

MEMORIAL SITES AND THE AFFECTIVE DYNAMICS OF HISTORICAL  
EXPERIENCE IN BERLIN AND TOKYO

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# MEMORIAL SITES AND THE AFFECTIVE DYNAMICS OF HISTORICAL EXPERIENCE IN BERLIN AND TOKYO

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Despite having undergone similar experiences of warfare and facing similar anxieties about the future, Germany and Japan evolved divergent responses to commemorating the Second World War over the course of the postwar period. This dissertation explores how different cultures and generational cohorts respond to the challenges of commemorating violent and traumatic pasts in response to shifting domestic concerns and to post-Cold War international geopolitical transformations. Four recently completed or revamped memorial sites form the backdrop of the discussion and provide insights into the politics of memory in postwar Germany and Japan: the Topography of Terror (2010) and the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe (2005) in Berlin; and the Yûshûkan (2002) and the Shôwakan (1999) in Tokyo.

Over the course of the ‘memory boom’ of the 1980s and 1990s, debates about both the architectural expression of a museum or monument and the contents to be exhibited within the confines of the museum became lightning rods for public perceptions about the past in the present. As an affectively-charged place within the urban fabric, the memorial site, consisting of its intermingling of image and text installed in a visual narrative unfolding in space, offers a unique perspective from which to explore the performative dimensions of national identity formation. A key question this dissertation seeks to answer is how individuals are affected by their encounters with images, captions, and media that constitute museal representations of past events – in short, how affective dynamics undergird and influence the visitor’s aesthetic experience of memorial sites.

Central to this relationship between aesthetics, affect, and experience manifested in museal display is authenticity. Through the lens of comparison, this dissertation contributes an understanding of how the curators, activists, trustees, and politicians involved with the fashioning of memorial sites use (and sometimes abuse) the discourse of authenticity to produce an experience of the past in line with a particular conception of national identity, and how visiting publics respond to these representations of the past.

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Franz D. Hofer was born on a cold and clear January afternoon in a suburb of Vancouver called Surrey, B.C. Since Simon Fraser University was located conveniently across the bridge from where he grew up, he enrolled in the History Department, leaving SFU in 1994 with a B.A. in history focusing on Germany. After traveling through Europe, doing volunteer work in Guatemala, the Philippines and Nepal, and teaching English in Sendai, Japan, he buckled down for the graduate school long-haul. With an M.A. in hand from McGill University in Montreal in Japanese history (2002), he settled into life as a graduate student in Cornell's History Department (2003), completing his Ph.D. in May 2012. When not working, Hofer indulges his passion for all things culinary. He is currently looking forward to taking up a postdoctoral fellowship in Cornell's History Department beginning in August 2012.

Dedicated  
to two  
who left this world too early

*in memoriam*

Ian Dyck  
mentor

Tom Brydon  
friend

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# INTRODUCTION

## PREFATORY REMARKS

Germany and Japan both started out from the ‘zero-hour’ of 1945 having undergone similar experiences and facing similar anxieties about the future. The citizenry of both countries had been mobilized for total war under militarist-fascist regimes; both had suffered the utter devastation of their cities and infrastructure at the hands of a concerted Allied aerial bombardment; both faced an uncertain future under Allied/American occupation. Yet over the course of the postwar period, Germany and Japan evolved divergent responses to commemorating the Second World War – in particular to those events and occurrences that cast the crimes of the nation in a critical light.<sup>1</sup> The question of how to confront the crimes perpetrated by ordinary Germans and Japanese in the name of the nation has engendered acrimonious debates that reveal the fault lines within and across national groupings. In this study, I explore how different cultures and different generational cohorts respond to the challenges of

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<sup>1</sup> In this study, I do not engage in a comparison of memory practices in the Federal Republic and the German Democratic Republic. I am well aware of the significance of this omission, but the ‘internal comparison’ would take me far afield from the comparison of Japan and Germany. Jeffrey Herf’s ambitious comparison of the Federal Republic (West Germany, or the FRG) and Democratic Republic (East Germany, or the GDR) in his *Divided Memory: The Nazi Past in the Two Germanys*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997, serves as a useful reference point whenever I refer, however fleetingly, to the GDR. He traces the triumph by 1956 of a relatively monolithic and uncontested official memory in the GDR, which contrasts with the relatively frequent and passionate moments that have marked memory tensions and their relationship to the construction of identity in the FRG. Apropos of the tensions between the memory of the Holocaust and the memory of the resistance to fascism, the memory of the resistance to fascism won out in the GDR. Herf notes that in the eventual elision of ‘the Jewish Question’ from official memory in the GDR, “the Jews were competitors for scarce political and emotional resources” (p.38) that were being directed to those (communists) who had resisted fascism. In the past decade or so, more work has been done on the comparison of the FRG and GDR. For example, Ute Frevert spends the opening sections of her contribution to her co-authored work with Aleida Assmann drawing distinctions between the FRG and the GDR in terms of the different hierarchies of victims and heroes, and critiquing the propagandistic tendencies of GDR official history. See Aleida Assmann and Ute Frevert, *Geschichtsvergessenheit, Geschichtsversessenheit: Vom Umgang mit der deutschen Vergangenheit nach 1945*, Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1999, pp.151-189.

commemorating the past in response to shifting domestic concerns over the postwar and to post-Cold War international geopolitical transformations.

As a means of gaining insight into these issues, I focus on recently completed or revamped memorial sites in Berlin and Tokyo.<sup>2</sup> After nearly three decades of sometimes acrimonious debate, Berlin's Topography of Terror welcomed its first visitors in May 2010. No less heated were the discussions that marked the planning and construction of the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, which was dedicated in 2005. What sets these memorial sites apart from the ones I study in Tokyo is their frank engagement with the question of perpetration. The Yūshūkan on the grounds of Yasukuni Shrine, which enshrines all who have fallen in the service of the modern Japanese nation-state, side-steps the issue of perpetration while valourizing the sacrifice of Japanese soldiers. Approaching the history of the war and the early decades of the postwar period from the vantage point of the home front, the Shōwakan highlights the sacrifice and hardships of those victimized by aerial bombardment and postwar deprivation.

This study lays out a framework for the comparison of memorial sites as they inhabit urban space and collective imaginaries. The memorial sites I consider here provide lenses onto the politics of memory in postwar Germany and Japan. Over the course of the 'memory boom' of the 1980s and 1990s, debates about the siting and architectural expression of a museum or monument, along with discussions about the content to be exhibited on memorial sites and in museums, became lightning rods for public perceptions about the past in the present. Once open to the public, these sites subsequently took on – and continue to play – a central and far-reaching role in constituting historical consciousness. As an affectively-charged place within the urban

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<sup>2</sup> Following James Young's distinction between 'monument' and 'memorial' in his *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1993, pp.2-7, I use the term 'memorial sites' as an overarching term that encompasses museums, memorials, and monuments. For Young, 'monument' is a subset of 'memorial,' and includes sculptures, installations, and the like. 'Memorial,' on the other hand, refers to both a set of practices (festivals, memorial days) and objects (monuments, museums).

fabric, the *mélange* of image and text installed in a visual narrative within the space of the memorial site offers a unique perspective from which to explore the performative dimensions of national identity formation. Taking my cue from Louis Althusser's notion of interpellation, I explore the role and function of museums in shaping collective memory through a discussion of how memorial sites mould (and, in more rare cases, contest) national identity – in particular, an identity that is shaped by the question of historical responsibility borne by those generations born after the Second World War.

A key component of this relationship between aesthetics, affect, and experience manifested in museal display is authenticity – or, more precisely, how museum curators and memorial site developers activate and deploy the *discourse* of authenticity. Up until now, scholarship on memorial sites has done little to consider how those who make use of the discourse of authenticity not only lay claim to concrete sites and objects, but more importantly revisualize and impart ideological significance to objects and relics exhibited in or on a particular space. In some cases, the result of this act of meaning-making is 'monumental' in its own right, with memorial sites standing in as sign posts gesturing toward both past events and future collective identity. Indeed, a memorial site such as the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, which does not itself inhabit a historically 'authentic' place, has been transformed into an 'authentic' nodal point on Berlin's and Germany's mnemonic map.<sup>3</sup> In the process, the

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<sup>3</sup> Despite the plethora of publications dedicated to artistic photography of the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe since its dedication in 2005, James Young noted during the planning stages that the scale of the monument made it virtually impossible for images to stand in for the power of place. According to Eisenman, the 'authentic experience' of what he claimed to be the uncanniness of the field of undulating stele is not something that can be experienced vicariously – through photographs, for example. One can have an 'authentic experience' of the field of stele only by being in the space itself to experience it. (See James E. Young, *At Memory's Edge: After-Images of the Holocaust in Contemporary Art and Architecture*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000, pp.206-207). Slippery and problematic as this contention may be, I find myself lending qualified agreement – provided, of course, that the powerful affective charge of experiencing a sensitively crafted memorial site in the present is not in any way confused with a dubious vicarious experience of the past, one that tends toward a false identification with an 'immediate' or 'original' experience one has not had. Aleida Assmann's admonitions regarding the blurring to



memorial site declared ‘authentic’ according to whatever criteria, and by whatever configuration of social and cultural power formations, becomes a monument to the very selectivity of collective memory. In this sense, it mirrors what is deemed to be of national significance to visitors of memorial sites in Berlin, Tokyo, and beyond. Memorial sites often buttress their claim to authority on authenticity – all the more assertively if the memorial site displays authentic relics or documents or happens to stand on ground (sometimes figured as sacred) that witnessed a past event. But as I demonstrate, authenticity comes in many guises, and can be put to many uses.

A central contention of this project is that in order to deal fruitfully with questions of transmitting the experience of the past to generations with no immediate experience of that past, a deeper engagement with the visual is needed. Because I am concerned with how those born well after events in question come to know of the past via the dynamics of commemoration, I explore how material traces and immaterial dynamics inform our encounter with the past. Visual representations provide an interesting vantage point from which to survey the mechanics and dynamics of affect as it engenders a potentially empathic response on the part not only of viewers of film, photography, or other plastic arts, but also on the part of visitors to memorial sites. When we pause to consider how members of a particular ethnicity or group might empathize or identify with a particular material image, or a more general historical ‘image’ on display at a museum, a question immediately arises. How are individuals affected by, and in turn act on, the sensations produced by encounters with various images, captions, and media in the

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the point of eliding temporal distance are helpful here. No matter how ‘authentic,’ moving, or powerful the experience of a memorial site such as Auschwitz is for the present visitor, no matter how uncanny the resonance between past and present may be on a historically charged site such as the Topography of Terror, there is an abyss of time and experience that is impossible to bridge. (See Aleida Assmann, *Erinnerungsräume: Formen und Wandlungen des kulturellen Gedächtnisses*, München: C.H. Beck, 1999, pp.328-339).

museum in such a way as to fashion experience relevant for the present out of engagements with museal representations of past events?

Part of the answer to this question can be discerned in the interactions of a number of groups operating within the public sphere of Germany and Japan.<sup>4</sup> But this study is not an attempt at an exhaustive description of the constellation of social forces that contribute to collective memory at a given time or place. I focus mainly on elite socio-cultural groupings: citizens' groups, voluntary associations, arts academies; members of the intelligentsia such as journalists, literary figures, architects, historians; and public officials of various political persuasions.<sup>5</sup> Nor do I intend to present a strict institutional history of the memorial sites under consideration here. That said, there is much in these pages that details how memory can condense into institutionalized consensus. For example, in the wake of the failed design competition to fashion the Gestapo-Gelände into a memorial site, the parameters of the debate narrowed, becoming increasingly focused – or restricted, depending on one's perspective – on a progressively winnowed-down set of potential solutions after the successful 'provisional' exhibition on the site on the occasion of Berlin's 750<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations in 1987.<sup>6</sup> The

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<sup>4</sup> My efforts toward addressing these questions are more sustained in the case of Germany than they are for Japan, given the relative availability or paucity of and access to sources in each place.

<sup>5</sup> This is not to suggest that grassroots citizens' initiatives did not attract members from a broad spectrum. The History Workshops in Germany are one such example. However, a perusal of any list of these groups' representatives who engage as spokespeople in the various debates reveals a cross-section almost exclusively issuing from the 'educated' strata of society. In this respect, those who engage in shaping the built environment of a city such as Berlin do not differ markedly in occupational composition than did those tracked by Rudy Koshar's historical study of preservation. (See Rudy Koshar, *Transient Pasts: Preservation and National Memory in the Twentieth Century*, Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1998, especially pp.10-11).

<sup>6</sup> Throughout this study I will use the terms Gestapo-Gelände (Gestapo-terrain) and Topography of Terror interchangeably to refer to what is also sometimes known as the Prinz-Albrecht-Gelände. The terms figure more or less prominently depending on which of the different periods of history of the Topography of Terror is being referenced. The terms track what was first destroyed on the site and later refashioned in a variety of ways, culminating in the exhibition hall that opened in May 2010. The latter term, Prinz-Albrecht-Gelände, refers both to the Schinkel-built nineteenth-century Prinz-Albrecht-Palais, and to the name of the street which is now called Niederkirchnerstrasse (renamed by the German Democratic Republic in honour of a communist resistance hero). The Prinz-Albrecht-Gelände was the nerve center of the National Socialist security and terror apparatus, housing Reinhard Heydrich's RSHA (*Reichssicherheitshauptamt*, or Reich Security Main Office), along with the head offices of the Gestapo at Prinz-Albrecht-Strasse 8.

conclusions of some commentators, such as Matthias Hass, suggest that the Expert Commission called into being in 1989 to debate the future of this site saturated with memories of National Socialism became captive to the success of the 1987 template.<sup>7</sup> More than that, the future of the site became increasingly determined by the intersection of official political-state interests in the wake of the fall of the Berlin Wall with those of the citizens' initiatives and voluntary associations that had struggled to put perpetration on the agenda of national commemoration.<sup>8</sup>

The memorial sites I take up in this study have all been conceived of and debated since the 1980s and executed in their present form from the late 1990s.<sup>9</sup> Each sheds light, firstly, on the dynamics of how collective memory changes over time, and secondly, on differential expressions of the desire to commemorate the past. Although this study is a comparison, the Topography of Terror takes center stage. I subject the Topography of Terror to the closest scrutiny, in part due to the richness of available source material.<sup>10</sup> More importantly, however, the issues confronted explicitly by the activists and scholars comprising the trusteeship of the Topography of Terror – ranging from political and ethical questions of naming perpetrators and victims to aesthetic and ethical questions of how to represent charged historical issues most effectively – are issues that lie at the heart of the relationship between commemorative practices and the formation of collective identity, temporally fluid and contested as that identity may be.

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<sup>7</sup> See Matthias Hass, *Gestaltetes Gedenken. Yad Vashem, Das U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, und die Stiftung Topographie des Terrors*, Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 2002, p.237.

<sup>8</sup> Briefly, what could be construed as 'intersecting interests' relates to Berlin's – and Germany's – newfound position at the center of Europe. The question of whether a re-unified Germany would reawaken the specters of National Socialism or irredentist designs against neighbours like Poland was met with a political will to assuage the anxieties of Europe and beyond. In this set of geo-political conditions, it made sound political sense to make symbolic gestures in the direction of confronting historical responsibility for past atrocities committed, even appearing to atone for those wrongs (e.g., in particular, at the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, completed in 2005).

<sup>9</sup> Technically, both the Shôwakan and the Topography of Terror trace their origins as memorial sites back into the late 1970s, and the Yûshûkan has had an on again, off again existence in various guises since 1882.

<sup>10</sup> Of note is how the sources pertaining to the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, the Jewish Museum Berlin, the German Historical Museum, the *Haus der Wannsee Konferenz* (the villa in which the 'Final Solution' was decided upon in 1942), the *Haus der Geschichte* in Bonn, and various other sites that I visited over the course of my research in Germany are similarly accessible in contrast to the major Tokyo sites I visited.

Key here is the frank *self-reflexivity* with which the trusteeship of the Topography of Terror undertook their task to express the authenticity of the site itself within the broader tapestry of both contemporary urban space and twentieth-century German history. This is not to suggest that the planners of the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe were not also exercised by political, ethical and aesthetic questions, or that opposition to the Shôwakan or Yûshûkan has not been equally principled. However, the thoroughness with which the historical, political, ethical, and aesthetic dimensions of the Topography of Terror were debated in participatory public forums, in the media, in formal political settings, and in specialized and scholarly publications from its incipient stages in the late 1970s down to the present framed and influenced subsequent debates in Berlin and beyond about memorial space.

Even if it is not possible to discern whether similar issues entered into curatorial debates at the Shôwakan or Yûshûkan,<sup>11</sup> nonetheless a symptomatic reading of the exhibitions is highly instructive. While I pay due attention to the reception of both the Shôwakan and the Yûshûkan in the media and among scholars, much of my comments in subsequent chapters are based on my own ‘close reading’ of the museums and exhibition spaces themselves, along with the publications – pamphlets and guidebooks – that present the memorial spaces to the public at the same time that they attempt to cement in place a particular reading both of the museal space itself and the past represented therein.

If the Topography of Terror constitutes the matrix for my comments and theoretical musings about collective memory, the Shôwakan emerges as an exemplary site for comparing

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<sup>11</sup> Tanaka Nobumasa, “Ima towareru mono, kokuritsu ‘Shôwakan’ to shimin ga tsukuru heiwa myûjiamu,” in *Hakubutsukan Mondai Kenkyû* (26), 1999, p.28, critiques the lack of accessibility to published materials pertaining to planning committee members and agenda items. Yamada Akira, “Yasukuni Jinja Yûshûkan no tenji to sono rekishi ishiki,” in *Nihonshi Kenkyû*, 533:1, 2007, p.64, references the lack of professional training in history or museum studies on the part of the staff at both the Yûshûkan and the Shôwakan, as does Yamabe Masahiko in his “Yasukuni Yûshûkan no jôsetsu tenji to tokubetsuten ‘Furusato no Gokoku Jinja,’” in *Nihonshi Kenkyû*, 533:1, 2007, pp.61-62.

how the discourse of authenticity can be deployed in radically different ways to further radically different ideological agendas.<sup>12</sup> The Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe occupies the stage mainly in a ‘supporting role’ to the Topography of Terror, functioning to delineate points of contrast even among two memorial sites that have much more in common than, say the Topography of Terror and the *Haus der Geschichte* in Bonn, or the Topography of Terror and the German Historical Museum in Berlin.

On a different level, resonances emerge between different memorial sites in unexpected places. The Yûshûkan parallels the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe insofar as both are more highly ritualized spaces than are the Shôwakan or the Topography of Terror. Attached as it is to the Yasukuni Shrine, the Yûshûkan is as much a space of mourning the fallen war heroes as it is one that commemorates their heroic martial sacrifice. The symbolic presence of the emperor system that infuses the exhibition space also puts its seal on the overtly ritualized dimensions of the Yûshûkan, even as the Yûshûkan announces itself as a history museum. Though there remains an element of ritual in the celebration of postwar consumption at the Shôwakan, its focus on the everyday codes the space as decidedly more secular than its counterpart.

