themselves. Diane Hornining, the President of WTC Families for proper burial explained, “I just don’t see the point. Our loved ones are not symbolically dead. But everything that’s been given to us is

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⁹ Ibid., 23.
symbolic.”  

This echoed what many survivors of the Shoah said as they witnessed abstract memorials rise in memory of their loved ones: “we were not killed in the abstract.”

Adorno wrote that there can be no poetry after the Shoah, because he thought that the artistic rendering of the “naked physical pain of those who were beaten down with rifle butts, contain, however instantly the possibility that beauty can be squeezed from it.”

Museums that represent the Shoah, as well as other traumatic historical events, share a fear of the image. Many Holocaust museums use grotesque pictures to show the horror that occurred. Vera Schwarcz explored how many Israelis were repulsed by images used at Yad Va Shem. One woman described the depiction of Babi Yar as allowing the “degradation go on and on” for they are depicted as “forever frightened, forever on the verge of being shot.” A similar fear of the grotesque image finds it way to 9/11. There is a now famous picture of the “falling man,” jumping to his death right before the towers fell. Again, the image becomes aestheticized in a way that besmirches the memory of those who had to jump to their deaths.

It is important to note that though the fear of aesthetics and of the image are similar the catalysts for these concerns remain different. This is exhibited through the different role of the image in Spiegelman’s two books, Maus, and In the Shadow of No Towers. While both books have a “tortured, ambivalent relationship to their own

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visuality in representing historical trauma, they differ in motivations for this struggle."\textsuperscript{13} The problem with the images references the differences in the events themselves:

From the ghetto, to the sealed boxcars to the camps and the sites and modes of killing, the conditions of the concentrationary universe restricted the visual records that could be made. Thus, there is a visual black hole at the core of the Holocaust.\textsuperscript{14}

In \textit{Maus}, the works main concern is not to “overwrite another visual archive of its subject."\textsuperscript{15} This concern is evident during Pavel and Art’s conversation discussed in the previous chapter. \textit{In the Shadow of No Towers}, the author is worried about how to prevent the event itself from being overwritten by the many images of the towers falling. Since September 11\textsuperscript{th} was such a global event, there was a fear that the images of the towers falling would supersede the event itself.\textsuperscript{16} Therefore, \textit{In the Shadow of No Towers} focuses upon the power of documentary images of that day. These images have become vulnerable to the “visual texts unintended absorption into the lightness of the infinitely repeated television documentary images.”\textsuperscript{17} September 11\textsuperscript{th} marks a time when New Yorkers knew they were living in a historic moment, therefore it was photographed instantly for posterity.\textsuperscript{18} Art Speigelman shows how the distance between a memorial and an event not only creates a unique fear of the image, but also

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item[\textsuperscript{13}] Katalin Orban, "Trauma and Visuality: Art Spiegelman's Maus and In the Shadow of Two Towers," \textit{Representations} 97, no. 1 (2007): 58.
\item[\textsuperscript{14}] Ibid., 58.
\item[\textsuperscript{15}] Ibid., 59.
\item[\textsuperscript{17}] Orban, "Trauma and Visuality: Art Spiegelman's Maus and In the Shadow of Two Towers," 60.
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portrays different relationships between the event and the historiography that comes after.

**When Memory Yields To History**

As exhibited in Speigalman’s two works, a key difference between 9/11 and the Shoah is the closeness of the events to the actual building of their monuments. The problem with September 11\(^{\text{th}}\), according to Jenny Edkins, a political scientist, is that as “trauma time collided with the time of the state, the time of capitalism, the time of routine, producing a curious unknown time.” \(^{19}\) Meanwhile, the memory of Shoah had a long road starting with the disbelief that an event “so gruesome, so alien to the human mind” could be true, into an era of remembrance and apology. \(^{20}\) The transition from memory to history and their actual structural distance from the event create differences within these two sites.

Casey, in his study on memory, discusses how commemoration should be “significantly removed in time and space from the scene of the present observance.” \(^{21}\) Though he is studying the commemoration process itself, this statement can be applied to the Berlin memorial that is removed in both time and space.