Similarly (but in a different valence and to different effect), the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe functions as a contemplative space of ritual atonement for the victims of German aggression. The nearby Topography of Terror provides a direct challenge to this ritualized atonement fixated upon the victim, resolutely refusing an all-too-convenient redemption of contemporary collective German identity. If the Topography of Terror could be figured in terms of its ritualized dimensions, it would be to the extent that the Topography of Terror also interpellates contemporary German citizens, but in such a way that the *explicitly*

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<sup>12</sup> The Yûshûkan also figures into this contrast, but more as a means of rounding out the context of contemporary Japanese issues channeled by the exhibitionary strategies at the Shôwakan.

*recollected experience* of perpetration during the Second World War – of note is that this has nothing to do with a transmission of guilt in perpetuity – constitutes a crucial element of contemporary German collective identity.

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This dissertation is divided into three parts. The first section (Chapters 1-4), deals with the temporal, spatial, and conceptual issues that frame the dissertation. Chapter 1 tracks the shifts in collective memory in Germany and Japan over the postwar period. Chapter 2 provides a rationale for taking up the spatial aspects of memory while building a case for focusing on memorial sites in Berlin and Tokyo. In Chapters 3 and 4 of this section, I provide a close examination of the concepts and categories that will recur at various points throughout the study, such as affective dynamics, aesthetics, and experience. In addition, I venture a method for ‘reading’ how visitors respond to the affective dynamics of memorial sites. The second section (Chapters 5-7) outlines what I call the ‘Yasukuni view of history’ before detailing how this view of history animates the exhibitions at the Yûshûkan and Shôwakan. In the third section (Chapters 8-10), which constitutes the bulk of the dissertation, I scrutinize the history of the Topography of Terror in relationship to other memorial sites in Berlin, in particular, the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe.

Over the remainder of this pointillist Introduction, I will first discuss what I perceive to be the stakes of engaging in comparison. Next, since this study fits broadly under the rubric of memory studies, I will venture a tentative intervention into conceptualizations of memory as an analytic category. My approach sees the memorial site as a dense nodal point at which converge a number of social, political, economic, and historical issues and forces. For example, in the case of the Yûshûkan, debates about war responsibility, victim consciousness, and the economic

downturn collide with historical revisionism, the ongoing Yasukuni Issue, and resurgent ethno-centric nationalism.<sup>13</sup> Whereas some scholars have delved deeply into the policy debates surrounding the inception and conceptualization of the particular memorial site under consideration while others have contented themselves with a description of the contents of the exhibits under scrutiny, I approach memorial sites somewhat differently, framing both debates about conceptualization and content in terms of representation, together with the affective dynamics that flow out of representation. But if my preoccupation is with concrete places and the affective dynamics of images narrativized spatially, I resist a synchronic ‘spatialization’ of the places and time periods I study. That is to say, I remain attentive to the fluidity of affective investments with memorial sites over time. Paying close attention to the historical responsibility borne by those generations born well after the Second World War, I hope to portray not a static snapshot of collective memory, but rather a kaleidoscopic rendering of postwar engagements with the troubled past of the Second World War in Germany and Japan.

### **PARALLAX PASTS, FUTURE COMPARISONS**

Comparisons of a historical nature are castles built on shifting sands. Often asymmetrical, they are inherently parallax, with relations between background and foreground, significant and insignificant details shifting constantly in kaleidoscopic-like fashion. What I write today has a shelf life. When I say that so-and-so over there is similar in such-and-such a way to something over here at this particular time, there is no guarantee that this will be the case even five years from now.

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<sup>13</sup> Put very briefly, the Yasukuni Issue pertains primarily to the question of official visits to the shrine, particularly by the prime minister, and also to the broader issue of the separation between religion and state enshrined in the postwar constitution.

Because my primary interest lies in how generations born well after those with any immediate or primary experience with the past learn about, commemorate, or ‘forget’ the past – in short, how they come to experience the past as a force that has a bearing on their identity in the present – I take the similarities between Germany and Japan mentioned at the outset merely as points of departure for introducing a parallax dimension into conventional comparative approaches that all too often tend to essentialize groups as monolithic categories. Even though my concern is more with disentangling the complex strands of memory politics operative *within* Germany and Japan as opposed to *across* the boundaries of each respective country, nonetheless what I do here resonates with the recent turn to transnational comparison insofar as I accept as a basic premise that what memory looks like within the confines of a given territory is the product of a tense interaction between domestic and external factors. I take it as axiomatic that it is futile to police the bounds of national memory, despite the best efforts of neo-nationalist groups to do just that. Approaching the questions and issues in a parallax way sets ‘Japan,’ ‘Germany,’ ‘Europe,’ ‘Asia,’ ‘the Occupation,’ ‘the Cold War,’ and ‘post-1989’ in motion. At the same time, such an approach resists attempts to posit the notion of a mono-experience that seeks to fix and define a quintessentially ‘Japanese’ or ‘German’ memory of the events that took place from the collapse of the Weimar period through to the end of the Third Reich, or from the annexation of Manchuria until Hirohito’s fateful proclamation to ‘endure the unendurable’ in the aftermath of atomic bombardment.

Introducing a finer-grained nuance and complexity into what is traditionally conceived as a rather undifferentiated national entity opens up interesting avenues of comparison at the same time that it circumvents the tendency to frame comparisons of Japan and other nations – most notably Germany – in such a way that Japan continually comes across as insensitive to its



neighbours.<sup>14</sup> It is worth pausing on this point in order to anticipate potential objections to the effects of what I intend to argue below. In the main, this dissertation paints a critical picture of two very central memorial sites in Tokyo – central both in the physical and metaphorical sense. What I call the ‘Yasukuni view of history’ animates and pervades the Yûshûkan in particular, as it does the margins and interstices of the Shôwakan.<sup>15</sup> In addition, I argue that the Japanese *state* (as opposed to various groups that make up the public sphere) is far less involved or interested in a critical re-engagement with the past and with historical responsibility than the German state has become from the early 1990s.<sup>16</sup> Though, as we shall see, the German state was not exactly at the forefront of efforts to transmit to future generations the role played by ordinary Germans in the Holocaust in the 1980s, representatives at the local, state, and federal levels have increasingly demonstrated symbolic support on key occasions. Significantly, this political support has also been forthcoming from the conservative CDU (Christian Democratic Union).<sup>17</sup> What is more, the various levels of the state have put up funds for the Jewish Museum, the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, and the Topography of Terror, if sometimes reluctantly.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> In an early example of a slowly growing number of works that compare wartime memory in Germany and Japan over the course of the post-war period, the back cover of Ian Buruma’s *The Wages of Guilt: Memories of War in Germany and Japan*, London: Farrar, Strauss & Giroux, Inc., 1994, poses the following questions: “Why are Germans so well informed on World War II while most Japanese know almost nothing about it? Why do so many West Germans feel guilty, Japanese victimized, and ‘Ossies’ virtuous?” These questions, which appear on the back cover of Buruma’s book, tend to drive his analysis. In this kind of formulation, the reader’s understanding of what is at stake in the intense debates surrounding history and memory are invariably (and somewhat disingenuously) framed and guided.

<sup>15</sup> I contend below that what is left out of the permanent exhibit is as important as what is chosen for inclusion.

<sup>16</sup> Some argue that this involvement is due, in part, to cynical political calculation, for there is a certain amount of ‘value-added’ that accrues to such political support: not only is the government perceived as engaging in difficult memory work, but also the new capital is graced with cutting-edge architectural designs that, moreover, attract tourist money to Berlin.

<sup>17</sup> See Ruth Wittlinger’s discussion of the similarities between Gerhard Schröder’s SPD (Social Democratic Party) and Angela Merkel’s CDU evaluations of memory politics as a fixture of German identity in the twenty-first century in her *German National Identity in the Twenty-First Century: A Different Republic After All?* New York and London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, p.140. The crucial differences, such as strong CDU support for the plight of the expellees evicted from eastern territories in the wake of the Second World War, form a strand of memory that co-exists uneasily with ‘Holocaust-centered memory.’

<sup>18</sup> Suspicion that the Berlin government was going to bolt from its commitments to the Topography of Terror is a common theme over the decades. For a sampling, see Rainer Höyneck, “Worte statt Taten,” *Berliner Kunstblatt*,

A similar level of commitment to historical responsibility on the part of the state – however shallow or calculated its critics perceive it to be – is virtually absent in Japan. But as I endeavour to demonstrate over the course of this study, this state of affairs is historically contingent, and not the result of, say, Japanese political immaturity in relation to Germany, as some essentializing accounts would have it. The thrust of my argument does not rule out the possibility that the many critically active networks in Tokyo and Japan might yet again coalesce into a more potent, prominent, and visible force in the shaping of collective memory. One might even be inclined to argue that the very recrudescence of conservative neo-nationalist forces in 1990s Japan is, in fact, a tribute to the prior success of left-progressive social formations.<sup>19</sup> The once-influential Japanese Teachers' Union, and, later, activist groups representing the interests of the euphemistically-named 'comfort women' put issues such as Japanese colonialism in Taiwan, Korea, and elsewhere, sexual slavery, the murderous bio-medical experiments of Unit 731, and the plight of Okinawa in the late stages of the war squarely on the agenda – and, in many cases, into high school history textbooks. In short, what contemporary neo-nationalists have pejoratively labeled as 'the Tokyo Trials view of history' represents a powerful alternative – for which, to be sure, there are plenty of historical antecedents in the postwar period – to the compensatory narrative of glory and pride pedaled by the currently ascendant nationalist right in Japan.

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19:8, 1990; Peter Steinbach, "Bewährung für Berliner Senat: 'Topographie des Terrors' darf keine Etatfrage sein," *Tribüne* (35), Heft 137, 1996; Paul Passauer, "Ein Zeichen gesetzt: Rürup resigniert," *Tribüne* (43), Heft 170, 2004; and Peter Gärtner and Martina Wengierek, "Gestapo hinter Glas: Ende eines Dauer-Bauskandals: Berlin baut die 'Topographie des Terrors,'" in *Segeberger Zeitung*, 27 February 2006.

<sup>19</sup> Sebastian Conrad, "Entangled Memories: Versions of the Past in Germany and Japan, 1945-2001," *Journal of Contemporary History*, 38:1, January 2003, pp.89-92, contains a discussion of the near-hegemonic position of Marxist historiography in the academy down through the 1960s. For a discussion of the many strands of leftist and progressive thought that wielded influence in the immediate postwar years (and whose influence would continue over the next several decades), see J. Victor Koschmann, *Revolution and Subjectivity in Postwar Japan*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996. Franziska Seraphim examines some of these social groupings that Koschmann discusses over a longer time period in her *War Memory and Social Politics in Japan, 1945-2005*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006, pp.86-107.

If comparison is parallax, it is also very much a moving target. Both significant differences and unexpected resonances across slightly different time periods in Germany and Japan's postwar history defy the tools of a traditional comparison that falters when the terms of the comparison – usually neatly construed, undifferentiated nations – do not readily map onto one another in neatly demarcated time periods.<sup>20</sup> In order to venture an account, however provisional, for why the differences (and resonances) manifest themselves the way they do at this or that moment in the history of Germany and Japan's postwar collective memory, the modalities and frameworks underpinning conventional comparisons are inadequate to the task.

In a move typical of well-meaning scholars aiming to criticize the relative exclusion of certain constituencies – comfort women, forced labourers, Asian victims of colonial and imperial aggression – from central and prominent national memorial sites and institutions, scholars such as Mochida Yukio adopt what I would term a 'contrastive approach' to comparison. This approach functions in similar fashion to a ledger sheet, and almost always features a measure adopted by Germany that has not been taken by Japan. For example, after the Nuremberg Trials, Mochida relates how Germans stood in judgment over Germans in a series of subsequent trials in the 1950s and 1960s. But the situation was different in Japan, where the absence of subsequent trials enabled the Japanese citizenry to project all blame onto the military, financial, and political elites. In effect, the Tokyo Trials – despite having been conducted by the victors – were seen, initially, as having settled accounts. Mochida thus figures the post-Nuremberg trials conducted in

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<sup>20</sup> For an example of what I take to be a conventional approach to comparison, one that separates groups into readily discernible units, see Ian Buruma, *The Wages of Guilt*. After relating a series of anecdotes that portray the Japanese in a less than favourable light, Buruma lays out the questions guiding his inquiry: "All this points to a gap between Japanese views of the war and German ones [...]. The question is why this should be so, why the collective German memory should appear to be so different from the Japanese. Is it cultural? Is it political? Is the explanation to be found in postwar history, or in the history of the war itself? Do Germans perhaps have more reason to mourn? Is it because Japan has an Asian 'shame culture, to quote Ruth Benedict's phrase, and Germany a Christian 'guilt culture?'" (p.10). Though Buruma's answers to these questions are somewhat more nuanced than their formulation, nonetheless the cumulative effect of his work betrays where Buruma's sympathies seem to lie.

Germany – and corresponding lack of such a process in Japan – as a factor in Germany’s more direct confrontation with its historical responsibility.<sup>21</sup>

Suffice it to say that an approach to comparison that lines up Germany and Japan at the starting line of 1945 ‘Stunde Null’ (hour zero) and then pauses to tally up the ‘similarities and differences’ at regular intervals and around similar significant signposts, such as the occupation or ‘1989,’ might overlook crucial aspects of the way in which strands of collective memory develop over time in different places. And though the events surrounding 1968 and 1989 had a significant but different impact on both Germany and Japan, there are all manner of ‘memory events’ in one place that do not call forth analogues in the other. The social, cultural, political, religious, and historical issues behind prime ministerial visits to Yasukuni Shrine is a prime example of a memory issue for which there is no analogue in Germany. Whereas memory issues in one place that do not echo in another might not initially generate much in terms of comparison, we must still be attentive to the silences – or to the unexpected corners in which one might hear an echo. For example, the triumphal and self-congratulatory narrative of consumerism driving postwar recovery on display at the Shôwakan finds a parallel at the *Haus der Geschichte* in Bonn.<sup>22</sup> The relative absence of a significant aspect of memory-work in one place might ‘say’ as much as its existence in another, as might the relative belatedness of a process in one place as compared with the other. The Occupation may not be an ongoing historical concern in Germany – indeed, it barely figured in the *Historikerstreit* (Historians’ Dispute) of 1986 – but that does not mean that it was not a significant factor in shaping the trajectory of postwar German history, especially since the Allied occupation resulted in the

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<sup>21</sup> See Mochida Yukio, “Sensô sekinin, sengô sekinin ni miru doitsu to nihon,” in *Kikan sensô sekinin kenkyû* (6), Winter 1994, p.3. Mochida continues his investigation of the contrasts between Japan and Germany in his recent *Futatsu no sengo, futatsu no kindai: nihon to doitsu*, Kyoto: Minerva Shobô, 2009.

<sup>22</sup> The full name of this museum is *Haus der Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (House of the History of the Federal Republic of Germany). I will use the shortened German moniker, *Haus der Geschichte*, throughout.

division of Germany.<sup>23</sup> The relative absence of explicit discussion of the Allied occupation may or may not tell us much about contemporary Germany. Where this absence emerges as significant is the way in which it highlights, in comparative context, the extent to which a phenomenon like the American occupation of Japan is still a significant factor that contributes to the fragmentation of contemporary collective memory.<sup>24</sup>

The more serious liabilities of a contrastive approach to comparison reveal themselves in a willingness to take at face value what a simultaneous comparison yields. Mochida treats the 1980s as a discreet unit, and identifies the *Historikerstreit* as a major memory event of the period. But because Japan had not yet had its own version of the *Historikerstreit* in the 1980s, Mochida sees this as further evidence of Japanese evasion of the difficult issues surrounding historical responsibility. He contends that the dimensions of the dispute revealed the ethical force brought to bear by adherents of the discourse of '*Vergangenheitsbewältigung*' against the revisionists.<sup>25</sup> Mochida argues that in terms of grappling with their respective historical

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<sup>23</sup> In mid-1980s West Germany, a dispute erupted among historians surrounding the 'uniqueness' of the Holocaust and the 'historicization' of National Socialism. This *Historikerstreit* (Historians' Dispute) of 1986 was closely linked to then-chancellor Helmut Kohl's 1982 call for the establishment of national history museums in Bonn and Berlin. But not just any history; rather, what Kohl and his associates desired was a history attuned to the 'positive' contributions of German culture. To his critics, this was none other than a disingenuous attempt to play down Germany's leading role in the traumatic events of the Second World War, such as the rise of Nazism and aggressive war in Europe, to say nothing of the racially motivated and rationally orchestrated murder of some 6 million Jews in what has come to be known variously as the Holocaust, or the Shoah. For more on the *Historikerstreit*, see James Knowlton and Truett Cates (trans.), *Forever in the Shadow of Hitler? Original Documents of the Historikerstreit, The Controversy Concerning the Singularity of the Holocaust*. New Jersey: Humanities Press International, Inc., 1993. The essay that touched off the dispute was Ernst Nolte's, "The Past That Will Not Pass: A Speech That Could Be Written but Not Delivered," in *Forever in the Shadow of Hitler?* pp.18-23. For the antecedent connections between the *Historikerstreit* and Kohl's proposed German Historical Museum, see Christoph Stölzl (ed.), *Deutsches Historisches Museum: Ideen – Kontroversen – Perspektiven*, Frankfurt: Propyläen, 1988.

<sup>24</sup> I do not intend to value presence, absence, or belatedness in a normative fashion, but only to highlight their heuristic value as a means of understanding the historical contingency that lies behind the comparison of ostensibly stable entities.

<sup>25</sup> *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* and *Aufarbeitung* are among the most-encountered terms bound up with the debates about memory-work in postwar Germany. Whereas *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* implies an 'overcoming' of the past suggesting a 'turning of the page' (a phantasmatic closure that quite often results in a subsequent repression of difficult or painful issues of the past), *Aufarbeitung* connotes a more critical engagement with those elements of the past that 'refuse to pass.' The first term is often associated with the debates animating the *Historikerstreit* of 1986, while the second term traces its genealogy back through Adorno to Jaspers' posing of the 'question of German guilt'

responsibility, “by contrast [...] Japan has not witnessed a similarly remarkable debate. Here, the amount of effort and energy expended by adherents of ‘Vergangenheitsbewältigung’ exposes the gap between Germany and Japan.”<sup>26</sup> Mochida was writing in 1994. Had he have waited another year or two, he might have been able to compare and contrast the *Historikerstreit* with the *Rekishu shutaisei riron* (Historical Subjectivity Debate). Instead, Mochida constantly frets over ‘closing the gap’ between Germany and Japan. Yet what premature judgments based on a simultaneous comparison focused on the ‘gaps’ suggest is that even if a parallax approach to comparison is much less certain in its conclusions than simultaneous comparisons, its provisional nature is more suited to the labile nature of collective memory.

Approaches to comparison such as Mochida’s tend, inadvertently, to privilege space over space-time relationships.<sup>27</sup> While this imagining of differences according to a spatial matrix of fixed and stable entities is problematic insofar as it enables a ‘mapping’ of the differences along a grid of reference for comparison and (all too often) hierarchical evaluation, the larger issue has to do with temporality.<sup>28</sup> On the one hand, contrastive comparisons that start from synchrony have the unfortunate side-effect of positing nation-states and ethnic groupings, even cultures, as fixed, stable entities impervious to change. In such a pristine figuration of ‘the nation,’ it is easy for some to overlook the fact that Germany of 1949 is a different place from Germany of the 1980s or 2000s. Comparisons such as Ian Buruma’s *The Wages of Guilt* (1994) traverse the postwar period in a broad sweep as if, firstly, each nation were not internally differentiated, and,

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in 1946. For a further discussion of the nuances of these terms, see Matthias Hass, *Gestaltetes Gedenken*, pp.25-35. See also Dominick LaCapra’s chapter on the *Historikerstreit* in *Representing the Holocaust: History, Theory, Trauma*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994, pp.43-67, in which he figures the debate in terms of ‘acting out’ and ‘working through.’