In Germany, distance is crucial for memorialization because, at first, the German people did not know how to commemorate the 11 million who were murdered under the German Reich. Whereas in New York there could be no distance. As a land of victims, New Yorkers (and the rest of the world) felt that something

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\(^{19}\) Jenny Edkins, *Trauma and Memory of Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 233.


needed to immediately happen at Ground Zero not only to pay respect to loved ones who died, but also to move on into the future. In New York, memory and events clashed in a way that was not seen on the German landscape. The intersection between memory and the event widened the scope of who was a witness in downtown NYC, which was also not evident in European society after World War II.

**The Changing Definition Of A Witness**

The collapse of the twin towers was an event “witnessed by an extraordinary number of viewers, by those standing on the rooftops of Manhattan, New Jersey, and Brooklyn, and by millions of television viewers throughout the United States and the world.”22 These different definitions of a “witness” affected the way each society viewed the memory of the trauma, and hence the way each respective memorial was formed. Dr. Laub calls the Shoah an event without a “witness”:

> During its historical occurrence, *the event produced no witnesses*. Not only, in effect, did the Nazis try to exterminate the physical witnesses of their crime; but the inherently incomprehensible and deceptive psychological structure of the event precluded its own witnessing, even by its very victims. 23

Laub explored how the Shoah shows the impossibility of witnessing. After the war many did not understand how there could truly be a witness if no one could describe what occurred. A survivor exclaims, “no one can understand it. Even I here now… I can’t believe I’m here. No, I just can’t believe it.”24 Even those who survived the camps could not claim to be witnesses for their memories were so deeply traumatic that they were unable to voice their experiences. The Shoah is considered an event

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24 Ibid., 224.
that whoever has “not lived through it can never know it,” and whoever has experienced the camps can never fully understand or reveal it.25

Today’s scholars want to get closer to the concentrationary universe in order to better understand the reality of what occurred in the camps. Philip Roth, a Jewish American author, tries to find the balance between these two worlds and connect the “unforgotten distance between the Shtetl and the Newark born.”26 Meanwhile, September 11th presents a unifying force of witnesses; the fall of the towers and the beginning of the memorial making process becomes a shared reference for New Yorkers. It is a matter of something thoroughly communal. In the official book to remember September 11th the witnesses and victims are described as “Everyone who died. Everyone who survived. Everyone who helped, and they all worked together to heal each other.”27 After the fall of the towers New Yorkers united in grief:

Separated by all economic and social distinction that would naturally distributed among so many victims, the families coalesced around the one thing they had in common: their sudden grief.28

For September 11th “witnesses” and “victims” are so expansive that they had a substantial impact on how the memorial turned out. Though the post 9/11 definition of a witness represents a unifying force, there was still a hierarchy of victimhood. Those who lost loved ones were not only witnesses to the event but they were the only ones who truly knew what the loss meant. They were living in traumatic

There is a gap between those who have lost loved ones and the witnesses who had prosthetic memories. Prosthetic memories are defined as the collective “imagined memories” of those who witnessed the event. It is like the dream or feeling of a missing ligament that was never really there. The stakes of those who suffered will always be different than ours. One of the major milestones that Arad had to surpass throughout the memorial competition was how to bring in various forms of memory and of witnessing.

**A Memorial Without Bothering The Perpetrators At Home**

The varying definition of “witness” leads us to question whom these memorials are really for. Since both the “witnesses” and the families of September 11th victims had such a significant say in the design of the memorial, there is no question that the memorial is for the 3,000 people who died and for the city that had to cope and move on afterwards. In Berlin, however, the question of whom this memorial is for is trickier to answer. By the time Lea Rosh and the Citizen’s Initiative began to think about the memorial in 1989, there were not many Jews living in Berlin, let alone survivors of the war.

It was non Jewish Germans who built “The Memorial for the Murdered Jews of Europe.” Today, there is little argument about the purpose of the memorial. Even those who work for the organization understand that it is to help the German people deal with their memories. Gunter Schlesche, the head architect of the site, admitted that it was a memorial built by the German people for the German people. Due to the

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29 James Young, *Personal Interview*. Amherst (11/11/12).
disparate tension regarding who is a witness and whom these memorials are for, there are also very different ideas about the land these sites inhabit.

**Memory Seeks Out Places**

To understand each nation’s relation to the topography their memorials sit on, I had to discover how memory seeks out physical places as it’s natural habitat. Within the field of memory studies, the very ground that the sites of memory inhabits has gained a special significance for many historians. Simon Schama in *Landscapes and Memory* argues the importance of landscapes:

Myths about landscapes will endure for centuries long after people are gone, like a ghostly outline…beneath the superficial covering of the contemporary and accessed by digging down through layers of memories and representations toward the primary bedrock.\(^{31}\)

Germany’s landscape has many layers of memory and history that will endure no matter what is built over it. In Berlin, I too had to dig under the surface of the bedrock and learned to see Berlin’s topography as a city of ghosts. Karen Till’s words gained meaning for me:

Cities haunt. At least in the sense that they force us to recognize the lives of those who have gone. In this sense, the physicality of the city itself shimmers, as it becomes a flexible and durable place for memory.\(^{32}\)

A history of buildings tells a certain kind of history devoid of people, and inhabited by ghosts. Ghosts have lives of their own and will inhabit buildings, places,

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apartments, and scarred landscapes. Suddenly, these structures seem to groan under the “burden of painful memories.”

One of the most important features of the September 11th Memorial is the very bedrock it sits on. Soon after the towers fell the ground on which the towers stood was declared by many to be hallowed or sacred. American culture places a special importance on the ground where blood has been shed. Abraham Lincoln famously announced in the Gettysburg Address:

But, in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate—we cannot consecrate—we cannot hollow—this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract.

The field at Gettysburg represents sacred ground, as it not only symbolizes an important historical event, but also becomes a resting place for those who can no longer receive a proper burial.

Ground Zero became sacred the second the towers fell; from that point on it has become an address for memory work. It is a place where people can go back and

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34 Sturken, *Tourists of History: Memory, Kitsch and Consumerism from Oklahoma City to Ground Zero*, 199.
remember by whatever means they choose. From the beginning of the building process, the families of those who died said that no matter what happened at the site the footprints of the towers needed to remain intact. Goldberger writes:

> It seemed somehow right that people who came to mourn and to honor would step down into the earth. Going down to the footprints seems to connect to an almost visceral feeling. We need to journey down into Ground Zero, onto the bedrock foundation, a process of deliberation into the deep indelible footprints of tower one and tower two.  

The footprints were able to make detritus into sacred space by bringing in the land itself and thus the absence that the fall of the towers created. The footprints remained important throughout the construction process and would take on new meanings over time. The ramp that led to the bedrock had a controversial removal for it symbolized not only the hollowed ground, but also as Dunlap explains, “the emotional connection between the very bedrock where the events took place and the city—and the world—that surrounds it.” At Ground Zero there is no claim of inauthenticity. In fact, the very importance of the landscape comes with the authentic site itself. There was never any argument that the memorial should be built elsewhere. Berlin tells a very different story.

**Only Minutes On The S. Bahn**

> “The Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe” is argued to be on a plot of expensive unscarred land purposely chosen to show Germany’s obligation to remember the victims of their forefathers’ crimes. I had the chance to speak to Gunter Schlesche, the government architect who worked with Eisenman and a large part of

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our conversation was centered on aspects of that land. Gunter explained that this site is unique for its many layers of history, ranging from the Ministerial gardens and the second Reich to the Cold War. The newest layer, Schlesche emphasized, was a “wonderful turn of history” that symbolizes a peaceful reunification between East and West Germany.

During my time in Berlin, however, it seemed as if the people I spoke to were in constant denial of the topography being authentically linked to the Nazi Reich. Many individuals I interviewed, including, Ulrich Baumann, the Vice Director of the Denkmal itself, argued, “the crime had been committed by Germans in occupied territory, the sites are not inside Germany.”  

Yet how can we discount The Topography of Terror which was the head quarters of the Gestapo and housed the desk bound criminals (Berlin will become one of the only places that has museums for the actions of the perpetrators), or Sachsenhausen, which Libeskind described as the “first human experiments, the first ovens, the first death marches were only 30 or 40 minutes away on the S. Bahn.” Libeskind goes further to expound upon the lack of innocence found at Sachsenhausen:

Sachsenhausen is not on some distant periphery in the wilderness of Brandenburg, but rather it is the center of Orianenberg. It is a black whole. A perfect triangle: and in the center, the city of death. So this is not an innocent site.