<sup>26</sup> Mochida, *op.cit.*, p.6.

<sup>27</sup> For a theorization of the spatialization of comparison, see Harry Harootunian, “Some Thoughts on Comparability and the Space-Time Problem, in *boundary 2*, 32:2, Summer 2005, especially his critique of Benedict Anderson, pp.38-39.

<sup>28</sup> Taking his cue from Harry Harootunian, Sebastian Conrad critiques the tendency to frame comparisons in a synchronic fashion as a homogeneous memory community across time. See Conrad, “Entangled Memories,” p. 86.

secondly, as if each social formation did not undergo change over time. On the other hand, a non-synchronic, non-simultaneous approach like the one I am outlining is attuned as much to the silences and ‘absences’ as to the resonances and echoes that make themselves heard at different times in different places. Where there is an echo, I remain attentive to the significance of how the events might resonate differently in Japan and Germany. 1989 presented a significant historical rupture in both countries, but the rupture has given rise to divergent responses to the conflagrations of the mid-twentieth century that cannot be figured merely in terms of ‘better’ or ‘worse,’ adequate or inadequate.

What is more, it is well nigh impossible to predict how the memorial sites of the 1990s and 2000s will resonate with future generations of Germans. Once a given memorial site takes its place as part of the built environment of a city, thereby lodging itself in the cultural imaginary of larger (national) collectivities and transnational constituencies, this same memorial site might yet take on a different significance in the future. As demographics shift, the question of whose past is being remembered will press more urgently to the fore, especially as recently established communities, such as the descendants of the euphemistically named ‘Gastarbeiter’ (guest workers), assert themselves. In addition, the particular domestic and international political climate of the post-Cold War period is subject to change, just as the Fall of the Berlin Wall itself ushered in profound transformations.<sup>29</sup> If one were to remain in the realm of conventional comparison, one might look at Germany and Japan in the years since 1989 and conclude, on the basis of the prominence of Second World War memorial sites in Berlin, with a variation on the theme that ‘Japan has engaged with its past less adequately than Germany.’ But such a

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<sup>29</sup> The recent global financial crisis of 2008 might yet be seen, along with other factors, as a catalyst that emboldened the likes of Thilo Sarrazin (a former Berlin SPD Senator of Finance) to press forward with their inflammatory and discriminatory remarks. See Thilo Sarrazin’s denunciation of Germany’s immigration policy in his recent best-selling book, *Deutschland schafft sich ab*, Munich: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 2010.

conclusion, based as it is on a view of history that Walter Benjamin strenuously critiqued in his “Theses on the Philosophy of History” – the recounting history like successive beads of the rosary – might be blind both to the ways in which memory politics in Germany and Japan showed a relative degree of convergence up until the mid-1990s, just as it would be to the possibility that the progressive forces that pushed memory politics in a more open, transnational direction in Japan during the 1980s and early 1990s might yet re-emerge as a significant influence on the future direction of Japanese collective memory.

With regard to these larger national collectivities and transnational constituencies, comparisons of different nation-states – in this case, Japan and Germany – shed light on how diverse constituencies both within the confines of a given territory and across its arbitrary boundaries contribute to a relatively ‘closed’ or relatively ‘open’ conception of national and transnational memory.<sup>30</sup> Though aspects of Japan’s contemporary commemorative culture – and I stress, *at this moment in time* – will emerge over the course of this study as relatively ‘closed’ in comparison with Germany’s, nonetheless I find highly unsatisfying those overly generalized and non-historicized explanations charging that Japan has done an inadequate job of confronting the traumas of its wartime past as both victim *and* aggressor. What my approach to comparison seeks is an account of why Germany’s contemporary commemorative culture might be more ‘open’ than Japan’s – again, *at this moment in time*. A parallax sensitivity attuned to historically contingent factors avoids the tired essentialisms of ‘national characteristics.’<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> If I focus on ‘the nation,’ I do so to depart from a narrow focus on national histories. In other words, I focus on the national in such a way as to call attention to ways in which certain groups see it as partial to their interests to police the boundaries of national memory – and also to point to ways in which other constituencies pry open the ‘bounded seriality’ of the nation, exposing it to transnational influences. See Benedict Anderson, *The Spectre of Comparisons: Nationalism, Southeast Asia, and the World*, London, New York: Verso, 1998, pp.29-45, for a discussion of a nation as a ‘bounded seriality.’

<sup>31</sup> Ruth Benedict’s notorious formulation of ‘shame cultures’ (Japan) versus ‘guilt cultures’ (the Christian West) in her 1946 publication, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword: Patterns of Japanese Culture*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967 (written at the behest of an American political and military machinery that was about to occupy



Though Laura Hein and Akiko Takenaka do not go into much depth about the longer history of the conservative re-emergence in their essay, “Exhibiting World War II in Japan and the United State since 1995,” nonetheless they offer a unique account of how conservative, ultra-nationalistic forces succeeded in forcing their notion of ‘positive’ history onto the agenda against the backdrop of mid-1990s domestic and international uncertainty.<sup>32</sup> Hein and Takenaka propose that the mid-1990s is the time when memory debates intensified and became increasingly divisive and controversial in Japan.<sup>33</sup> Their account underscores the degree to which historical contingencies and the attendant geo-political circumstances trump explanations for Japan’s ‘inadequacy’ figured in overtly or covertly cultural terms with regard to confronting its past.

If we accept Hein and Takenaka’s argument that memory issues did not become heatedly and divisively contentious until the mid-1990s in Japan, two broad interpretive pathways open up when comparing Germany and Japan. The first leads to the conclusion that Japan’s response was ‘belated’ (with all the implications of model, copy, and mimicry), and then less ‘adequate’

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Japan), is only the most famous of a deluge of publications spanning the postwar period that seek to make sense of the differences in terms of national traits and characteristics. The *Nihonjinron* (discourse of Japanese uniqueness) publications of the postwar period mirrors this Manichean distinction between cultures.

<sup>32</sup> Regarding the ‘positive history’ espoused by contemporary neo-nationalists, ‘positive’ here does not refer to positivism, although members of the ‘Liberal View of History’ group – a misnomer if there ever was one – and its successor, the Japan Society for History Textbook Reform, display an unswerving proclivity for carping on ‘facts.’ See, for example, Gavan McCormack’s informative article entitled “The Japanese Movement to ‘Correct’ History,” in Laura Hein and Mark Selden (eds.), *Censoring History: Citizenship and Memory in Japan, Germany, and the United States*, Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, Inc, 2000, especially pp.53-63. Rather, ‘positive’ – *sekkyoku-teki* – is offered up as an antidote to what members of these groups see as the self-flagellating ‘masochistic’ history associated with the left-leaning Japan Teachers’ Union. Interestingly, this desire for a ‘positive’ history that feeds into a healthy and proud national identity found an earlier parallel in the 1980s debates over the meaning and function of the proposed German Historical Museum. (See, for example, Charles Maier’s *The Unmasterable Past: History, Holocaust, and German National Identity*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988, pp.121-139).

<sup>33</sup> Laura Hein and Akiko Takenaka, “Exhibiting World War II in Japan and the United State since 1995,” in *Pacific Historical Review*, 76:1, 2007, p.65, cite the years 1994 and 1996 as crucial years in Japan’s reassessment of difficult memory issues, but we can surely go back further into the 1980s to trace the beginnings of this critical engagement. To be fair, their point might not be so much that memory was not contested before the mid-1990s, but that it reached an intensity not yet witnessed in the postwar period. Hein and Takenaka’s essay resonates with a number of works that detail contested memory in contemporary Japan. Along with other works already cited, see, for example, Sheila Miyoshi Jager and Rana Mitter (eds.), *Ruptured Histories: War, Memory, and the Post-Cold War in Asia*, Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2007. Another excellent set of essays that take up comparison within the Asia-Pacific region is T. Fujitani, Geoffrey M. White, and Lisa Yoneyama (eds.), *Perilous Memories: The Asia-Pacific War(s)*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001.

because two of the more prominent memorial sites whose planning, development, and execution unfolded against the backdrop of these controversies – the Shôwakan (1999) and the Yûshûkan (2002) – were not nearly as critical in their approach to Japan’s aggressive role in the Asia-Pacific War as the prominent memorial sites that opened in Berlin around the same time were of Germany’s role in perpetrating atrocities: Daniel Libeskind’s Jewish Museum (2001) and Peter Eisenman’s Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe (2005).<sup>34</sup> This approach is questionable on many grounds, not least of which is its tendency to smuggle unexamined cultural-essentialist positions into the argument, along with the lack of sensitivity to historically contingent factors.

The second interpretive option is to resist the temptation of convenient formulas and look elsewhere, for example to the development and coalescence of particular cultural dynamics such as a resurgent neo-nationalism or a decline in the strength of trade-unionism in Japan.<sup>35</sup> Other comparative perspectives offer themselves, such as a focus on the significance of 1989 in Germany and Japan and its linked set of issues surrounding the differential repercussions of what happened after the Shôwa Emperor passed away in January 1989 and the Berlin Wall came down in November of that same year. Spurred on by the death of the Shôwa Emperor, many Japanese began to engage more self-reflexively with Japan’s wartime past. Intersecting with the death of the Shôwa Emperor and the fall of the Berlin Wall was the end of the Cold War, and the geo-political realignments it brought in its wake. Significantly, these geo-political realignments,

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<sup>34</sup> For a critique of variations of my admittedly simplified version of such arguments, see Philip Seaton, *Japan’s Contested War Memories: The ‘Memory Rifts’ in Historical Consciousness of World War II*: London: Routledge, 2007. But it is not only Western media sources and journalists who perpetuate this view. As we have seen, Mochida Yukio presents a more sophisticated version of this argument in his “Sensô sekinin, sengo sekinin ni miru doitsu to nihon,” where, despite going on to develop a cogent and critically nuanced comparison of Germany and Japan, he argues at the outset that Germany “has by far done a much more thorough job of engaging with ‘reflection about the past’” (p.2), and that Japan would do well to study the concrete measures Germany has taken in ‘overcoming the past’ (p.3). The term Mochida uses is *kako no kokufuku*, the Japanese rendition of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*.

<sup>35</sup> A particularly salient factor in Japan, but one which I can only gesture toward here, is the decline in the strength and influence of the Japan Teachers’ Union. For a more thorough treatment of the Japan Teachers’ Union (but which nonetheless leaves vague the circumstances surrounding its decline in influence), see Seraphim, *War Memory*, pp.86-107, and especially p.29.

coupled with shifting American power-political interests, affected memory politics differently in Europe and Asia. Not only was the future of relations with Japan's neighbours contingent upon how Japan confronted its historical responsibility, the changing priorities and coordinates of American influence re-kindled debates about dissatisfaction with Japan's alliance with the United States.

The regional situation of re-unified Germany differed slightly from that influencing Japan, insofar as Germany's neighbours desired re-assurances that Germany would not embark again on the path of European dominance. In addition to concrete measures such as the recognition of the Oder-Neisse Line forming the frontier between Germany and Poland, participants in the memory debates within Germany's borders and beyond were sensitive to the resonance of symbolic gestures, such as the development of memorial sites that took dialogue and historical responsibility seriously. The contours of the contentious memory politics surrounding the Topography of Terror and the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe become all the more clear against this backdrop.

Alongside the influence of transnational factors, it is not to be forgotten that the early to mid-1990s were a time of domestic social and political upheaval in Japan. After years of unmatched prosperity under the consumption-oriented conditions of the 'bubble economy' which burst in the early 1990s, Japan witnessed its first power shift in 1993, when the long-time LDP (Liberal Democratic Party) temporarily fell from power. In close succession, two more events rattled Japan's confidence, the Aum Shinrikyô's lethal sarin gas terrorist attack on the part of the Tokyo subway system running through the government quarter, and then the Kobe earthquake of 1995, which revealed how ill-prepared Japan's ostensibly technologically-advanced society was for such a disaster. (It also shook confidence in the political system itself, uncovering as it did

the corrupt tie-ups between construction companies and bureaucrats willing to turn a blind eye to violations of building code). In this climate of rising unemployment, diminishing opportunities, and a mounting social uncertainty bordering, at times, on despair, conservatives had an audience more amenable to compensatory stories of national grandeur. The resurgence of the neo-nationalistic right was thus as much a result of the historical contingencies outlined here as it was a product of the reaction to the very successes of left-progressive social formations in lodging certain topics firmly within the Japanese collective social imaginary.

In rounding out this section on comparison, I find it important to emphasize again that comparisons are of limited validity in a sense that they have a ‘best before’ date, so to speak. This is not to invalidate comparison, but to suggest that it has importance as an on-going process, and as such relates to one of the ways in which I understand the term ‘parallax.’ Comparisons are, at the very least, triangulated in terms of the researcher, his or her object of study, and the audience that reads the work. In addition, the relationship between various regions or social groupings under consideration, as well as the position of the historian him- or herself in relationship to his or her research at a given time and place, shifts continually and is thus subject to continual revision. For example, each new set of history textbooks approved for publication by Japan’s Ministry of Education will likely bring a new round of acrimonious debates within Asia, just as the ongoing debate in Berlin, Germany, and beyond as to what kind of memorial – if any – to build to Germans expelled from lands east of the Oder-Neisse Line will likely cast the recently-completed ‘memory trio’ in a new light.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> The ‘memory trio’ consists of Jewish Museum, the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, and the Topography of Terror.

## NATIONAL IDENTITY AND AFFECTIVE AFFINITIES WITH MEMORIES OF THE PAST

As much as this study is a comparison of memorial sites in two cities, it is also an intervention into the vibrant and burgeoning field of memory studies.<sup>37</sup> In what has become a classic essay in memory studies, Pierre Nora delineates two general vectors of memory: traditional and critical. Traditional memory relies for its effect on the organic milieu of the community for transmission. In this figuration, memory is ‘living,’ ‘organic,’ a community resource. Nora contended that a dynamic symbiosis between history and memory was established in the nineteenth-century Third Republic. But this ‘organic’ symbiosis was eclipsed early in the twentieth century as an increasingly ‘critical,’ secular, and abstract historical memory called mythic national traditions into question.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> For an example of the varieties of approaches to memory, see Patrick Hutton’s discussion in *History as an Art of Memory*, Hanover NH: University Press of New England, 1993, and Alon Confino’s “Collective Memory and Cultural History: Problems of Method,” in *American Historical Review*, December 1997. For the intersection between trauma studies and memory studies, see Paul Antze and Michael Lambek (eds.), *Tense Past: Cultural Essays in Trauma and Memory*, New York: Routledge, 1996. See also the works of Dominick LaCapra, who has written extensively on the problem. An example that probes the difficulties of representing trauma in historical writing is his *Writing History, Writing Trauma*, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001, which builds on his previous two works dealing with the Holocaust, *Representing the Holocaust* (1994) and *History and Memory after Auschwitz*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998. In his *The Politics of Regret: On Collective Memory and Historical Responsibility*, New York: Routledge, 2007, Jeffrey K. Olick puts forward a ‘process-relational model’ of ‘social memory studies’ as an antidote to what he sees as the fixed and monolithic conception of collective memory stemming from readings of Maurice Halbwachs. Paul Connerton examines an important component of debates about collective memory in his “Seven Types of Forgetting,” in *Memory Studies*, 1:1, 2008. A recent issue of the journal, *Social Research*, 75:1, Spring 2008, brings together scholars from a range of fields to debate the terms of memory, collective memory, identity, and responsibility. An example is Aleida Assmann’s “Transformations between Memory and History,” where she cites the ‘memory boom’ as a contributing factor in the historian’s loss of his/her “singular luster,” forced to concede ground to a host of activists, politicians, museum curators, artists, citizens, and others “engaged in the common enterprise of reconstructing and shaping the past” (p.54). Nonetheless, Assmann’s article is devoted to underlining how, in this increasingly crowded milieu, the professional historian is “as important as ever” (p.54). Jeffrey K. Olick’s “The Ciphered Transits of Collective Memory: Neo-Freudian Impressions” also merits attention.

<sup>38</sup> See Pierre Nora’s series of comparisons and contrasts between memory and history in “Between History and Memory: Les Lieux de Mémoire,” in *Representations* (26), Spring 1989, especially, pp.7-11. The essay in the special issue of *Representations* on memory and counter-memory is also the introductory essay contained in Volume One of his three volume edited collection, *Realms of Memory: The Construction of the French Past*, 3 vols., English language ed. Laurence D. Kritzman, trans. Arthur Goldhammer, New York: Columbia University Press, 1996-1998.

In seeking to understand how and why monuments had become increasingly important as compensatory places (lieux instead of milieux) of memory as the twentieth century wore on, Nora identified the rise of this secularized, abstract ‘historical memory’ critical of the often mythic nature and affective dimension of traditional memory.<sup>39</sup> I will bracket the problematic aspects of Nora’s nostalgia for traditional memory, but will take the opportunity to observe that what Nora has identified as ‘historical memory’ operative at lieux of memory is the hallmark of the highly mediated variety of memory I take up in this study. Though the family still plays a profound role in shaping our initial ‘frameworks’ with which we approach memory in the public sphere, memory for late modernity and post-modernity has, arguably, less to do with oral transmission than it does with images, sites, monuments, museums, film, photography: in short, representation. I will return to mediation and representation shortly.

Another figure who has exerted an enormous influence on the direction of memory studies is Maurice Halbwachs. Though I have reservations about Halbwachs’ conceptualization of the social frameworks of memory at the expense of bodily and psychological dimensions of memory, his simultaneous attention to memory as concept and content helps us to think through how memorial sites embody a socio-culturally configured memory that is subject to change over time.<sup>40</sup> Indeed, Halbwachs’ attentiveness to the *transformations* that the ‘content’ of memory

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<sup>39</sup> Nora’s nostalgia for ‘traditional memory’ inadvertently comes close, at times, to replicating the antipathy that certain social forces of the 1920s and 1930s directed toward abstract, intellectualized, rootless, cosmopolitan ideas. See Jeffrey Herf, *Reactionary modernism: Technology, culture, and politics in Weimar and the Third Reich*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984, for a discussion of the fault lines that characterized debates about Kultur and Zivilisation, which, *mutatis mutandis*, map onto Nora’s distinctions between memory and history. Kultur was associated with the values of a classical technique and training, profundity, and authenticity, while Zivilisation referred to practical learning, rationality, and mass culture. Rudy Koshar also references this debate within the context of *Heimatschutz* debates of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Urbanism, socialism, and democracy contrasted with “a presumably more organic rural past whose qualities could be symbolized in everything from medieval castles to peasant costumes” (*op.cit.*, p.21). Though the fault lines are not quite as fraught and volatile as they once were in Germany, many of these tropes continue to lurk in the background of the aesthetics and functionality of memorial sites. I return to this below in chapters on the Topography of Terror.