The notion that Berlin is not where the killing took place is too literal and defensive an argument. The “claim of innocence” is exemplified in the post-WWII rebuilding of Alexanderplatz, a public square in central Mitte. At the time the German politicians

40 Ulrich Baumann, Personal Interview. Berlin (08/01/12).
41 Daniel Libeskind in Monument and Memory: The Columbia Seminar on Art and Memory, 17.
pressed the architects to treat the site as a “tabula rasa, an exercise in amnesia, a site without a past—as if Berlin were just any other city of the world to be developed.”

But Berlin is not like any other city in the world, even Gunter Schlesche will admit that there can be no innocent memorial in Germany, for the land will always be scarred. Nora is correct when he argued that while history attaches itself to events: “memory attached itself to sites.”

Brian Ladd in his work, *The Ghosts of Berlin*, studied the haunted landscape of the Nazi past and asked: “What kind of Berlin can there be after Hitler and the SS?” The creators of “The Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe” attempted to answer the question of what Berlin can be after Hitler. They also made claims, however, of inauthenticity on a very haunted landscape.

When the Citizens Initiative was in the process of choosing a location for “The Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe” it had fifteen different options. The Citizen’s Initiative and the German government ended up choosing a centrally located site that was, allegedly, not connected to the German Reich. Why was this specific plot of land chosen? It was an expensive, “inauthentic” plot of land that delegated German peoples complex memory work.

Gunter Schlesche looked to US and Israeli Holocaust commemoration and noted how these societies strove for authenticity by creating structures that remind visitors of the camps. In Germany “we do not have to create or recreate

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43 Ibid., 46.
44 Cited in Isabelle Engelhardt, *Topography of Memory. Representations of the Holocaust at Dachau and Buchenwald in Comparison with Auschwitz*, Yad Vashem ad Washington D.C. Series Multiple Europe’s (Brussels: Peter Land, 2002), 44.
The desire to have an inauthentic and unscarred landscape ran so deep that when building the memorial site Eisenman created his own topography by layering two undulating landscapes on top of one another.

Godfrey questioned, “For all its supposed simplicity and neutrality, it is a process replete with suggestions.” What does it mean to invent the topography in the first place? Eisenman could have just as easily sunk the pillars into the bare ground of Berlin as he found it. The very idea of creating his own topography makes the want for an inauthentic piece of land more apparent. Eisenman explains that one of the Nazi party’s core ideologies involved the sanctity of human ground. His memorial replaced the “firmness and fixity of German ground with the fictitious, unpredictable, newly invented topography, one that is ‘other than stable.’” Perhaps German architects were not trying to run away from Nazi guilt by creating these different landscapes, but rather rebelling against the Nazi’s concept of “ground.” During the construction process it was discovered that the “ground” was not as “unscarred” as previously thought.

**Two Meters Of Separation**

During the construction process for “The Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe,” the workers unearthed Goebbels bunker. When I started my research, the discovery of Goebbels bunker and the subsequent silencing of this information was extremely controversial. Controversy came with a strong sense of irony, for the memorial is argued to be important because it showed Germany’s obligation “to wrangle with its difficult past.” The fact that they were willing to destroy such an

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46 Günter Schlusche, *Personal Interview*. Berlin (08/14/2012).
48 Ibid., 246.
important piece of history in order to create a monument that’s aim was to preserve that same story seems somewhat ludicrous. In *A Monumental Mockery*, which is centered largely on the unearthing of Goebbels Bunker, Simon Mangos asks: “How can one honor and pay respect (albeit 60 years too late) to the six million murdered Jews, and not finally be open about where their memory (literally) stands?”49

When asked about the bunker, Gunter, who had researched the history of Goebbels Bunker explained:

    Our memorial doesn’t touch. It is where the field is not that deep, on zero level. We didn’t touch it because it is two meter below. We leave this… if future generations want to open it and make it assessable, this is another discussion that had to be done then. But we don’t care about this. This for us is meaningless.50

For Gunter the physical separation between layers of memory and layers of land means everything. Since the layers of land do not actually touch each other, the memory itself is “left alone.” The architects have decided to leave this history and this layer of land alone for the time being.

50 Günter Schlusche, *Personal Interview*. Berlin (08/14/2012).
52 Topography of different historic sites surrounding the plot for the Denkmal. Photo by Gunter Schlusche in *Materials on the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe*. .
The different conceptions of landscape affect the disparate nature of the memorials and who is building them. The very distinct difference between these memory sites also leads to the varying paths of their creation and the debates that marked the beginning of their genesis.

**Silencing Of Microphones**

Due to the nature of the Berlin memorial, and the thin line the Germans had to tread in memorializing the Shoah, the debates in Berlin were not as open in the beginning. All those who were part of the first debates saw the major shortcomings of the debate and competition. Cullens describes his problems with the competition as follows:

> I found that the way the meeting was being conducted was very autocratic. It was not an exchange of ideas. The monument would be built, there would be no competition, and there would be no change of site. And one of the professors Christian Meier, said, Well if you know all that, why did you invite 75 of us from all parts of the world to come here and give you ideas? Everything has been said and done. \(^{53}\)

After Meier’s criticism remained unanswered, Cullens asked those in charge: “How can you people say all these things and not get any input?” \(^{54}\) After two minutes of speaking Cullen’s’ microphone was cut off, and the meeting ended an hour early.

This sentiment was expressed by many of those who experienced the silencing of microphones. When Simone Mangos asked a question about Goebbels bunker her microphone was also silenced. Gunter Schlusche argues that the first competition did not work because: “mistakes were made in the descriptions of the

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\(^{54}\) Ibid.,
task. Before one asks architects and artists to develop an idea one should describe the problem." He elaborates in an interview with Karen Till, the author *The New Berlin:*

As a professional planner, I know that you need a transparent and structured process of planning if you want to have results. This process had to be open and inclusive of new findings. This sensibility is especially important when memory is built, when cultural values are represented.

Gunter’s problem with the first competition is that it was closed in the way that made it so there was no room for the conversation and debate that he saw as essential.

In our interview, I asked about the line between an open and closed debate in the first competition. Gunter explained that from the beginning there was a problem with the decision to choose the location. In his view, there were not enough arguments in public, which was a basic mistake. He explained that one had to argue in public and convince the people in order for the competition to remain open:

> An anonymous competition is absolutely necessary. When you make a public competition with public money, it is absolutely required to have an uninfluenced, open process. It’s impossible not to.

Gunter explained that the Berlin government tried to fix the problems found in the first round (the silencing of microphones and the closed aspect of the competition) in the second round by bringing in a jury that included James Young. It was difficult, however, to allow the public to have a significant part in the debates when there was so much controversy involved in the building of the memorial.

**They Put Their Faith In Us**

When looking at the September 11th memorial, the process was much more open than in Berlin. This was evident from the town hall style meetings, to the jury

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55 Till, *New Berlin: Memory, Politics, Place,* 177.
56 Ibid., 178.
57 Günter Schlusche, *Personal Interview.* Berlin (08/14/2012).
sitting and listening to those who lost loved ones, and the public input sent out in the many mailings. David Dunlap argued that the competition in New York was not as open as perceived. In our interview, he did not describe the competition as a democratic process, in which a great number of people vote and discuss back and forth. Rather it consisted of private discussions between the enlightened and elite. As I examined both memorial debates and spoke with those on the jury, I realized how open the process really was.

The jury in New York described a moment of shock when Governor Pataki chose the master design by Libeskind without consulting anyone. The jury explained that after that the government put complete trust into their hands and let them organize the competition the way they wanted. In a press release, James Young, Maya Lin and their cohorts, challenged architects to break the rules and cross the boundaries that were given to them in the guidelines. The jury members wanted the entrants to feel “they could go anywhere with their imagination, where their mourning needs to take them in order to articulate some relationship to this terrible loss.” Because of the lessons learned from Berlin, the jury members deliberating on the 9/11 memorial design allowed for a more open competition, less strict guidelines, and a memorial that valued the visitor in imbuing the site of memory with life and loss.