<sup>40</sup> The touchstone for memory as socially embedded is, of course, Maurice Halbwachs’ 1925 work, *The Social Frameworks of Memory*. In what follows, I will be referring to passages from *The Social Frameworks of Memory*

such as the historical experiences of the family, religion, or social class undergo over long durations of centuries is a key component of his thought that recent and contemporary sociologists of memory often overlook.<sup>41</sup>

With regard to religion, Halbwachs illustrates how abstract ideas such as the attributes of God or the rites such as communion or confession survive across the centuries of Christianity. Following Immanuel Kant, Halbwachs notes that “[i]f religious thought were nothing else, it would apply only to ideas that do not correspond to any image or sensible reality.”<sup>42</sup> Rather, concept and idea are reinforced by concrete acts of recollection – acts that recall a seemingly transhistorical idea with each re-enactment. As Halbwachs concludes, “there is no religious thought that cannot be understood as an idea and that is not at the same time composed of a series of concrete recollections, of images or events or persons that can be located in space and time.”<sup>43</sup> Whether it be the survivals of religious dogma or of archaic notions of aristocratic rank or title, the crucial point for Halbwachs is that the content of these ideas or the traits of the social

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contained in Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, edited, translated, and with an Introduction by Lewis A. Coser, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992. Though I spend time here discussing Halbwachs in order to recuperate a diachronic sensibility that tends to be elided by some scholars who invoke Halbwachs, I should point out that as helpful as I find Halbwachs’ formulation of malleable frames of memory, I derive my conceptualization of memory in large part from theorists of ‘trace’ such as Sigmund Freud (*Totem and Taboo: Some Points of Agreement between the Mental Lives of Savages and Neurotics* [1913], trans. and ed. James Strachey, New York: W.W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1989, and *Moses and Monotheism* [1939], trans. Katherine Jones, New York: Vintage Books, 1967), Jacques Derrida (*Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, trans. Eric Prenowitz, Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), and Dominick LaCapra’s articulation of these strands of thought for his own project of accounting for the persistence of the sacred within the secular, and of understanding repetition with change.

<sup>41</sup> See Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, in particular the passages from *The Social Frameworks of Memory* dealing with the collective memory of the family (p.54ff), religious collective memory (p.84ff), and social classes (p.120ff). Halbwachs’ sensitivity to change over the *longue durée* arises from his close association with early thinkers of the *Annaliste* tradition in France such as Marc Bloch and Lucien Febvre. For more on Halbwachs’ rejection of Henri Bergson, embrace of Emile Durkheim, and association with the *Annalistes*, see Lewis Coser’s helpful introduction to *On Collective Memory*.

<sup>42</sup> Halbwachs, p.178.

<sup>43</sup> Halbwachs, p.179.

organization that supported them “are inscribed in the structure of society, in which it was possible at every moment to retrieve and read them.”<sup>44</sup>

Halbwachs’ contribution to memory studies lies, then, in his ability to account for both change and the persistence of traces within social formations. Individual memory in Halbwach’s account is social through and through, for one does not have memory, firstly, without reference to a group, and secondly, without language. He recognized that even when memory was at its most personal, it depended on collective processes shaped by interactions with others. Sensitive to the persistence of traditions, legends, and myths that leant social groupings a certain degree of stability and coherence, Halbwachs was, nonetheless, eminently sensitive to the diachrony of structures. Submerged traces persisted across time, sometimes re-emerging to flavour collective memory at a later time, often in a way dimly understood by contemporaries, if they were even aware of the recrudescence of these traces at all. Since I take up memorial sites in this study, these observations on the diachronic aspects of structures – be they ‘mentalités’ or concrete places – are crucial for my reflections on the spatial aspects of memorial sites as they exist in urban geographies and inhabit ‘collective imaginaries’ over time.

The urban space inhabited by the Topography of Terror illustrates this notion of the survival of submerged content over time. On this space, the temporalities of the previous usages and meanings of the space in the Wilhelmine Era overlap with those of the Weimar period and the Third Reich. Imbricated with these meanings of the space over time is the subsequent neglect of the site in the decades following 1945. To be sure, the various names attached to the site over the course of the postwar period – Prinz-Albrecht-Gelände, Gestapo-Gelände, Topographie des Terrors – are testament to the shifting and intertwined meanings attached to the site. What this suggests is that an attention to the spatial dimensions of memory need not entail a relentlessly

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<sup>44</sup> Halbwachs, p.180.



synchronic approach to memorial sites, for material though they may be, the use of and meaning attached to sites is subject to constant transformation and negotiation. The memory of the erstwhile usage of the site had been repressed, even actively expunged by a wartime generation bent on obliterating the traces that bore witness to the trauma of complicity in the crimes of the National Socialist regime. It was thus no foregone conclusion that a memorial site dedicated to a confrontation with and teaching about the memory of perpetration of unspeakable atrocities should rise out of the ruins of the Gestapo headquarters.

If Halbwachs' attentiveness to the diachronic transformations of structures is helpful in understanding how memorial sites change over time, his rejection of the psychological dimensions of memory yields less for our attempts to understand how contemporary visitors respond to memorial sites. Halbwachs' emphasis on the social dynamics of language overlooks or ignores other crucial aspects or formulations of memory that inform my study of memorial sites. Foremost is the imagistic quality of memory. Though our experiences are, inherently and for the most part 'social' – and thus narratable and localizable as part of a series of social interactions – there are aspects of memory that escape language, that are more 'dreamlike,' not to mention disorienting at times.<sup>45</sup> Halbwachs' formulation of memory as inherently social also does not do justice to the spontaneity of individual memory triggered by sensations and psychological associations.<sup>46</sup> The trigger does not necessarily have to be social. It might be vivid, or vaguely defined or sensed. But it might not necessarily be narratable. The point, however, is that although what is being recalled might well have taken place in a social setting, the

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<sup>45</sup> In this connection we might cite works as diverse as Sigmund Freud's conceptualizations of traumatic memory through to Gilles Deleuze's creative reading of Henri Bergson expressed in what Deleuze terms the 'time-image.' See, for example, Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989. A discussion of Deleuze's time-image would take us well beyond the scope of this study.

<sup>46</sup> See Walter Benjamin, "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire," in *Illuminations*, edited with an introduction by Hanna Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn, New York: Schocken Books, 1968, for his well-known discussion of Proust's madeleine.

experience of recollection need not be social. It might be entirely interiorized. It might even cut someone off from ‘the social,’ as is the case with trauma.

What I am to critique here is not so much Halbwachs’ emphasis on the social, but rather his rejection of psychological dimensions of memory. Here, Dominick LaCapra’s project of introducing psychoanalytic concepts into the study of history and memory, in particular the dynamics of traumatic memory, is a particularly germane corrective. LaCapra’s problematization of binary distinctions between individual and collective re-inserts the individual *back* into the social fabric whence he or she came. Writes LaCapra:

Psychoanalysis is misconstrued as a psychology of the individual: its basic concepts should be understood as undercutting the binary opposition between the individual and society because these concepts apply to social individuals whose relative individuation or collective status is a problem for investigation and argument.<sup>47</sup>

This conception whereby the individual is perceived as the ‘site’ of intersection at which collective memory influences personal memory (and vice-versa) provides an antidote both to the blind spots in Halbwachs’ conception of memory as unremittingly social at the same time it addresses influential German psychoanalysts Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich’s over-emphasis on the individual as the source of analogies about the collective in their widely-read 1967 work, *The Inability to Mourn*.<sup>48</sup>

Following LaCapra’s attempts to account for how memory straddles the individual and collective realms, my study of memorial sites proposes a feedback loop that considers the individual as always-already embedded in social frameworks, and thus subjectivized by those frameworks. But individuals also shape and alter those frameworks. To make this feedback loop more concrete, let us take the case of Germany in the immediate postwar period. Making

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<sup>47</sup> Dominick LaCapra, *Representing the Holocaust*, p.173.

<sup>48</sup> We will come across the Mitscherlich’s classic, *The Inability to Mourn* (1967), trans. Beverly R. Placzek, with a Preface by Robert Jay Lifton, New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1975, at various points over the course of this study.

allowances for generational differentiation in 1945, individuals in Germany collectively experienced the collapse of Hitler, National Socialism, and the Third Reich. While the rubble heaps and the steady stream of expellees from Germany's former eastern territories assured that the trauma would not be 'forgotten,' the fact that many who were alive at the time evidently chose not to talk about their *individual memories and experiences* gave rise to a 'repression' on an individual *and* generational level.<sup>49</sup> Manifesting itself on a cultural level of this feedback loop, this repression contributed in no small way to the generational upheaval of the late 1960s and early 1970s led by those who had experienced the social framework of reticence. The affective mechanics of individual memory – silences and repressions filtered through the family via generational dynamics – profoundly shaped the subsequent development of German collective identity in the 1970s and 1980s. This generational shift would have a profound impact on Berlin's mnemonic landscape as it developed from the 1980s down to the present. Even if we do not adopt an explicitly psychoanalytic stance vis-à-vis collective memory, a modified understanding of Halbwachs' 'frameworks' legitimizes approaches that take seriously 'silences' and 'repression' – for is not a climate of silence also a social framework that shapes the (non)memory of a given generation subject to silences?

One last point on memory. Despite my reservations with Halbwachs' location of memory almost exclusively within social frameworks, his formulation has the distinct advantage of enabling us to 'read' the materially inscribed traces of collective memory. This last point regarding the legibility of memory traces buttresses my attempts to read collective memory in sites such as museums and memorial sites. In this sense, I am drawing upon the work of cultural critic, Andreas Huyssen, whose writing situates the museum at the interstices of its material and

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<sup>49</sup> Many of the essays in Hanna Schissler (ed.), *The Miracle Years: A Cultural History of West Germany 1949-1968*, Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001, take up positions that explicitly revise the Mitscherlich's arguments about repression on a cultural level of the traumatic memory of the Second World War.

immaterial qualities. To the extent that Huyssen celebrates the mediated nature of memory, sites and museums remain the gossamer threads that tie the present to the past by way of a dual authenticity: of place, and of object.<sup>50</sup> In formulating his critique, he has Jean Baudrillard's notion of the simulacrum in his sights. Huyssen's account of the past mediated by the museum serves as an antidote to Baudrillard's critiques of a docile mass culture lulled by the eternal present of the televisual image, the intensifying acceleration of the now, the production of the new, with the new consuming past and future in the increasingly shrinking duration of the now. For Baudrillard, this is no 'Jetztzeit' of possible constellations with the past, but a now devoid of any 'meaningful' connections to the past, lost as they are in televisual virtuality. Huyssen intervenes to champion a version of mediated memory that still holds fast to the tangible and the concrete. On the memorial site, the tangibility of objects installed at a concrete site anchors a memory of the past before it flees the present in the televisual image that consumes the past yet offers no 'future horizon.'<sup>51</sup>

Insofar as part of my approach treats the mediated memory that manifests itself on memorial sites as something material and tangible,<sup>52</sup> I approach the empirical givenness of site and object textually, keying in on ways that words, images, and *discourse* make it possible for various constituencies to *define* a memorial site – or the experience of the site and its installed or exhibited relics, objects, and traces – as 'authentic' in the first place. Memorial sites emerge in this study as cultural productions that are 'empirically legible' – even if this legibility is less

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<sup>50</sup> See Andreas Huyssen, *Twilight Memories: Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia*, London and New York: Routledge, 1995, pp.33-35 and p.255.

<sup>51</sup> Huyssen, *op.cit.*, pp.30-32. If we accept Andreas Huyssen's trenchant critique of Jean Baudrillard's *tout court* dismissal of all contemporary mass culture as a televisual flow of simulacra, we get a sense of how the tangibility of objects installed at a concrete site anchor a memory of the past that threatens to flee the present in the televisual image that consumes the past yet offers no 'future horizon.' (Here, Huyssen invokes Reinhard Koselleck's writings on the intensification of a continually shrinking present consumed by a constant demand for novelty).

<sup>52</sup> Another major component of my approach is, of course, the immaterial and affective dynamics of memory, dynamics that hover between the tangible and intangible, between the sensible and the barely perceptible, if not imperceptible.

transparent than it is palimpsest-like in nature. Not only are they ‘legible,’ but their givenness in space renders memorial sites capable of engendering affect as visitors experience the memorial site itself, as well as the ‘past’ represented there.

## **HISTORICAL RESPONSIBILITY AND THE AFFECT OF UNEASE**

Over the course of this study, we will encounter how elites in some places use memorial sites to influence national identity. An example of this is the way in which ‘reality effects’ are interwoven into the fabric of the Shôwakan exhibition in the service of a particular version of a national past. But memorial sites may also be proposed and then used to contest a received version of official memory. The emergence in the 1970s of the ‘Topography of Terror’ out of the ruins of the Gestapo-Gelände is but one of the more prominent examples of how a historically-charged site might be cultivated as a means to counter official and cultural silences pertaining to traumatic pasts. Inadvertently or not, the result of these confrontations and contestations over the meaning of a site may well have an effect on a group’s identity. As Dariuš Zifonun has argued, the discursive shift effected by various ‘progressive’ groups involved with the development of the Topography of Terror contributed to a contemporary German identity profoundly marked by an awareness of and confrontation with perpetrator pasts.<sup>53</sup>

Contestation over representing and exhibiting sensitive aspects of warfare highlights the tense relationship between memorial sites, their visitors and audiences, and the professional responsibilities of curators and memorial site administrators who design and manage the sites. This cocktail mixing together the production and reception of memory and identity on memorial sites is made all the more volatile when the stakes are the transmission of ‘past experience’ to

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<sup>53</sup> Dariuš Zifonun, *Gedenken und Identität: Der deutsche Erinnerungsdiskurs*, Frankfurt/New York: Campus Verlag, 2004, pp.226-231.

future generations. In the case of Japan, memorial site administrators have grappled with questions of representation framed by the poles of Japanese involvement in the Asia-Pacific War as one of ‘self-defense’ or ‘imperial ambition.’ The vexed nature of representing perpetrator pasts – and what degree of prominence to give these issues within the longer sweep of German history – has exercised the resourcefulness of many a curator in Germany as well.

Throughout the pages of this dissertation, the notion of historical responsibility and its connection with perpetrator and victimhood narratives will recur with regularity. Historical responsibility and the representation of perpetrator pasts pose a number of difficult problems. The question as to how and to whom an individual can be held responsible for a criminal act perpetrated by the collectivity to which she or he is supposed to belong seems, for many commentators, to hinge on a conceptual distinction between responsibility and culpability.<sup>54</sup> The anxiety felt by those such as Fujioka Nobukatsu, Nishio Kanji, Hata Ikuhiko and various other conservative nationalist academics and politicians who see the claims of so-called ‘comfort women’ as a challenge to Japan’s historical honour plays out against the backdrop of a politics of collective identification intricately bound up with acknowledged or unacknowledged culpability, liability, and responsibility. The question of how and to whom an individual can be held responsible, accountable, even liable for a criminal act committed by the collectivity to which he or she belongs (whether by choice or ascription) is a question that depends, largely, on the proximity of the individual in both space and time to the wrong committed.

The distinction between guilt and responsibility is important here, for the nuances have an effect either in engendering resentment (in the case of an entire group being tarred with the brush of moral guilt), or in encouraging reflection about one’s subject-position at the time and

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<sup>54</sup> For a discussion of accountability, culpability, and responsibility, see Herbert Morris, “Legal Responsibility,” in Philip P. Wiener (ed.), *Dictionary of the History of Ideas*, Vol.3, New York: Scribner, 1973, pp.33-36.

subsequently. One's proximity – as perpetrator, collaborator, witness, bystander – to any crime committed affects the degree of one's legal/criminal guilt, political guilt, moral guilt, or metaphysical guilt, as Karl Jaspers has pointed out.<sup>55</sup> But Jaspers' figuring of the different kinds of guilt is less helpful when dealing questions of the kind of historical responsibility borne by the *descendants* of members of a particular group, say, 'German,' or 'Japanese,' or Japanese military commander, SS member, or Nazi party member. In these cases, the 'proximity' to the crime perpetrated is attenuated by the passage of time. To further complicate matters, the assumption of historical responsibility by an individual or collectivity in the present depends largely on a willingness to assume this responsibility in the absence of any concrete mechanisms of enforcing accountability. Such is the case, for example, with those who deny that a massacre took place at Nanjing, or that sexual violence was systematically perpetrated against women by the Japanese forces, never tire of pointing out. Without evidence linking that individual or that group *causally* to the wrong committed, an individual or group might deny responsibility for an event that happened in the past. The assignation of 'metaphysical' historical responsibility along the lines of Jaspers' notion of metaphysical guilt is thus a very difficult task.

In trying to think through these ambiguities, Primo Levi's more expansive notion of the 'gray zone' is useful insofar as his figure of the bystander is a subject-position that complicates the relationship between responsibility and liability.<sup>56</sup> Reformulating Levi's gray zone somewhat, we might venture to consider those born well after an event such as the Second World War as occupying the position of 'bystander' bound by an ethical injunction to not forget the past. As a person born into a particular group and bearing the citizenship rights to a particular

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<sup>55</sup> The classic account is Karl Jaspers, *The Question of German Guilt*, trans. E.B. Ashton, New York: The Dial Press, 1947.

<sup>56</sup> For Primo Levi's riveting discussion of the various subject-positions that comprise the gray zone, see *The Drowned and the Saved* (1986), trans. Raymond Rosenthal, New York: Vintage International, 1989, pp.36-69.

collectivity, in benefitting from the rights of this particular collectivity, one also assumes the responsibilities of this collectivity. That is to say, the individual, being part of a larger entity that has existed in space and time prior to the existence of that individual, bears a partial burden of that entity's past. Though the individual might not be held liable or accountable for wrongs committed before he/she was born (except, perhaps, via continued payments of indemnity or reparations), that person cannot opt out of the responsibility accruing from his or her accidental citizenship.

And so, as the *hibakusha* (atom bomb survivors), the 'comfort woman,' or the survivor of the extermination camp confront those of us born after with decreasing frequency, I would like to suggest that the affective condition of contemporary historical responsibility is one of unease. This 'ideal position' for inhabitants of the contemporary moment vis-à-vis historical responsibility links affective dynamics together with aesthetics. The unease is generated by conscientious memorial site designers and curators who employ a potent critical pedagogy that aims at a productive recognition and awareness of the persistence of traces of the past in the present.<sup>57</sup> This affect of unease is a defamiliarization provoked by encounters with mediated images of the past which replace the face and gaze of those who have passed on. A reinvigorated historiography focusing on the dynamics of the production, consumption, and reception of memorial sites and the images they house is one way to bring about this affective condition of historical responsibility. The continual unease generated by a plurality of images serves to mitigate the desire for a harmonious, crystallized 'Image' of a national history.

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<sup>57</sup> An example is the Topography of Terror's installation of photographs of SS men on an outing with smiling family members, the presentation of which is meant to circumvent the stereotype of the sadistic SS man. Another example – again from the Topography of Terror – is the focus on the mundane bureaucracy of managed death, which is meant to encourage the visitor to reflect upon the dynamics of a managed society in the present.