When tracing the memory arc between Berlin and Ground Zero it seems as if much of the history and memory since the Shoah has been affected by Jewish commemoration and memorialization. A historian Gavriel Rosenfeld writes:

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Deconstructivist architecture arose from the massive rupture in western civilization caused by the Holocaust. Libeskind and Eisenman argue that the Nazi genocide provided compelling reason to abandon traditional architectural practice and to instead embrace architecture of fragmentation, de-centeredness, and loss that reflected the reality of the post modern, post-humanist, post-Holocaust world.60

The Ground Zero memorial is not another Holocaust memorial, but a memorial that has been created in a post-Holocaust world, where many of the modern architectural attributes have stemmed from the de-constructivist (or counter memorials) culture that began in Germany. Therefore, it is not just Jewish concerns which informed the work of architects who have to represent trauma. Rather, it was the historical experiences of the 20th century that informed the discipline of architecture itself.61

There were apparent changes and connections made at the 9/11 site that have come from the influence of Jewish architecture of trauma, specifically that of the Shoah found at the Berlin Denkmal. The National September 11th Memorial had to take the lessons and attributes of Shoah memorialization and transform them into something else. With the passage of time it may appear that “9/11 will refigure the past into patterns open to being made into new and maybe dangerous forms of sense.”62

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Conclusion

_Grope your way up:_
How the Past Becomes the True Present.

This cover published on the 10th anniversary of September 11th, revisited the people who led us, moved us and inspired us, from the morning of the attacks through the tumultuous decade that followed. The forty men and women who are interviewed show what it means to meet adversity and then overcome it. It brings in the stages of memory that were needed in order to confront the past, but also in order to move on into the future.
Nun aber schrumpft der Ort, wo du stehst:  
Wohin jetzt, Schattenentblößter, wohin?  
Steige. Taste empor.

But now shrinks the place where you stand:  
Where now, stripped by shade, will you go?  
Upward. Grope your way up.

Paul Celan, *Sprich Auch Du* (Speak, You Also)

After studying both the central Denkmal in Berlin, and the National September 11th Memorial over the past year, I do not believe that the memorial at Ground Zero is another Holocaust memorial. In fact, it is far from it. Today, we are well informed by a whole school of deconstructivist architecture that has been built up from the Shoah. In an obituary for Martin Broszat, Christian Mieir, a German historian, wrote: “All historical work on the events of this period will be pursued or considered in relation to the events of Auschwitz… here, all historicization has reached its limits.”¹ The meaning of the Shoah shapes not only the world we live in, but also the way we tell history and build memorials. We now understand the connections and linkages between memory and memorials better then we did 30 years ago. Using the lessons we have learned from Shoah memorialization, we have begun to “grope our way up,” as Paul Celan refers to in his poem *Sprich Auch Du*.

Remembrance of the Shoah has enabled us to discover many different ways to articulate absence. When looking at the memorial in central Berlin we are looking at a memorial built by a nation of perpetrators, sixty years after the events took place. At Ground Zero, by contrast, we find a memorial whose conception began days after the towers fell by a nation, victimized by catastrophe.

These sites of memory construct very different relations between time and place, place and memory, memory and time. The September 11th memorial marks a

moment where we are recording a historical event as we are living it. The German people went through a long reconciliation process before they finally arrived at the stage of the memorial in Berlin. The pillars of Eisenman’s structure embody the long road of commemoration in German society. Immediately after the war, the German people turned their backs on the historical facts and denied their knowledge about the atrocities that had occurred. Later, the floodgates of memory opened and German people entered into an “age of apology.” This era created a culture of remembrance that would affect subsequent memorializations of trauma.²

One of the great gifts we have gotten from Berlin is the expectation to remember. This expectation for memory work surfaced during my time in Germany. The international students at Leo Baeck Summer University spoke about bringing the challenges they witnessed in Berlin back to their native lands. During our final session we were asked what we had learned from living in Berlin and throughout our classes and activities. One Israeli student commented on the significance of memory work. He said that seeing how important memorialization was as a social construct in Berlin made him want to bring the knowledge back to Israel. For him, Germany’s lessons would be beneficial to his country’s scarred landscape.

In Berlin, we learned that “more than the rest of us, Germans are facing up to the moral dilemmas inherent in their nation identity.”³ Nonetheless, today we live in a world that has become preoccupied with the past and with the intricate ways of remembering history. Edward Casey has argued that sometimes the past becomes our

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true present and loses its own identity. What happened before begins to imbue our world with a certain kind of meaning.

One way in which the past instills in our present different meanings is through nostalgia. In remembering we can be thrust back, “transported, into the place we can recall: the re-memories and re-experiences of these events create different memories and places that had once been there.”⁴ As I was thrust back into places I began to recall I was also was forced to engage in my own recollection of the past.

**Skeptical Of My Own Skepticism**

During these encounters I was met with a surprising and strange indifference that forced me to find my own path of memory. I faced this provoking indifference twice, once in Berlin and once at the 9/11 Memorial. During my first visit to the Berlin Memorial I did not want to take sides. I wanted to be told what happened, to feel sad and be done with my part in visiting this site of memory. To my surprise, I encountered a memorial whose stones were cold and blank, emanating nothing. They seemed rather indifferent considering the situation. They told no story, and some people nonchalantly hanging out on the pillars didn’t even seem like they wanted to hear any story being told. The absence of inscription on the pillars and the experience of walking through the site of memory left me feeling angry and disturbed rather than reflective. My discreet trajectory of experience, however, forced me to no longer look for an already polished narrative but rather engage in my own memory work.

When visiting these sites, I came to understand James Young’s revelation during the Denkmal memorial debates: “I had to come down from my perch of holy

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dialectics and take a position.”\textsuperscript{5} This thesis argues that self-awareness is essential in studying the history of the Third Reich and the Shoah.\textsuperscript{6} Through this self-awareness I began to become skeptical of my own skepticism. As a result, certain boundaries started to collapse. At first, it was the separation between the witness and non-witness, later, life and loss, and finally testimony and listener. This thesis expands upon the crossing of boundaries that I have not crossed before. Eventually, I started upon my own memory work that led to this research project. Thus, the issues at the heart of these memorials processes come into sharper relief.

Berlin is a city that is haunted by ghosts as the memories of those gone cling to the physical settings of the city landscape. The historic structures of Berlin seem to groan under the “burden of painful memories,” while a new Berlin is on the rise.\textsuperscript{7} Berlin is also a city that is always working on how to remember, and one that constantly forced me to confront my boundaries, my definitions and my beliefs.

During my second visit to Berlin, my definitions of “memorial” and “debate” that I had set in my mind began to change. I learned that, sometimes, the most lasting things in life are not physical monuments or material remains. A memorial does not have to be bronze or marble. What constitutes a memorial? It can be many things: a memorial book, a Passover Seder, a yahrzeit candle, or a memento from a loved one.

As I traced this memorial vernacular, I had to confront my own mistakes in defining terms. I began to see the changing definition of the idea of “debates” that has

\textsuperscript{5} James Young, \textit{At Memory’s Edge: After Images of the Holocaust in Contemporary Art and Architecture} (New Haven: Lucius N. Littauer Foundation, 2000), 196.
imbued these sites of memory with meaning. I realized that the building and the 
debates surrounding the 9/11 memorial site were not as immediate as I once thought.

Another dilemma I encountered throughout my research and remembering 
was that sometimes the writing and re-remembering process causes our memory of 
the traumatic event to be skewed. I came to appreciate James Young’s words:

> In good academic fashion, we had become preoccupied with the fascinating issues at the heart of the memorial process and increasingly indifferent to what was supposed to be remember: the mass murder of the Jews and the void it left behind.\(^8\)

Here, Young refers to the Berlin memorial debates that began to take on the shape of 
a self-enclosed argument and became a kind of spectator sport. With this realization 
his personal stake in the memorial changed, and he decided to join the jury to help 
find a suitable design. Through Young’s transition I learned that we cannot allow our 
preoccupation with the past to cause indifference. At the same time we have the 
obligation to discuss and remember. Perhaps, the most important thing I have learned 
in studying the obligation to remember is not only the visitor’s importance in the 
process of memory, but also the importance of writing in the process of remembering.

This is a discovery that began to separate my path from that of scholars such 
as Young and Chanin. Throughout my research on this memorial arc, I have found 
that the true “gift” of the post Holocaust world is the importance of the visitor. 
Chanin speaks about the expectation of memorialization that stems from the 
Holocaust, while Young describes the importance of ongoing debates. This thesis

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\(^8\) Young, *At Memory’s Edge: After Images of the Holocaust in Contemporary Art and Architecture*, 195.
goes one step further by expounding on the expectation that has arisen during the past few decades—visitors have the power to imbue stone with meaning.