## CHAPTER 1

### HISTORY AND MEMORY IN POSTWAR GERMANY AND JAPAN

When the guns fell silent in 1945, both Germany and Japan lay in ruins. Though the populace of both countries once faced similar anxieties about what the future would hold, the memoryscapes of Berlin and Tokyo (and Germany and Japan more generally) look very different in the no-longer so new millennium.<sup>1</sup> A slowly growing body of work comparing the postwar histories of Japan and Germany views the 1990s as a point of increasing convergence in terms of the vibrancy of memory politics. For example, Franziska Seraphim concludes her informative *War Memory and Social Politics in Japan* with an extended meditation on memory politics in Japan and Germany over the course of the postwar period, building a case for an increasing convergence between the two on memory issues by the turn of the twenty-first century.<sup>2</sup> Though Philip Seaton does not engage in a sustained comparison of Japan and Germany, his points of reference (healthy contestation within Japan that is misrepresented by a Western media that still sees Japanese engagements with the past as ‘inadequate’) position him with those who see the effervescence of a debate that has intensified over the course of the 1990s as an optimistic sign that the debate – one that encompasses multiple actors and unites coalitions across national boundaries – might yet result in a more frank assessment of Japan’s historical responsibility, especially at official levels. Sometimes Seaton’s position also betrays an unconscious – or, at best, unexamined – adherence to the ‘German model’ as norm, with Japan following a long and twisted path to attain this Holy Grail of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, or overcoming the past. The

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<sup>1</sup> The term ‘memoryscape’ is Lisa Yoneyama’s. See her *Hiroshima Traces: Time, Space, and the Dialectics of Memory*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999.

<sup>2</sup> Franziska Seraphim, *War Memory and Social Politics in Japan, 1945-2005*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006, in particular, pp.317-323.

position thereby unwittingly replicates the earlier arguments of those who posited a normative ‘north-western Europe’ from which Germany, in its own earlier *Sonderweg*, had strayed before eventually becoming a capitalist liberal democracy.<sup>3</sup> In contrast to these positions, I take a less sanguine view with respect to increasing convergences between Germany and Japan.

Contestation remains a feature of collective memory in contemporary Japan, to be sure; but I contend that collective memory in Japan and Germany have followed divergent paths since the early 1990s.

Divided into two parts, this chapter on history and memory in postwar Germany and Japan forms the backdrop for my discussion of memorial sites in Berlin and Tokyo, and sets the stage for the latter segments of this study, in which I identify and trace the convergences and divergences that emerge out of a comparison of the postwar history of Germany and Japan. The first section of this chapter follows the signposts of some of the significant memory events that have shaped the postwar history of the Federal Republic of Germany (in both its Bonn and Berlin incarnations). The second section does the same for the postwar ‘history of memory’ of Japan.

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<sup>3</sup> See Philip Seaton, *Japan’s Contested War Memories: The ‘Memory Rifts’ in Historical Consciousness of World War II*: London: Routledge, 2007. It is worth noting that Laura Hein and Akiko Takenaka take a more dim view of the results of the so-called ‘civil war of memory’ (pace Kang Sang-Jun, *Sekai*, 1997) than does Seaton. Perhaps the less sanguine viewpoint adopted by Hein and Takenaka has to do with a perspective slightly further removed in time from the mid- to late 1990s taken up by Seaton. (See Hein and Takenaka, “Exhibiting World War II in Japan and the United State since 1995,” in *Pacific Historical Review*, 76:1, 2007).

## PART ONE. GERMANY: FROM SILENCE TO CONSENSUS<sup>4</sup>

Something unexpected occurred in the Federal Republic in 1979. After years of stylized modernist or post-modernist literary, theatrical, artistic and cinematographic productions that grappled with what went horribly awry, a production from the land of mass kitsch captivated audiences and succeeded in forcing open the floodgates that had blocked a sustained – and mass popular cultural – debate about the Holocaust in Germany. This prime-time American soap opera moved millions while demonstrating to professional historians “how limited the impact of their research on Nazism had been.”<sup>5</sup> According to Alf Lüdtke, during the phone-ins that were a feature of the January 1979 broadcasts of *Holocaust* in West Germany, the professional historians invited to staff the phone lines “increasingly ran into trouble and displayed insecurity, if not helplessness”<sup>6</sup> at the tenor of questions ranging from who acquired the property of those people deported from town on short notice to the railway employees who conducted the trains. This humorous yet somewhat tragic account of ‘helpless professional historians’ illustrates both the stakes and the tensions of a past that, as Ernst Nolte infamously complained, will not go

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<sup>4</sup> If the periodization becomes confusing at times, it is because I am mapping the historical periodization of various memorial sites, in particular, the Topography of Terror, onto the more or less generally accepted periodizations of postwar German history. In terms of ‘memory history,’ these broad periodizations are further marked by sub-periodizations and cross-cutting periodizations. Though contestable, we can paint the broad strokes of postwar German history in the following fashion. 1945-1949 was the time of defeat and occupation. 1949-1968 witnessed the period of state formation (the Federal Republic of Germany, or West Germany, and the German Democratic Republic, or East Germany) and the intensification of the Cold War, an era dominated by the chancellorship of Konrad Adenauer (Christian Democratic Union, or CDU). 1968-1989 was marked by the generational upheaval in the years surrounding 1968, which set the tone for the social turbulence of the 1970s and 1980s, especially in the Federal Republic. 1989 to the present saw the toppling of the Berlin Wall, an event which brought about the reunification of Germany under the auspices of the Berlin Republic.

<sup>5</sup> Alf Lüdtke, “‘Coming to Terms with the Past’: Illusions of Remembering, Ways of Forgetting Nazism in West Germany,” *The Journal of Modern History*, 65:3, September 1993, p.543.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p.546.

away.<sup>7</sup> It also signals the extent to which a full-fledged generational shift had begun to alter the terms of the discussion about the Nazi era.<sup>8</sup>

Monuments, museums, memory practice, and counter-memory all serve to underscore the stakes of how which version of the past gets represented for whose interests – which past remains present, as it were. The memorial sites that came into being in the years since the late 1970s present an interesting vantage point from which to explore this very much *processual* aspect of collective memory as the generational shift raised new questions and issues. In a work comparing Yad Vashem, the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, and the Topography of Terror, Matthias Hass asserts – rather surprisingly given the implications of his work – that the history of memorial sites did not exert a direct influence on the major memory events of the 1980s and 1990s.<sup>9</sup> But from even a cursory glance into the history of Topography of Terror’s development along with that of the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, it is impossible to speak of most memory events without reference to memorial sites, and vice versa. The Walser-Bubis Debate (1998) was touched off by the planning process for the Memorial to the Murdered Jews

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<sup>7</sup> See Ernst Nolte, “The Past That Will Not Pass: A Speech That Could Be Written but Not Delivered,” In James Knowlton and Truett Cates (trans.), *Forever in the Shadow of Hitler? Original Documents of the Historikerstreit, The Controversy Concerning the Singularity of the Holocaust*. New Jersey: Humanities Press International, Inc., 1993, pp.18-23.

<sup>8</sup> See Peter Reichel, *Vergangenheitsbewältigung in Deutschland: Die Auseinandersetzung mit der NS-Diktatur von 1945 bis heute*, Munich: C.H. Beck, 2001, p.205. While it is by no means unique to claim that different generations experience the past differently, Aleida Assmann and Ute Frevert pay close attention to the chiasmic relations of memory linking victors and vanquished, victims and perpetrators, and, importantly, individual memory and generational memory. Contemporaries of a particular generational cohort – such as those of the war and National Socialism – will integrate the memory of this time period into their *personal* memories in a different way than those for whom the Third Reich is experienced through documents and representations. Assmann and Frevert thus make an important distinction between ‘living memory’ and ‘mediated memory,’ a distinction that informs my own interest in how memorial sites convey experience and transmit the past to future generations. See Aleida Assmann and Ute Frevert, *Geschichtsvergessenheit, Geschichtsversessenheit: Vom Umgang mit der deutschen Vergangenheit nach 1945*, Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1999, pp.9-14.

<sup>9</sup> See Matthias Hass, *Gestaltetes Gedenken. Yad Vashem, Das U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, und die Stiftung Topographie des Terrors*, Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 2002, pp.165-166. Hass bases his use of the term ‘Geschichtspolitik’ on Edgar Wolfrum’s *Geschichtspolitik in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland: Der Weg zur bundesrepublikanischen Erinnerung, 1948-1990*, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1999, pp.13-38. Depending on the context, I will call refer to ‘Geschichtspolitik’ as either ‘memory events’ or ‘the politics of memory.’

of Europe, and the *Historikerstreit* (1986-1987), though making no direct reference to the Gestapo-Gelände, grew out of an earlier controversy surrounding the siting and content of the proposed German Historical Museum, potentially on the site of the former Gestapo headquarters.<sup>10</sup> Memorial sites such as the Topography of Terror thus reflect broader currents in collective memory.

Before picking up the thread of memorial sites, I will outline the broader context of postwar memory against which these sites developed. As a means of tracing the radical transformation of collective memory from the late 1970s to the early 1990s, I will touch upon the period of relative silence in the immediate postwar period up to the 1960s regarding the Holocaust and the Third Reich in order to contextualize the later debates that had a profound effect on the development of Berlin's landscape of memory, as well as the memoryscape of Germany more broadly. From there, I turn towards the struggle to negotiate identity in the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s against the backdrop of demands to 'normalize' or overcome the Holocaust and the Third Reich. It is within the affectively charged space of representation – the memorial site – that the cultural and political aspects of attempts to either master, overcome, repeat, or work through the past in postwar Germany unfolds.

## **MANAGING VOLATILE MEMORY FROM DEFEAT AND OCCUPATION THROUGH THE 1980S**

Collective memory in the Federal Republic of Germany underwent a massive transformation in the years between the late 1960s and early 1990s in reaction and response to

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<sup>10</sup> The very broad contours of the debate are as follows: various constituencies favoured siting the museum on the vacant lot of the former Gestapo headquarters – with some going so far as to envision the rebuilding of the Prinz-Albrecht-Palais – while other constituencies advocated for the erection of a monument to victims of fascism on the site.

the silences and selective memory of the immediate postwar decades.<sup>11</sup> During the Occupation from 1945-1949, the initial West German confrontation with its immediate past was initiated primarily from without. The Nuremberg Trial of 1945-1946, as well as the supervised process of de-nazification, confirmed Germany's status as 'world pariah.' Re-iterating in 1967 what he had argued in *The Question of German Guilt* of 1946, Karl Jaspers emphasized the need to remember: "Untruths lie at the core of our political life when we forget the actual origin of our republic, our unsolved task."<sup>12</sup> He continues: "Perhaps [the untruths] can all be grouped around a single one: that the Germans were never really Nazis... That at bottom, though terror may have beclouded their thinking at times, they always remained as decent, peace-loving, and truthful as

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<sup>11</sup> Virtually all scholars of collective memory in Germany agree that a radical transformation of German engagements with its past was ushered in by the generational upheaval beginning in the late 1960s. Where they differ slightly is in their periodization, and in the kinds of characteristics and dynamics they see dominating each period. See, for example, Dariuř Zifonun, *Gedenken und Identität: Der deutsche Erinnerungsdiskurs*, Frankfurt and New York: Campus Verlag, 2004, and Jennifer A. Jordan, *Structures of Memory: Understanding Urban Change in Berlin and Beyond*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006, pp.28-58. See also Norbert Frei's essay, "Abschied von der Zeitgenossenschaft: Der Nationalsozialismus und seine Erforschung auf dem Weg in die Geschichte," in Norbert Frei, *1945 und wir: Das Dritte Reich im Beußtsein der Deutschen*, Munich: C.H. Beck, 2005. Peter Reichel's *Vergangenheitsbewältigung in Deutschland* concerns itself primarily with the first two decades of the postwar period, focusing on the Nuremberg Trial, restitution, the Auschwitz Trial in Frankfurt, and the debate over the statute of limitations. This detailed discussion sets the stage for the generational shift to come. In her contribution to her work co-authored with Aleida Assmann, *Geschichtsvergessenheit, Geschichtsversessenheit*, Ute Frevert reminds those who place a strong emphasis on the 1990s as the period in which the theme of National Socialism dominated the daily agenda that the shift in perspective regarding the National Socialist past was already well under way during the 1980s. The 1990s only continued and intensified this trend. She emphasizes how little resonance the revisionist perspective had among intellectuals and scholars, going so far as to contend that the *Historikerstreit* resulted in a clear defeat of the position that sought to relativize the past, thereby strengthening the hand of the 'social-liberal' experts (who were then in the minority) incorporated into state museum planning. (See pp.258-261). Karen Till, *The New Berlin: Memory, Politics, Place*, Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2005, offers a very fine-grained account through the lens of the Gestapo-Gelände of the crucial period in which the transformation of collective memory occurred. For a consideration of monuments and memorial sites against the larger sweep of postwar history, see Matthias Hass, *Gestaltetes Gedenken*, pp.161-186. As the backdrop to his institutional history of the Topography of Terror, Hass identifies three distinct phases. In the first phase during the 1950s and 1960s, survivors and former inmates constituted the largest group of visitors to memorial sites. In the next phase during the 1970s, the decentralization of German cultural policy gave rise to local history studies of the National Socialist era. As the 1970s flowed into the 1980s, these local history initiatives joined hands (or in many cases overlapped) with the environmental and anti-atomic peace movements. The extra-parliamentary edge of these movements set the stage for prickly relations with, and mistrust of, state involvement over the course of the 1980s.

<sup>12</sup> Karl Jaspers, *The Future of Germany*, trans. E.B. Ashton with a Foreword by Hannah Arendt, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1967, p.59. Jaspers' work could be read as an answer to Adenauer's early denunciations of the inefficacy of the de-nazification process.

they had been previously and are today.”<sup>13</sup> However, Jaspers’ call in 1946 for each individual to confront his or her own degree of criminal, political, moral, and metaphysical guilt<sup>14</sup> received a cool reception from representatives of certain segments of German society, most notably from future West German chancellor Konrad Adenauer, who reasoned that the old ghosts of nationalism might be reawakened by too bracing a confrontation with the past.<sup>15</sup> As Jeffrey Herf points out, for Adenauer, “economic recovery and political legitimacy, not additional purges, were the proper medicine.”<sup>16</sup> *Schlußstrich* was the operative word – draw a line under the Nazi past, and move forward. Adenauer’s political prescription vis-à-vis the recent past was a politics of forgetting.<sup>17</sup>

In the first instance, then, during the immediate postwar through the 1960s, self-identification was predicated upon a caesura with a Nazi past figured as radical alterity. Indeed the common way of referring to the defeat in 1945 as ‘Stunde Null’ marks the extent to which many in Germany and Europe felt themselves standing on the threshold of something new.

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid, p.59

<sup>14</sup> For an illuminating discussion of Jaspers’ gradations of guilt, see Anson Rabinbach, *In the Shadow of Catastrophe: German Intellectuals between Apocalypse and Enlightenment*, Berkeley, Los Angeles: The University of California Press, 1997, pp.143-146 and pp.163-164.

<sup>15</sup> See Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945*, New York and London: Penguin Books, 2005, pp.54-61, pp.236-244, and pp.270-271 for references to Adenauer’s views on denazification within the context of his fears of right-wing revival, as well as the amnesties he championed. See also Norbert Frei, *Vergangenheitspolitik: Die Anfänge der Bundesrepublik und die NS-Vergangenheit* (1996), Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1999, pp.133-306 for a thorough treatment of the issue of war criminals within the interlinked amnesty debates of 1951-1952 and the debate about rearmament (1950-1951). Adenauer used the issue of amnesty as a bargaining chip in negotiations with the United States, skillfully playing off West German anxiety at re-armament against the American desire to see a re-armed West Germany as a buffer against potential Soviet expansion. In exchange for an amnesty of war criminals, Germany agreed to re-armament, formally joining NATO in 1955, and inaugurating its Bundeswehr in 1956.

<sup>16</sup> Jeffrey Herf, *Divided Memory: The Nazi Past in the Two Germanys*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997, p.225.

<sup>17</sup> Against the tendency to paint too stark of a contrast between the years of silence, amnesia and repression, and the dawning of open confrontation with the past from the late 1960s onward, it would be wise to bear in mind that the ‘Schlußstrich discourse’ reappeared at various times in the 1980s and 1990s, most notably in the debates about the proposed German Historical Museum in the early 1980s, the Bitburg affair (1985), the *Historikerstreit* a few years later, and again during the rededication of the Neue Wache (1993). Indeed the 2009 festivities celebrating the twentieth anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall, and the sixtieth anniversary of the coming into being of the Federal Republic evinced no small amount of a desire to emerge from and draw yet another line under the National Socialist past.

During this time, the fraught ruins – not only precarious structures that posed a physical threat of collapsing, but those that were politically freighted – were pulled down or, in some cases, ignored. This sweeping away of the rubble set the stage for the next period. As the Cold War was intensifying, both states in the newly-divided Germany cast about for their own respective foundational narratives and serviceable heroes. The German Democratic Republic celebrated the anti-fascist resistance and the heroism of communists in the face of persecution, while the Federal Republic under Adenauer directed its praise toward conservative military resistance, and the efforts of democrats and the church.<sup>18</sup> As several commentators have suggested, a period of silence and selective memory set in on the cultural level after the experience of total war and the crushing and traumatic defeat. Lasting from roughly 1949-1968, this was a period characterized by partial amnesia and a repression of traumatic memories in the interest, first, of survival in bleak postwar conditions of deprivation, and then of rebuilding. In contrast to the concern with the traces of the past in the present that marked collective memory from the 1970s and 1980s onwards – the ‘present’ problematized and symbolically bound up with the past through memory-work – the past during the Adenauer era receded behind the present needs of recovery and renewal.

Writing in 1959, Theodor Adorno sounded a cautionary note that would be echoed a decade later by Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich. Adorno warned that “our prosperity is the product of circumstances; no one trusts in its unlimited duration.”<sup>19</sup> For that reason it was dubious to put one’s faith in economic success as a means of coming to terms with the past – and

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<sup>18</sup> It was as a means of circumventing this ritualized dimension of according honour to heroes in the form of traditional, didactic monuments that 1980s proponents of the ‘active museum’ developed their notions of the pedagogical function of memorial sites provisioned with exhibits, libraries, and information centers. I discuss the notion of an active museum in subsequent chapters on the Topography of Terror.

<sup>19</sup> Theodor W. Adorno, “What Does Coming to Terms with the Past Mean?” in Geoffrey Hartman (ed.), *Bitburg in Moral and Political Perspective*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986, pp.122-123.



Adorno acknowledged that one could not live forever in the shadow of the past. But the case of National Socialism was different, for “to this day we don’t know whether it is only a ghost of what was so monstrous that it didn’t even die off with its own death, or whether it never died in the first place.”<sup>20</sup> Anticipating the arguments of the Mitscherlichs – and, according to Geoffrey Hartman, the issues raised by the Bitburg cemetery visit of 1985<sup>21</sup> – Adorno’s psychoanalytically inflected argument claims that the diminished faculty of memory of the immediate postwar period “stubbornly glorifies the National Socialist period, which fulfilled the collective power-fantasies of those who were powerless as individuals and, indeed, felt themselves to be somebody only by virtue of such collective might.”<sup>22</sup> The collapse of the Hitler regime exacted a heavy toll.

Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich continued this line of argument with their widely influential *The Inability to Mourn* (1967). For them the problem lies in the nature of the unconscious psychic economy. Unconscious issues of loss and experiences that were both painful and shameful contributed to the shattering of German self-esteem.<sup>23</sup> Mourning involves loss, yet many argue that in the Federal Republic mourning was hindered by the energy required to fuel the economic miracle. In addition, for many Germans, naming the loss to be mourned (Hitler, national pride, community) would entail facing the personal guilt of complicity in a discredited regime. As the Mitscherlichs claimed, “one of the economic advantages of this global

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p.115.

<sup>21</sup> See Geoffrey Hartman’s “Editor’s Note” to the Adorno essay contained in *Bitburg in Moral and Political Perspective*, p.114.