**Speaking The Unspeakable**

Pierre Nora wrote that events begin to “tumble with increasing rapidity into an irretrievable past.” As the Shoah, too, falls further into the past, the discussion of memory is constantly on our lips. We must share this burden to remember, and we must open up our hearts and ears to listen and experience. Chanin acknowledges this fear, “there is reason to wonder whether, in the remembrance of national stories, the connective tissue of the whole Holocaust – the idea and events that made it into a single event—might fade from view.” I believe it is important for my own generation of young people to speak up. Adorno was wrong. We must write poetry after the Holocaust. The Shoah is not unspeakable, it must be spoken and heard.

Philip Roth, an American Jewish writer, created a recurring protagonist, Nathan Zuckerman, who starts to speak about his families past in Bergen-Belsen rather than remain silent. Zuckerman speaks up because “to act willingly now, the way certain Jews in horror, grief and shock were forced to act then, provokes me with an outrage equaled only by my disbelief.” Today we must try to bring words to the silence and speak the unsayable for our ancestors before us could not.

Being able to speak about the Holocaust and telling these stories in my own words became an important aspect of my thesis. I’ve also learned the importance of

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silence and the need to hear these silences. Esther Shalev-Gerz’s exhibition became the perfect representation for me of this silence:

Here we become witnesses to the survivors’ inward-search for memory, witnesses to their search for language commensurate to their memory, witnesses to their inability to find such language, witnesses to the pain such memory now re-inflicts on them. We watch as memory remains within, as it finds expression in facial contortions, but not in speech. In a way we become witnessing to the speaking and to the not speaking.  

My thesis is an act of testimony, as I write about the voices I heard, as well as the absence of sounds, and stone that make the unexplainable tangible. The victims and survivors cannot fulfill their task without a true listener who is able to “pass through the crisis of experiencing their boundaries, their separateness, their functionality and indeed their sanity, at risk.”

Just as a listener is needed to engage in testimony, visitors to these sites of memory are needed to tease out the faint echo of narratives, genealogy, and controversy. It is up to the researchers, historians, visitors, and the general public to imbue them with meaning, to breathe life into the stone. Throughout this memorial vernacular, the visitor has grown increasingly important.

This thesis explores how history becomes the horizon between the unknown and the known and how memory leads us to this outlook. As I was led to this horizon, I realized that we cannot turn comfortably away from disaster as W.H Auden writes, “In Breughel's Icarus, for instance: how everything turns away / Quite leisurely from

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the disaster...” Today we have entered an age of remembrance in which we
purposely build memorials that refuse to let visitors turn away from disaster so easily

To Know The Place For The First Time

The need to remember (even though the fear is almost suffocating) is what got
me interested in German history and memory when I was a sophomore in high
school. The last lines of The Tin Drum opened up a window into a world that I
wanted to comprehend:

It is not true that when the heart is full, the eyes necessarily overflow, some people can never manage it, especially in our country, which in
spite of all the suffering and sorrow will surely be known to prosperity
as the tearless century… it did what the world and the sorrows of the
world could not do: it brought forth a round human tear. It made them
cry. To cry properly, without restraint, to cry like mad. The tears
flowed and washed everything away.  

I continued to read about German history and how this nation slowly began to
reconcile with its dark past. I also began to look at the ways 9/11 has been
remembered in New York City. In NYC I encountered a society that was not
“tearless,” but could bring forth human tears readily. I became a witness and a listener
who went along on the journey to try to answer the questions that were set out before
me. Through this thesis, I too, became a carrier of civilization.

Only when both the witness and the listener are able to go on the journey
together are we able to come a little closer to comprehending events that seem almost
impossible to understand. Coming back to The Tin Drum six years later, and the spark
that made me want to write, I also came to see the deeper meaning in T.S Elliot’s
conclusion to 4th Quartet:

And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.\textsuperscript{16}

Much like Auden, I too have come to know the place for the first time. As I reach the end of my exploring, I have learned that we need to listen to not only the sounds and the speakers, but the silence and the stone. We need to open up our hearts and our minds to the testimonies surrounding traumatic events, not only for the victims well-being, but for ourselves. Furthermore, we, the next generation, cannot underestimate our importance in the process of remembering. Michael Cullens advice at the end of our interview still resonates with me: “These memorials cast long shadows…Another group is going come along in 10 or 15 years and they wont know anything and will need to be taught. Someday I won’t be there and you’ll be telling the story.”\textsuperscript{17}

\textsuperscript{17} Michael Cullens, \textit{Personal Interview}. Berlin (08/14/2012).
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