<sup>22</sup> Adorno, *op.cit.*, p.121.

<sup>23</sup> See Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich, *The Inability to Mourn* (1967), trans. Beverly R. Placzek, with a Preface by Robert Jay Lifton, New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1975, pp.xxv, xxvi. According to their much-discussed thesis, the ‘inability to mourn’ was characterized by the decalecting of libidinal energy hitherto invested in the lost love object (Hitler), the repressing the memory of that lost love object, and the recathecting of libidinal energy into economic production. Repressed memory was also repressed guilt: the guilt of having invested so much energy in the National Socialist project. Mourning would entail painful remembering of that guilt, a luxury many Germans felt they could ill-afford as they struggled to rebuild their lives, their immediate surroundings, their country and – most importantly – their self-esteem.

retreat from their past was that it made possible for Germans an unhampered dedication to the present and its tasks.”<sup>24</sup> Echoing Adorno, the Mitscherlichs argued that the fall of Hitler constituted a traumatic devaluation of the ego resulting in a sense of worthlessness.<sup>25</sup> Summing up their argument, the Mitscherlichs maintained that:

The inability to mourn the loss of the Führer is the result of an intense defense against guilt, shame, and anxiety [...]. The Nazi past was de-realized, i.e., emptied of reality. The occasion for mourning was not only the death of Adolf Hitler as a *real* person, but above all this disappearance as the representations of the *collective ego-ideal*.<sup>26</sup>

Although this argument has continued to wield influence, it has not been without its detractors.<sup>27</sup> Robert Moeller concurs with the Mitscherlichs insofar as he accepts that taking leave of the war years was made possible by a massive self-investment in the modernization of German industrial potential “right down to the kitchen utensils.”<sup>28</sup> Yet he is critical of both Adorno and the Mitscherlichs for failing to recognize the power of certain integrative myths, not least of which was the one that emphasized not German well-being but German suffering.<sup>29</sup> Moeller allows that the ‘imagined community’ of the Federal Republic was shaped in part by the so-called economic miracle. But this prosperity did not automatically entail a willed forgetting. Moeller would rather that we cease to lament that which was not remembered and focus instead on what was selectively remembered: the German victims of the war on the Eastern Front.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p.25.

<sup>25</sup> See *ibid.*, p.19.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p.23.

<sup>27</sup> Recent scholarship has challenged the notion that the late 1940s through the 1960s were decades of silence about the war. See, for example, the essays collected in Hanna Schissler, “Introduction: Writing about 1950s West Germany,” in Hanna Schissler (ed.), *The Miracle Years: A Cultural History of West Germany 1949-1968*, Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001. In her Introduction, Schissler prefers to refer to a ‘veiled presence’ of certain memories (p.7). Although this collection and similar works do much to recuperate aspects of social experience that have received less attention, they do not dispel the notion that not much was said about National Socialism or the Holocaust in the decades immediately following the war.

<sup>28</sup> Robert G. Moeller, “Remembering the War in a Nation of Victims: West German Pasts in the 1950s,” in Schissler (ed.), *The Miracle Years*, p.100.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p.100.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., pp.84-85.

Yet despite this and other valid criticisms of the Mitscherlichs, their observations can still contribute a great deal to our understanding of the period prior to the generational upheaval of the late 1960s and 1970s.<sup>31</sup> Even without the influential yet controversial work of the Mitscherlichs, it seems difficult to deny that there was some sort of ‘veil of silence’ during the immediate postwar period over certain aspects of the Third Reich, or else there would not have been such a vehement reaction on the part of the generation of the 1960s against its parents, followed by an explosion of popular interest during the 1970s and 1980s in reinterpreting often forgotten aspects of the German past.

It was against this relative silence about certain aspects of Germany’s recent past that the grassroots citizens’ initiatives spearheaded by a younger generation born after the war began their search for traces that connected them to the recent past. Historical exhibits accompanying Berlin’s 750<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations in 1987 drew enthusiastic crowds. Prior to that, the 1981 “Taking Stock of Prussia” (Preußen: Versuch einer Bilanz) exhibition, mounted in the Martin-Gropius-Bau just to the west of what would become the Topography of Terror, drew some 450,000 visitors during its three-month run. Soon it became known to a wider public over the course of the Prussia exhibition that the lot next door housing a scrap company and race track of sorts was once ‘the most feared address in Berlin.’ Once this awareness had taken hold, the enthusiasm for reinterpreting the forgotten aspects of the past spilled over into the struggle to preserve the neglected and densely overgrown terrain abutting the Berlin Wall in the

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<sup>31</sup> Criticisms range from the problematic nature of drawing analogies valid for groups from what is a clinical practice focusing on the individual to the casting broad net of censure over all of Germany, whether individual Germans had perpetrated crimes, or had gone about their own business with their heads down during the war. Still other commentators adduce as problematic the fact that the Mitscherlichs based their diagnosis of a collective neurosis on ‘spontaneous observations’ of individual case studies of patients who had sought help in the first place. What *they* may have repressed cannot be extrapolated to an entire group. See, for example, Anthony D. Kauders, “History as Censure: ‘Repression’ and ‘Philo-Semitism’ in Postwar Germany,” *History and Memory*, 15:1, Spring/Summer 2003, pp.101-102. Several of the essays contributed to Schissler’s edited collection, *The Miracle Years*, take up a position against the Mitscherlichs. Matthias Hass, Tony Judt, and Ian Buruma are also among those who express reservations with the Mitscherlichs’ approaches and conclusions.

northernmost reaches of then West Berlin and transform it into a memorial site that would do justice to the memory of the victims of Nazi oppression.

### **1979-1989: CONTESTED HISTORIES AND THE ‘RE-DISCOVERY’ OF THE GESTAPO-GELÄNDE**

The ‘re-discovery’ of the Gestapo-Gelände in the late 1970s (which eventually became the Topography of Terror) is only one of the more prominent examples of what Dominick LaCapra has figured as ‘the return of the historical repressed.’<sup>32</sup> Within this context, the ‘rediscovery’ of the Gestapo-Gelände in the late 1970s and its development into the ‘Topography of Terror’ over the course of the 1980s constitutes a material manifestation of what was repressed, and provides a lens through which to view the shifting content of ‘victimhood’ course of the 1980s alongside the concomitant increase in awareness of perpetration. The period during which the Gestapo-Gelände became a topic of debate was marked by a protracted and heated conflict between those who desired to ‘overcome the past’<sup>33</sup> so as to turn the page and move on, and those who emphasized the importance of keeping the past a present concern not so much as a melancholic repetition of trauma characteristic of what some have called ‘wound cultures’ as it was a means of critical engagement with the past.

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<sup>32</sup> LaCapra relates the return of the repressed to “the variable workings of repetitive temporality in (or as) history. Here the notions of simple continuity or discontinuity are deceptive, for ‘continuity’ involves not pure identity over time but some mode of repetition.” See Dominick LaCapra, *Representing the Holocaust: History, Theory, Trauma*, Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1994, p.174.

<sup>33</sup> *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* is one of the more ambivalent terms that characterized the debates of the 1970s and especially the 1980s. For some, it meant a productive ‘coming to terms with the past,’ and represented a sensitivity to the ethical dimensions of remembrance: atonement, restitution, responsibility. On the other hand, the term could also mean ‘overcoming the past’ so as to ‘normalize’ and domesticate it. The more critical dimensions of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* are often expressed by the term *Aufarbeitung*, a term which conveys the sense that memory requires work, working through, and continual attention.

During the 1980s, the renewed nationalist and conservative search for a useable past sought to downplay the uniqueness of ‘the Final Solution’ in relation to the Stalinist terror.<sup>34</sup> The ensuing *Historikerstreit*, or Historians’ Dispute, between competing visions of the past was less about facts and more about the competing modes of representing the past.<sup>35</sup> Erupting in the wake of American president Ronald Reagan’s visit to a war cemetery in Bitburg at the behest of chancellor Helmut Kohl on 5 May 1985, it cut to the heart of the question of postwar German national identity. Both Kohl and Reagan believed that remembering Germany’s fallen would enact a symbolic reconciliation between the United States and Germany, as well as confirm the strength of their NATO ties and unity against communism.<sup>36</sup> This gesture of reconciliation and the possibility of the ‘normalization’ of the past that it held out coincided with mounting attempts to ‘historicize’ the Holocaust and National Socialism.<sup>37</sup> Charles Maier astutely observes

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<sup>34</sup> In this context, it is important to note the various political valences attached to the notion of ‘uniqueness.’ For some, such as those who aligned themselves with Ernst Nolte during the *Historikerstreit*, the questioning of the uniqueness of the Holocaust served a dubious normalizing role. In other lines of inquiry, questioning the uniqueness of the Holocaust serves to draw attention to colonial genocides, such as the genocide committed by the Germans against the Herero and Nama between 1904 and 1907 in German Southwest Africa (present-day Namibia). For example, see Sven Lindqvist’s stylistically original *‘Exterminate All the Brutes’: One Man’s Odyssey into the Heart of Darkness and the Origins of European Genocide* (1992), trans. Joan Tate, New York: The New Press, 1996, especially p.10 and pp.149-158, where he points out that no one mentions colonial violence and genocide in debates about uniqueness or comparability. For a more recent challenge to the uniqueness of the Holocaust that emphasizes the significance of Stalin’s atrocities, see Timothy Snyder’s *Bloodlands: Europe between Hitler and Stalin*, New York: Basic Books, 2010. Incidentally, the defense of the uniqueness of the Holocaust also figures prominently in strands of Japanese war memory, especially in relation to atrocities committed by Japanese troops.

<sup>35</sup> See Mary Fulbrook, *The Divided Nation: A History of Germany 1918-1990*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991, p.305. Curiously, Fulbrook remarks that the *Historikerstreit* “ultimately served more to illustrate the contentious, problematic, and political nature of perceptions of history in the Federal Republic than to shed any new light on the genuinely difficult questions of the past” (p.306). I say ‘curiously’ because here as elsewhere in her work, Fulbrook’s intrepid pursuit of ‘historiographical questions’ steers her away from a key point. From the vantage point of the 2010s, that the debate was less about ‘facts’ and ‘difficult questions of the past’ than it was about the modality of assimilating a difficult past to the present represents precisely what *is* interesting about the *Historikerstreit* as a symptom of the 1980s cultural landscape of (West) Germany.

<sup>36</sup> That to which those in charge of planning the visit remained insensitive, however, was the revelation that there were some forty-seven graves of SS men interspersed among the other two thousand graves of soldiers who had fallen serving the Third Reich. Despite a flurry of protest on both sides of the Atlantic, Reagan and Kohl went ahead with their visit. See the collection of essays and documents edited by Geoffrey Hartman, *Bitburg in Moral and Political Perspective*, chronicling the events and responses surrounding Reagan’s visit to the cemetery at Bitburg.

<sup>37</sup> See Charles Maier, *The Unmasterable Past: History, Holocaust, and German National Identity*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988, “Introduction.” Maier’s work is by far the most sustained and subtle discussion of the *Historikerstreit* as it impinges upon questions of historical methodology and approach, the question of

that the *Historikerstreit* was akin to a “collective self-examination” in which the Germans debated “what quality of nationhood is allowed them by their burdened past and by their fractured present.”<sup>38</sup>

Linked as it was to Kohl’s 1982 and 1983 calls for historical museums in Bonn and Berlin that sought to minimize the damage done to German identity by the twelve years of National Socialist rule, the *Historikerstreit* was itself a product of the seismic generational changes in Germany.<sup>39</sup> Over the course of (West) Germany’s rebuilding, economics displaced politics. Thanks to the immediate situation in which many found themselves during the first decades of the postwar period, there was but scant appreciation that the crimes of the Nazis committed in the name of Germany had been perpetrated by Germans. ‘Normalization’ was alive and well in Adenauer’s Germany. The generation of 1968 challenged and destabilized this convenient postwar foundational myth and its attendant depoliticization of the citizenry, perpetuated as it was by memorials such as the Bendlerblock dedicated to the nobility of (an exaggerated) resistance.<sup>40</sup>

Although the desire to ‘historicize’ the past need not necessarily be characterized by a desire to ‘normalize’ the events and experiences of the Second World War,<sup>41</sup> Ernst Nolte’s

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comparability in history and its relation to use (and abuse), and the generational divides that contribute nuances to the search for identity.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p.8.

<sup>39</sup> The strongest call came in Kohl’s 1983 ‘government intent’ speech. See Helmut Kohl, “Regierungserklärung des Bundeskanzlers am 4. Mai 1983 vor dem Deutschen Bundestag in Bonn: ‘Programm der Erneuerung, Freiheit, Mitmenschlichkeit, Verantwortung,’” *Bulletin* (43), Bonn, 5 May 1983.

<sup>40</sup> In the immediate postwar, the nascent conservative democracy that emerged under Adenauer sought out serviceable heroes who had resisted Nazi tyranny. The Bendlerblock Memorial dedicated to the 20 July 1944 resisters who plotted the assassination of Hitler traces its origins as a monument back to 1952-1953.

<sup>41</sup> In a nuanced reflection on the exchange between Martin Broszat and Saul Friedländer regarding the possibility or desirability of ‘historicizing’ National Socialism, Jörn Rüsen, in his “The Logic of Historicization: Metahistorical Reflections on the Debate between Friedländer and Broszat.” *History and Memory*, 9:1/2, Fall 1997, sees one of the fundamental aspects of the exchange to be the following: “Broszat’s ‘Plea’ is propelled by his repeated assertion that *moral condemnation acts as a blockade to knowledge*. Friedländer did not dispute the necessity of a historicization that can serve to open up such windows on new knowledge. Yet he clearly saw the concomitant danger: the

notorious attempt to compare Auschwitz and the Gulag touched a raw nerve. In his controversial 1986 article, “The Past That Will Not Pass,” Nolte called for the re-evaluation of Germany’s role in perpetuating the Holocaust on the dubious grounds that the Gulag Archipelago was primary to Auschwitz, that the Bolshevik murder of an entire class was antecedent – logically and factually – to the ‘racial murder’ (the scare quotes are Nolte’s) committed by National Socialists. Hiding behind the fig leaf of the disciplinary rigour of the historical profession, Nolte puts forward the following contention as a ‘simple truth’:

It is a notable shortcoming that the literature about National Socialism does not know or does not want to admit to what degree all the deeds – with the sole exception of the technical process of gassing [! – FDH] – that the National Socialists later committed had already been described in the voluminous literature of the 1920s: mass deportations and executions, torture, death camps, the extermination of entire groups using strictly objective selection criteria, and public demands for the annihilation of millions of guiltless people who were thought to be ‘enemies.’<sup>42</sup>

Unsurprisingly, such a provocation set off a firestorm of controversy, firstly in the German press, and then in German and international scholarly publications.<sup>43</sup>

Jürgen Habermas’s eventual intervention in the *Historikerstreit* draws out the dialogic tensions among multiple, often competing voices within and across national boundaries.

Advocating on behalf of the “anamnesiac power of solidarity” that the dead can claim with the present, Habermas’s sentiments speak volumes in favour of accepting the burden of historical

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historical experience of National Socialism – and the Holocaust in particular – could forfeit the very quality which is at the core of their special historical significance” (p.116).

<sup>42</sup> Nolte, “The Past That Will Not Pass,” in Knowlton and Cates (trans.), *Forever in the Shadow of Hitler?* pp.21-22. (Originally published in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 6 June 1986).

<sup>43</sup> See Knowlton and Cates (trans.), *Forever in the Shadow of Hitler?* for translations of contributions to the debate from a roster of scholars that demonstrates how extensively the debate exercised the historical profession in West Germany. Among others, essays and articles appear from Nolte, Andreas Hillgruber, Michael Stürmer, Hagen Schulze, Klaus Hildebrand, Joachim Fest, Karl Dietrich Bracher, Eberhard Jäckel, Jürgen Kocka, Hans Mommsen, Martin Brozsat, Christian Meier, Thomas Nipperdey, and Jürgen Habermas. (Incidentally, several of these scholars had already been involved together or ranged against one another in early 1980s symposia and pilot studies about the proposed historical museums in Berlin and Bonn). See also Dan Diner (ed.), *Ist der Nationalsozialismus Geschichte? Zu Historisierung und Historikerstreit*, Frankfurt a. M.: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1987.

responsibility as Germany's less than positive past collided with the need to work through shame and guilt.<sup>44</sup> Against the desire to obtain closure via the pacification of troublesome memories, Habermas pointedly takes aim at some of the issues raised above by Nolte's essay by posing the following question: "should we, with the help of historical comparisons, attempt macabre squarings of accounts in order to sneak out of the liability for the encumbered history of the Germans?"<sup>45</sup> The politics of remembering that Habermas articulates are a clear invocation: to remember, and publicly. His conception of public memory challenges those who might otherwise wish to erase or transform memories of past events in an effort to 'normalize' or 'sanitize' the past.

Over the course of the 1980s, many took up this challenge with alacrity. In terms of critical engagement with the past, James Young has identified a 'counter-monumental' aesthetic that inspired artists, architects, and memorial site designers in West Germany to turn the conventional monument 'against itself.'<sup>46</sup> Critical engagement also entailed an active, self-reflexive involvement in acquiring knowledge about the past. In the already decentralized climate of West German cultural policy, local citizens' initiatives, voluntary organizations, and history workshops sprung up to investigate their local surroundings and make visible what had been physically and metaphorically hidden from view.<sup>47</sup> In the case of the history of the

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<sup>44</sup> Jürgen Habermas, "On the Public Use of History: The Official Self-Understanding of the Federal Republic Is Breaking Up," in Knowlton and Cates (trans.) *Forever in the Shadow of Hitler?* p.165.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p.167.

<sup>46</sup> See James E. Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1993, especially Ch.1, "The Countermonument: Memory against Itself in Germany," and Ch.3, "The Gestapo-Gelände: Topography as Unfinished Memory." The artists, designers, and architects whose work fit this characterization drew their inspiration from, while also contributing to, currents in contemporary art at the time. For a collection of critical theoretical essays contemporaneous to these developments, see Hal Foster (ed.), *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*, Seattle, WA: Bay Press, 1983, in particular Douglas Crimp's essay, "On the Museum's Ruins," and Kenneth Frampton's "Towards a Critical Regionalism: Six Points for an Architecture of Resistance."

<sup>47</sup> See Matthias Hass, p.167. The rallying cry of the various citizens' initiatives and history workshops, 'Dig where you stand!', motivated many of these groups, as did an enthusiasm for a Foucauldian archeological understanding of the past as layered, with its 'foundations' hidden from view. Hass, however, places himself in the camp that rejects



Topography of Terror, the political edge of this activism was directed toward disrupting the city fabric (many spoke of a desire to maintain the site as a scar in the middle of Berlin), and toward confronting people with the reality of the Nazi past. By mitigating the abstraction of evil, the architectural traces of the past uncovered by citizens' groups and voluntary associations engendered novel affective relationships to the past that contrasted with the dogmatic official narrative spun during the Adenauer era. The uncovering of previously concealed traces also had a profound influence on the shifting understanding of victimhood and perpetration, subtly transforming the content of victimhood against the backdrop of increasing awareness of the need to commemorate and transmit to future generations Germany's role as perpetrator.<sup>48</sup>

The difficulty of confronting perpetration in the early 1980s hinged on the relative ease with which various segments of society – on the left and on the right of the political spectrum – felt an affinity with the victim, whereas perpetrators and their fellow travelers permitted no such easy identification. Compounding the acute difficulty and painfulness of this situation, 'perpetrator history' was the history of parents, relatives, neighbours, even friends. Stefanie Endlich's numerous essays on the process that brought about the current iteration of the Topography of Terror also has much to say about this shift in victim consciousness. Indeed, her views were shaped as an active participant in the opposition to Lea Rosh's *Perspektive Berlin* proposal to erect a monument to Jewish victims on the former Gestapo site.<sup>49</sup>

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too strong of an emphasis on the repression of the past between 1945-1968, citing the common examples of the Ulm Einsatzgruppe Trial (1958), the Frankfurt Auschwitz Trials (1963-1965), the attention paid to the Eichmann Trial, along with the debates about the renewal of the suspension of the statute of limitations on war crimes (the *Verjährungsdebatten*) of 1961, 1965, 1969, and 1979.

<sup>48</sup> See Hass, pp.170-173, and Zifonun, pp.68-70.

<sup>49</sup> Stefanie Endlich's influential writings on the appropriateness of certain kinds of memorial sites, along with the work of the Expert Commission, will figure prominently in the chapters on the Topography of Terror. For the contours of the dispute between Lea Rosh's *Perspektive Berlin* and the groups (with which Endlich was affiliated) championing an 'active museum' on the site of the former Gestapo and SS headquarters, see Bürgerinitiative Perspektive Berlin (ed.), *Ein Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas: Dokumentation 1988-1995*, Berlin, 1995,

## THE BACKDROP TO THE EMERGING BERLINER MEMORYSCAPE IN THE 1980s AND 1990s

With the fall of the Wall and the coming of the Berlin Republic, the mode of engagement with the past particular to the Federal Republic came to gain ascendancy over that of the former GDR. Collective memory became all the more concentrated with Berlin once again the capital – concentrated in Berlin, with domestic and international attention concentrated on Berlin. Concurrently, memorial sites have achieved enhanced importance in conveying an ‘experience’ of the past to generations with little or no direct contact with the period of the Third Reich. Taken together with the prominence of other ‘memory events’ in Berlin, Germany, and internationally over the course of the 1990s, memorial sites have occupied a central place in the socio-cultural history of several countries, from Germany, Poland, and France, to Israel, the United States, and Japan, to name but a few places where memory issues have predominated.<sup>50</sup> Given this contextual shift, I would suggest approaching the current phase of the unfolding of collective memory as one in which the traumatic memory that marked previous periods has given way to a realization of the importance of affective dynamics. Although few curators, activists, scholars, and trustees involved with memorial sites would put it in these terms, they are engaging in the production and management of a dynamic that keeps afloat an affective investment with the Second World War past on the part of current and future generations. As the ‘authentic witness’ has passed on, curators, directors, and trustees of memorial sites have come to invest heavily in the ‘authentic trace’ as a means of encouraging this affective investment with the past.

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in particular “Gegenstimmen: Zur Kritik des ‘Aktiven Museums’ an der Forderung nach einem Holocaust-Mahnmal auf dem Gestapo-Gelände,” pp.44-46, and “Stellungnahme des ‘Aktiven Museums,’” (dated April 1989), pp.55-58.  
<sup>50</sup> For a sustained critical engagement with the repercussions of the explosive expansion of commemorative culture, see Andreas Huyssen, *Twilight Memories: Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia*, London and New York: Routledge, 1995, where he identifies an irony wherein “the undisputed waning of history and historical consciousness, the lament about political, social, and cultural amnesia, and the various discourses, celebratory or apocalyptic, about *posthistoire* have been accompanied in the past decade and a half by a memory boom of unprecedented proportions” (p.5).

Memorial sites have risen to prominence in the urban fabric of Berlin and other cities, and have played a key role in the transformation of collective memory in Germany. Along the way, the acrimonious nature of the 1980s confrontation gave way to a consensus of sorts by the 2000s circling around the way in which perpetration has come to figure as a component of contemporary German identity. Harald Schmid and others have dubbed this shift away from the discourse of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, marked as it was by tensions and contention, ‘*Erinnerungskultur*,’ or a culture of consensus marked by remembrance.<sup>51</sup> In his *Gedenken und Identität*, Dariusz Zifonun notes that guilt is not the end but rather the beginning of German identity formation. (Where Zifonun mentions ‘guilt,’ I would be inclined to substitute ‘historical responsibility’). Though Zifonun himself does not address the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, in light of critiques of this memorial that see it as a problematic expression of a longing for redemption it is interesting that Zifonun reads the Topography of Terror as a site at which an otherwise stigmatized German identity is not redeemed but rehabilitated.<sup>52</sup> As he argues:

The attribution of guilt for the crimes of National Socialism is, in the discourse of *Aufarbeitung*, turned inside out in a provocative way, thereby integrating the crisis of meaning into the construction of meaning itself. The rupture [of meaning provoked by exploring the attribution of guilt for the crimes of National Socialism] is maintained and stabilized, and the self-stigmatizing engagement with this rupture is incorporated together with the rupture into the core of identity.<sup>53</sup>

In the 1950s and 1960s, Germans sought to disassociate and seal themselves off from National Socialism. National Socialism was the ‘foundational crime’ against which postwar Germans contrasted their economic and political successes. By contrast, in contemporary Germany, the no-longer-repressed National Socialist past infuses the present in the form of

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<sup>51</sup> Harald Schmid, “Immer wieder ‘Nie wieder!’: Begründungsprobleme, Mythen und Perspektiven der deutschen Erinnerungskultur,” in *Dachauer Hefte* (25), November 2009. Schmid is skeptical of the force and pervasiveness of this consensus.

<sup>52</sup> See Zifonun, *Gedenken und Identität*, pp.223-224.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid*, p.227.

memorial sites that bear witness to this traumatic rupture in Germany history. But as Zifonun points out, despite the prevalence of and support for memorial institutions such as the Topography of Terror, there still exists a tension between those who see memorial sites as a means of continually problematizing and reflecting upon the past, and those – predominantly politicians – who see in memorial sites the potential to ‘heal’ a German identity riven by ‘a past that will not pass.’

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To sum up before moving on, the radical transformation of the texture of collective memory over the course of the postwar period, tied as it is to the shifting exigencies of nationhood and the formation of national identity over the course of the postwar, is reflected in the changing nature of memorial sites in Berlin and the rest of Germany. Due to the erosion of barriers and resistances to confronting the past among a younger generation of Germans, a new desire and willingness to engage critically with the past had emerged over the course of the 1970s. As the generation that came of age from the 1960s forced the reluctant acceptance over the course of the 1970s and 1980s that there was much more collaboration than resistance going on, the pedagogical aims of memorial sites shifted as well. But at the same time the familiar resistances to this desire expressed themselves in a more robust fashion by the 1980s. The 1980s represent a confrontation between ‘conservative’ and ‘progressive’ socio-cultural formations, one that played itself out as much in public debate as it did on and around sites such as the German Historical Museum and the Topography of Terror. As evidenced by the acrimonious nature of the *Historikerstreit*, conservatives redoubled their efforts to revive nationalist themes and disperse the pall of guilt and shame that had hung over postwar Germany.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Interestingly, since the 2008 financial crisis, a ‘repetition’ of the 1980s has been unfolding, with a similar configuration of forces making its voice heard and influence felt. Against those who continue to keep the Holocaust

The revisionist position did not, however, carry the day; moreover, the upshot of the confrontation marked a crucial turning point in the history of German collective memory away from the silences and selective recollection of the 1950s and 1960s and attempted revisionism of the 1980s. Forming part of the radical transformation of collective memory between the 1970s and 1990s, the effervescence of citizen involvement surrounding the Topography of Terror over the course of the 1980s contributed in no small way to a general shift in the content and awareness of victimhood against the backdrop of the arrival of the perpetrator on the scene of collective memory. The turn toward a critically self-reflexive engagement with the past was a result of these years of effervescence, a turn that was eventually but not unproblematically embraced by the state over the course of the 1990s.

It is important to note that the impetus for this shift did not issue from the ‘middle’ of German society, let alone the state or political elite, and reflected no consensus whatsoever regarding the aims of engaging with the National Socialist past. Rather, the initial impulse toward critical engagement during the 1970s and 1980s came from the left, who felt a close political connection to the victims that official memory had neglected: the leftist political opponents of the regime as opposed to the military-aristocratic – and largely anti-communist – 20 July 1944 resistance heroes celebrated at the Bendlerblock. As the 1980s wore on, citizens’ initiatives, activists, scholars, voluntary associations, amateur historians, and survivor groups

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and National Socialism on the agenda, and who are advocating for a greater memorial site prominence for, among other things, the Nazi system of forced labour are those who appeal to pride in the nation (represented by the soon-to-be-built Freiheit und Einheit memorial), and who seek an end to the shame and suffering of defeat. This confrontation plays itself out from Bund der Vertriebenen (Association of Expellees) head and former CDU politician Erika Steinbach’s ambivalent position regarding the Oder-Neisse border between Germany and Poland, to Thilo Sarrazin’s denunciation of Germany’s immigration policy in his 2010 best-selling book, *Deutschland schafft sich ab*, Munich: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 2010, to current CDU chancellor Angela Merkel’s recent pronouncement that multi-culturalism has been a ‘failure.’ On Merkel’s statement, see “Angela Merkel declares the Death of Multiculturalism,” *The Guardian*, 17 October 2010. On the skepticism evinced by Poles with regard to the sincerity of Steinbach’s aims, see “Expellee Scuffle: Merkel caught in a Warsaw-Berlin Vice,” in *Spiegel-Online*, 20 February 2009, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/0,1518,608984,00.html> (accessed 7 October 2011).

sought out ‘authentic sites’ that bore witness to the crimes perpetrated by Germans. The importance of such sites bearing witness to widespread persecution – and general ineffectiveness in challenging the Nazi regime – came to eclipse the heroism of but a few commemorated by sites such as the Bendlerblock.<sup>55</sup>

The critical assault on the official version of the past was less a historical concern than it was a reflection of oppositional politics vis-à-vis the state, a politics that traced its roots back to the ’68 generation.<sup>56</sup> In opposition to the officially sanctioned memory of the 1950s and 1960s that shaped popular perceptions of the past, often in convenient ways, the impetus toward ‘counter-memory’ that drove the shift in collective memory originated at the grassroots level, in citizens’ organizations, voluntary associations, and critical academia.<sup>57</sup> Driven forward by those who felt a close affinity to the victims of Nazi political persecution, left-leaning socio-cultural configurations sought out spaces in the urban fabric of Berlin that resonated with their own confrontational positions.<sup>58</sup> One such site was the Gestapo-Gelände, where many political opponents of the Nazi regime were imprisoned, tortured, and, in many cases, dispatched to their deaths. In his critique of the tendency to conveniently load all of the problems of contemporary

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<sup>55</sup> Over the course of the 1980s, this memorial site, too, underwent a complete transformation. While still celebrating and documenting the pockets of resistance to Hitler and the Nazis, the exhibition contextualizes the resistance movements within the climate of support for the Nazis.

<sup>56</sup> See Hass, pp.234-235. See also Martin Klimke, “West Germany,” in Martin Klimke and Joachim Scharloth (eds.), *1968 in Europe: A History of Protest and Activism, 1956-1977*, London and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008, pp.106-107.

<sup>57</sup> ‘Counter-memory’ here refers to the Foucauldian notion of ‘counter-memory,’ and not to James Young’s notion of the ‘counter-monument.’ (Young’s counter-monument is itself a subset of ‘counter-memory,’ but it is concerned more with alternative or experimental plastic interpretations of sites or spaces). Michel Foucault develops his notion of counter-memory in “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History,” in Paul Rabinow (ed.), *The Foucault Reader*, New York: Pantheon Books, 1984. Foucault’s counter-memory draws on Nietzsche’s genealogical approach to history developed in his “On the Use and Disadvantage of History for Life” (*Untimely Meditations*), and is the ‘parodic double’ of what Nietzsche critiqued as ‘monumental history.’ Seeking out the plural through a “systematic dissociation of identity” (p.94), the historiographical practice of counter-memory looks for the continuities that disrupt an ostensibly unified history of knowledge. For an in-depth discussion of Foucault’s influence on memory studies, see Patrick H. Hutton, *History as an Art of Memory*, Hanover NH: University Press of New England, 1993, pp.5-6 and *passim*. Hutton takes account of power relations in noting that “[w]hat is remembered about the past depends on the way it is represented. [...] Rather than culling the past for residual memories, each age reconstructs the past with images that suit its present needs” (p.6).

<sup>58</sup> See Hass, p.164.

collective memory onto the Gestapo-Gelände, architectural historian and cultural critic Dieter Hoffmann-Axthelm reminded his audience during a 1986 public hearing at the Berliner Akademie der Künste (Academy of the Arts) that the critical thrust that put the Gestapo-Gelände on the agenda in the first place was decidedly ‘left-radical.’<sup>59</sup> Critiquing the then-current liberal-middle class ‘end product-oriented’ desire to declaim to the world that Germany was engaging with its past – because that was what was expected of Germany, after all – Hoffmann-Axthelm emphasized that such a position threatened to displace with an inert monument what was better thought of as an ongoing process of reflection and, importantly, critique of state power and governmental authority.<sup>60</sup>

Crucially, the citizens’ initiatives that grew out of the initially radical political confrontations with the authoritarian helix of ‘the state’ and ‘the past’ saw the past not as something ‘museal’ in the Adornoian sense of the word.<sup>61</sup> History was not merely a received tradition. Instead, it was bound to concrete historical sites that invited and demanded that politically engaged citizens work over these sites so as to acquire their own historical knowledge while shaping their own historical consciousness. Through actions such as the 1985 archaeological dig on the Gestapo-Gelände organized to prove to skeptical city officials that

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<sup>59</sup> Dieter Hoffmann-Axthelm, who was one of the first people to have appreciated the significance of this neglected wasteland (the Gestapo-Gelände) on the margins of then-West Berlin, disseminated the results of his research of the palimpsest of urban Berlin geography during the Tu-Nix Kongress (an event that was part of the extra-parliamentary radical politics of the 1970s) at Technische Universität, during which time he took radical activists on tours of Berlin’s ‘forgotten’ history. For more on this aspect of the radical politics of the 1970s, see Dieter Hoffmann-Axthelm, Otto Kallscheuer, Eberhard Knödler-Bunte, and Brigitte Wartmann (eds.), *Zwei Kulturen? Tu-Nix, Mescalero, und die Folgen*, Berlin: Ästhetik und Kommunikation Verlag, 1978.

<sup>60</sup> Hoffmann-Axthelm’s remarks are contained in Akademie der Künste (ed.), *Diskussion zum Umgang mit dem ‘Gestapo-Gelände’: Dokumentation*, Berlin, 1986, p.21.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. Theodor W. Adorno, *Prisms* (1967), trans. Samuel and Shierry Weber, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997, p.173. Writes Adorno: “The German word, ‘museal’ [‘museumlike’], has unpleasant overtones. It describes objects to which the observer no longer has a vital relationship and which are in the process of dying. They owe their preservation more to historical respect than to the needs of the present. Museum and mausoleum are connected by more than phonetic association. Museums are like the family sepulchres of works of art. They testify to the neutralization of culture. Art treasures are hoarded in them, and their market value leaves no room for the pleasure of looking at them.”

traces of the demolished buildings still existed despite assurances that the foundations had been cleared away decades ago, these broad-based groups in civil society pushed and cajoled a reluctant officialdom into acting to fund both the preservation of crumbling traces of the past and the means of transmitting this past to the future (i.e., in the form of a permanent home for an exhibition, library, information center). The result: the very force and persistence of these counter-memorial actions contributed to the shaping of official memory as the state eventually took a more active interest in memory issues during the 1990s. Ironically, the consensus that eventually emerged was, perhaps, an unintended and unwitting consequence of contestatory politics.

#### **THE OFFICIALIZATION OF HOLOCAUST MEMORY AND THE CONSENSUS SURROUNDING PERPETRATION: THE 1990S AND 2000S**

Even if many segments of German society began, for their own reasons, to concern themselves with the victims of National Socialism, during this initial period of effervescence, memory work directed at perpetration was neither supported by the political apparatus nor desired by the general population. Indeed the citizens' initiatives who spearheaded the critical engagement with the past did not entirely grasp the complex meaning of a site such as the Topography of Terror. Inspired as they were in the initial stages of the Gestapo-Gelände's 'rediscovery' by their affinity with the persecuted political opponents of the regime, these groups unwittingly overlooked the broader dimensions of what it meant to be a victim of Nazi tyranny. This is not surprising in light of the leftist narrative of resistance to fascism. But the focus on politically as opposed to racially motivated persecution contributed to the broader socio-cultural



displacement of concern away from perpetration.<sup>62</sup> With their view of the perpetrator safely obscured, good liberal citizens of West Germany could feel themselves vaguely exculpated of any residual guilt by honouring the victims of the National Socialist regime.

At the time when NBC's *Holocaust* was broadcast in Germany, Germans could wring their hands with a mixture of shock and concern at what had been perpetrated against Jewish victims of Nazi tyranny. But despite the initial outpouring of sympathy for Jewish victims of Nazi atrocities, more time was needed before this translated into an impulse toward commemoration of the victims of Nazi racial policies. In the early 1980s, the commemorative thrust was in the direction of an undifferentiated 'victim of fascism.'<sup>63</sup> By the late 1980s, commentators driving the memory debates had come to acknowledge how the racist underpinnings of National Socialist ideology produced victims well beyond the scope of the political resistance category of victim. Concurrently, as a result of persistent political engagement with memory issues and with sites such as the Gestapo-Gelände, center-left and leftist socio-political constituencies gradually eroded the resistances to confronting, learning about, and understanding both the fact of, and the system and circumstances that led to, German perpetration of racially motivated genocide.

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No matter how the significance of the Topography of Terror or the nearby Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe might change beyond 2010, and no matter how the increasing institutionalization of these memorial sites has invited increased state-level involvement, it is

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<sup>62</sup> The language of the initial SPD call for a monument to be erected to the victims of fascism was of a piece with GDR critiques of capitalism and communist resistance to fascism. See Drucksache 9/393 (Abgeordnetenhaus von Berlin), "Antrag der Fraktion der SPD über Errichtung eines Mahnmals für die Opfer der nationalsozialistischen Gewaltherrschaft," 24 February 1982.

<sup>63</sup> This is a legacy of the student movement associated with the events of 1968, influenced as it was by an affinity with a GDR-style celebration of communist resistance that was blind to the racial dimensions of National Socialist thought.

important to bear in mind that the citizens' groups advocating in favour of something being built on the site of the Gestapo-Gelände were organizing, in large part, against the attempts on the part of the local and federal CDU in alliance with conservative historians, scholars, and other such forces to impose a 'positive' history, 'normalized' and sanitized of its tainted associations with National Socialism. The agitation in favour of a critically engaged memorial site that coalesced around what became the Topography of Terror represents a strong counter-memorial thrust that predominated in the 1970s into the 1990s, forming a strong kernel of resistance to the brand of officially sanctioned memory that supporters hoped to display at the German Historical Museum in Berlin and the *Haus der Geschichte* in Bonn. For this reason, a focus on this period – especially the 1980s – reveals much about the shift in complexion, both of Berlin's memoryscape, and of collective memory as a whole. During this period, the Topography of Terror emerged as a 'permanent,' persistent reminder of troubling pasts, and continues to serve as a counter-force to post-Wende amnesiac tendencies in Berliner urban development.

The unfolding of the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe's legacy is more ambiguous. It traces its origins to 1980s citizen agitation, but over the course of the 1990s, the symbolism of atonement (and redemption) was embraced by the political establishment in a way that the Topography of Terror was not. Despite the heated debates over what was to be built, despite the conflicts regarding who was to be commemorated (Jews exclusively, or the myriad groups of Nazi victims in general), by the time of its dedication in 2005 the memorial was firmly ensconced in German official/political memory. Can we go so far as to read this as a political co-optation of the 1980s counter-memorial thrust? A related question arises. Is this officialization of the critical edge of '*Aufarbeitung*' occasion for concern? Does the political institutionalization of

memory – resulting in even more (and more prominent) memory work – yield, paradoxically, a diminishing of the political ‘meaning’ of memory struggles?

Venturing a provisional answer is difficult, to say the least. On the one hand, it is certainly to be applauded that self-reflexive commemorative aims are now firmly entrenched not only in the collective social imaginary, but as physical sites, ‘milieux de mémoire’ that invite participation and discussion by their very presence. Any potential tendency toward ritualization or sacralization notwithstanding – especially in the case of the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe – both the Topography of Terror and the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe are social spaces that open out onto the city. In addition, officialization of these memorial sites and their place in collective memory emerge as salutary when compared to the relative absence of elite-level political engagement in the commemoration of crimes perpetrated by the Japanese state. To the extent that German state-level involvement dampens the critical thrust of memorial sites, in comparative perspective its involvement signals a broader willingness to accept the burden of historical responsibility thrust upon contemporary Germany by its past deeds. The effect of this involvement on official memory translates into a certain degree of prominence in the public sphere regarding the burden of historical responsibility borne by German citizens born well after the perpetrators. The kinds of memorial sites advocated for by the citizens’ initiatives of the 1980s and then embraced – albeit with its critical thrust diminished – and championed by the state serve an important ‘affective role’ in the transmission of the past.

Then again, the answer to the question posed above regarding the institutionalization of memory and the concordant potential to blunt its critical edge is a qualified ‘yes,’ for now that both the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe and the Topography of Terror have attained a degree of permanence in the urban fabric, the issues that animated the ongoing and contentious

debates while the sites were in a state of flux and uncertainty have ‘crystallized’ to some extent.<sup>64</sup> No longer ever-changing building sites, these memorial sites are now a fixed part of the urban scenery. Gone are the intense symposia and citizen agitation that brought certain memorial sites into existence now that the most ‘appropriate’ way of interacting with and developing affectively charged sites such as the Topography of Terror have been ‘solved.’ Perhaps this is too pessimistic an assessment, for it is difficult to predict the ongoing reception of a particular site. And just as it is difficult to predict the future resonance of, say, the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, we might add that this future resonance will undoubtedly be influenced by the currently unfolding context of debates about the form and content of memorial sites alternately dedicated to the suffering of the expellees, or celebrating FRG triumphalism in the form of the proposed Unity and Freedom (*Einheit und Freiheit*) memorial. Against this backdrop, will the coming decades be marked by an increased awareness about the plight of forced labourers, and of ‘authentic sites’ of internment in Berlin and elsewhere as ‘counter-monuments’ to the increasing influence of the discourse of German suffering?<sup>65</sup> Or will it be one in which the voices pronouncing the ‘failure of multiculturalism’ predominate?

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<sup>64</sup> Despite my preference for fluid metaphors to characterize collective memory, ‘crystallization’ here evokes the ways in which the debates are no longer as productively volatile as they once were.

<sup>65</sup> An additional question presses to the fore in contemporary Germany, but one which is beyond the scope of my current project. To wit, what is the historical responsibility borne by new and recent immigrants to ‘German’ perpetrator pasts? The question itself hinges on the debate about what it means to be ‘German’ in the new millennium.

## PART TWO. JAPAN: FRAGMENTED MEMORY<sup>66</sup>

In his much-discussed work, *Haisengoron*,<sup>67</sup> Katô Norihiro paints a picture of postwar official memory as pathologically split between those critical of Japan's role during the Asia-Pacific War, and those who, in one way or another, affirm it. No sooner does 'Jekyll' enunciate a clear position on Japanese aggression during the Asia-Pacific War – former prime minister Hosokawa Morihiro's public acknowledgment on 15 August 1993 that the Asia-Pacific War was both a war of aggression and a mistaken war comes readily to mind – than 'Hyde' comes along and declares that the Nanjing Massacre is nothing but a fabrication, or that there is no evidence supporting Japanese state or military involvement in organizing the 'comfort women' system.<sup>68</sup> Katô diagnoses Japan's ailment thus: the 'distorted path' (*nejire*) of postwar Japanese history is attributable to the 'contamination at the origin' (*genten no yogore*), the stain being the peace constitution imposed on Japan by the American victors.<sup>69</sup>

Problematic as Katô's diagnosis of the condition may be, he is, nonetheless, on to something. Even as neo-nationalist perspectives on the past are currently in the ascendancy, whether we understand collective memory as 'official memory,' or as that large remainder that circulates in the collective social imaginary with or without official sanction, collective memory of the Asia-Pacific War is nothing if not fragmented in contemporary Japan. The influence of the American Occupation finds expression in terms of the effects of censorship on Japanese attempts

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<sup>66</sup> If this section appears rather sparse in comparison to the coverage of postwar memory events in Germany, it is because I will detail the emergence of the 'Yasukuni view of history' in a subsequent chapter.

<sup>67</sup> Katô Norihiro, *Haisengoron*, Tokyo: Chikuma Bunko, 2005. Based on a 1995 essay of the same name and first published as a book in 1997, the title plays on defeat (*haisen*) and postwar (*sengo*), so that it could be rendered in English as "After the Defeat," or as "On Defeat and the Postwar."

<sup>68</sup> See Katô Norihiro, *Haisengoron*, pp.51-53.

<sup>69</sup> See Katô, p.21-28, where he argues that the only way to wipe away this 'stain' is to make provisions for a revised constitution that issues 'spontaneously' from the Japanese people (pp.27-28). We will take up in a subsequent chapter the problematic implications of Katô's argument that this self-crafted constitution would form the basis of a sovereign community that could mourn for its war losses before finally issuing a sincere apology to its neighbours.

to mourn the trauma of warfare, the atomic bombings, and defeat. The American Occupation and subsequent alliance with the United States is never far from debates regarding whether the peace constitution curtails Japan's sovereignty. Related to the Occupation is effect of the Tokyo Trials and the problematic status of the emperor. The regularly recurring textbook controversies since 1982, together with the rise to prominence of the Japanese Society for History Textbook Reform (*Atarashii Rekishi Kyōkasho wo Tsukuru Kai*)<sup>70</sup> in the years since their founding in 1996 is testament to the ongoing fragmentation of collective memory in Japan.<sup>71</sup> Though there are plenty of points of overlap with collective memory in Germany, nonetheless the differential valences of these memory issues have had a profound effect on the different levels of engagement with historical responsibility in contemporary Japan and Germany.

## THE OCCUPATION LEGACY

In shifting configurations of social and cultural forces and in contrast to Germany, the debates about the constitution and the Tokyo Trial continue to figure understandings of Japan's role in the Asia-Pacific War. If I spend more time on the legacy of the American Occupation than I do on the subsequent decades leading up to the focal point of my studies – the 1980s onward – it is because of the extent to which the debates inaugurated in the immediate postwar period continue to resonate in 1990s and 2000s Japan. Central to this legacy was the vast influence wielded by the Supreme Command for the Allied Powers (SCAP) headed up by

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<sup>70</sup> This is translated variously as the Orthodox History Group, Society for the Making of New School Textbooks in History, Japanese Society for History Textbook Reform, henceforth abbreviated as JSHTR as per the group's English language statements.

<sup>71</sup> See Gavan McCormack's informative article entitled "The Japanese Movement to 'Correct' History," in Laura Hein and Mark Selden (eds.), *Censoring History: Citizenship and Memory in Japan, Germany, and the United States*, Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, Inc, 2000, especially pp.53-63, as well as Aaron Gerow's "Consuming Asia, Consuming Japan: The New Neonationalistic Revisionism in Japan" (in the same volume), which focuses on film and manga.

General Douglas MacArthur.<sup>72</sup> And while a focus on this legacy must be tempered by considerations of the charged political debates within Japan about what gave rise to ultranationalistic militarism and which direction Japan should take now that the militarist clique had been ousted,<sup>73</sup> nonetheless it is important to acknowledge the degree to which American Occupation policies and their legacy have profoundly influenced Japanese politics, public opinion, and the fragmented nature of collective memory over the decades.<sup>74</sup> In the immediate aftermath of the war, Occupation policy, in conjunction with the Tokyo Trials, obscured Emperor Hirohito's wartime guilt in order to capitalize on the Emperor's popularity in the hope of effecting a peaceful transition. Beginning in 1948, American Cold War anticommunist fervour resulted in the 'reverse course,' which effectively undid much of the prior process of political liberalization in Japan and ushered in the '1955 system' of uninterrupted LDP hegemony down to 1993. In an effort to stem the tide of a vociferously critical left, purged politicians (including some who had been tried for war crimes, such as Kishi Nobosuke, who eventually became prime minister) and businessmen with ties to the militarists/fascists were rehabilitated.

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<sup>72</sup> For the richness of the debate about the role of the U.S. Occupation, see John Dower, *Japan in War and Peace: Essays on History, Culture and Race*, London: Fontana Press, 1996, and especially Dower, *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II*, New York: W.W Norton and Co, 1999; Laura Hein, *Reasonable Men, Powerful Words: Political Culture and Expertise in Twentieth-Century Japan*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 2004; J. Victor Koschmann, *Revolution and Subjectivity in Postwar Japan*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996; Igarashi Yoshikuni, *Bodies of Memory: Narratives of War in Postwar Japanese Culture, 1945-1970*, Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000; Yukiko Koshiro, *Trans-Pacific Racisms and the U.S. Occupation of Japan*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1999; and Ernestine Schlant and J. Thomas Rimer (eds.), *Legacies and Ambiguities: Postwar Fiction and Culture in West Germany and Japan*, Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991.

<sup>73</sup> See the collection of Maruyama Masao's essays on topics such as ultranationalism, feudalism, fascism, and ideology entitled *Thought and Behaviour in Modern Japanese Politics* (1963), (expanded edition), Ivan Morris (ed.), London: Oxford University Press, 1969, as well as Takeuchi Yoshimi, *What is Modernity? Writings of Takeuchi Yoshimi*, (ed., trans., and with an Introduction by Richard F. Calichman), New York: Columbia University Press, 2005.

<sup>74</sup> See Naoyuki Umemori, "An Origin of Japan's Post-war Neo-nationalism: Rethinking Etô Jun's *America to Watashi* (1965)," unpublished paper presented to the Asian History Colloquium, Cornell University, April 19, 2011, p.4, where Umemori argues that 'occupation-centric historiography' began to hold sway in the 1980s after younger intellectuals returned from sojourns in the United States in earlier decades. There, many fell under the sway of modernization theory, which posited normative stages of economic development en route to capitalist modernity.

Manifold have been the effects of this inconsistent occupation policy over the course of the postwar. Katô views the major fruit of the occupation period – the peace constitution – as the root of Japan’s postwar ‘schizophrenia.’ Not only in relation to the emperor but with regards to the recently decommissioned soldiers returning from the battlefronts, the Occupation contributed to a marked ambivalence in terms of mourning and commemorating the suffering of the Asia-Pacific War. Katô even goes so far as to argue that Japan cannot offer a heartfelt apology to the victims of Japanese imperialism and aggression (most notably Korea and China) until Japan has successfully laid its own war dead to rest. Interpreted cynically, this is naught but an infinite deferral of the need to apologize for wartime aggression.<sup>75</sup> In this context, Yasukuni Shrine, which honours the war dead of modernity, continues to haunt East Asian relations just as it contributes to heated domestic debates.<sup>76</sup>

SCAP was, of course, a major interlocutor that contributed to the setting of the parameters of the politics of memory and amnesia that have persisted down to the present, dictating policy and running a censorship apparatus that was at odds with many of the liberal-democratic ideals the Americans wanted to advance. But what those who extend a qualified acknowledgment to the legacy of the years from 1945-1952 add to our understanding of the period is an appreciation for the intense and highly politicized *conflict within* Japanese society and *among* Japanese participants and interlocutors in the charged debates about which form the postwar settlement should take, and in which direction postwar Japan should head. On the one

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<sup>75</sup> Several commentators have taken Katô to task for this and other elements of his argument. See, for example, J. Victor Koschmann, “National Subjectivity and the Uses of Atonement in the Age of Recession,” *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, 99:4, Fall 2000. See also Takahashi Tetsuya, *Yasukuni mondai*, Tokyo: Chikuma Shinsho, 2005, pp.62-66; Franziska Seraphim, *op.cit.*, pp.311-314; and Tessa Morris-Suzuki, “Unquiet Graves: Katô Norihiro and the Politics of Mourning,” *Japanese Studies*, 18:1, 1998, pp.21-30. The concluding chapter of Igarashi Yoshikuni’s *Bodies of Memory* also contains a discussion highly critical of Katô’s viewpoints.

<sup>76</sup> For a sampling of the debate, see the collection of articles in *Gendai Shisô*’s special issue on the Yasukuni issue (*Gendai Shisô*, 33:9, August 2005). John Breen (ed.), *Yasukuni, the War Dead, and the Struggle for Japan’s Past*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2008, presents a range of essays from across the ideological spectrum.



hand, John Dower credits the American Occupation with laying the foundation for a ‘modern,’ democratic Japan, albeit in qualified terms.<sup>77</sup> Others view the U.S. occupation as a collaboration between like-minded Americans and Japanese who nevertheless had separate as well as overlapping agendas in the realms of the economy, the political system, culture, welfare and minority rights.<sup>78</sup> On the other hand, still others tend to see (perhaps with rose-tinted glasses) the era of the Occupation as the golden age of American-style democracy, constitutionalism, and educational policies, a legacy that has come under increasing fire and threat of erosion with the recent resurgence of the ultra-nationalist right whose backward-looking, narcissistic nationalism paints the Japanese as the liberators of Asia from the yoke of Western imperialism.

Carol Gluck makes reference to “officiants and celebrants of the developing conservative consensus” who, in contradistinction to progressive critics whose judgment of Japanese history was less than kind, “searched the same past for its brighter moments.”<sup>79</sup> Gluck appears unwilling to confine this conservative consensus to the level of the state, offering instead an argument about the broader social prevalence of the conservative consensus. Linking the custodianship of national history to ideological hegemony, she suggests that in the wake of the era of high economic growth of the 1960s, “the dominant sense of the past shifted toward the conservative social and national center.”<sup>80</sup> As I argue, however, whereas the *state* may well have been characterized by a conservative consensus over the course of the ‘long post war’ (Gluck’s term), and although a ‘conservative consensus’ has indeed pervaded Japanese political and popular culture since the mid-1990s, the breadth of this consensus has not been a constant feature over

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<sup>77</sup> See John Dower, *Embracing Defeat*. Some who follow this line of inquiry study the conflicts that raged inside the GHQ between liberals bent on reforming Japan in the image of the New Deal and conservative military officers and bureaucrats whose greatest fear was that liberal reform would open the floodgates to communism.

<sup>78</sup> See, for example, Laura Hein, *Reasonable Men, Powerful Words*.

<sup>79</sup> Carol Gluck, “The Past in the Present,” in Andrew Gordon, *Postwar Japan as History*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993, p.65.

<sup>80</sup> Gluck, p.65.

the course of the postwar period. At the state level, the result of the ‘San Francisco System’ and the ‘1955 System’ produced a situation in which a state staffed by a conservative elite<sup>81</sup> – whose dominance was interrupted for a very brief period of time in the mid-1990s, and again only very recently from 2009 – was countered by a kaleidoscopic public sphere, segments of which opposed the conservative state, others of which, such as the Japan Association for War-bereaved Families (*Izokukai*) and Association of Shinto Shrines (*Jinja honchô*), supported the conservative streak in official memory.<sup>82</sup>

Apropos of these distinctions, Franziska Seraphim asserts that “the dominant pattern of contention over both the wartime and the postwar past remained locked in a dynamic that pitted (liberal) citizens against the (conservative) state.”<sup>83</sup> The thrust of her work, however, goes against this dichotomous formulation, analyzing as she does five groupings spanning the political spectrum within the Japanese public sphere: The Association of Shinto Shrines; The Japan Association of War-bereaved Families; The Japan Teachers’ Union; The Japan-China Friendship Association (*Nitchû yûkô kyôkai*); and the Japan Memorial Society for the Students Killed in the War (*Wadatsumikai*). As a means of re-formulating this binary between a (conservative) state and a (liberal) citizenry, I propose the following framework. For much of the postwar period, the progressive elements within civil society counter-balanced the weight of conservative forces in civil society, sometimes even gaining the upper hand to the extent that progressives and leftists could influence the agenda of commemorative politics reflected in official memory. If we grant that the state remained relatively conservative over the course of the long postwar – brief

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<sup>81</sup> See John Dower, “Peace and Democracy in Two Systems: External Policy and Internal Conflict,” in Andrew Gordon, *Postwar Japan as History*, especially pp.4-22.

<sup>82</sup> See Seraphim, *op.cit.*, pp.35-59 on the Association of Shinto Shrines (*Jinja honchô*). The Japan Association for War-bereaved Families makes numerous appearances in the chapters below. I will refer to this organization mainly by its abbreviated Japanese form, *Izokukai*.

<sup>83</sup> Seraphim, p.24.

interludes of center-left governance notwithstanding – a relative loss in influence of progressive and leftist groupings (such as the Japan Teachers’ Union, the Japan Socialist Party, labour in general) and a concomitant rise in prominence of neo-nationalist groups within the public sphere, such as the one witnessed since the mid-1990s, would register an all the more conservative flavour in terms of expressions of collective memory. The memorial sites I take up in this study provide sites in the interstices of which the contours of this shift become legible.

### **CONTESTED IDENTITY: THE EMERGENCE OF THE ‘YASUKUNI VIEW OF HISTORY’ AND THE TEXTBOOK CONTROVERSY**

On any given day, in driving rain or oppressive mid-summer humidity, upon exiting the Kudanshita Station and proceeding up the Kudanzaka in the direction of the gates to Yasukuni, one might encounter a few people with an elaborate spread of pamphlets fanned out on a makeshift table, or on the sidewalk itself. Upon closer scrutiny, these pamphlets bear iconic photographs of alleged Japanese atrocities that have become the focal point of heated controversy, often accompanied with a caption declaring the Nanjing Massacre a fabrication. The photographs are controversial because, in some cases, either the provenance or the authenticity of the photograph is subject to doubt. Some scholars and activists, including Iris Chang (author of *The Rape of Nanking*), have made use of these photographs without a sufficient investigation into their provenance or authenticity. Ever ready to pounce on any perceived distortion of ‘fact,’ certain constituencies on the right point to these controversial photographs as ‘evidence’ that the Nanjing Massacre was fabricated, and that the fabrication is perpetuated by left-leaning groups.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> See Iris Chang, *The Rape of Nanking: The Forgotten Holocaust of World War II*, London: Penguin Books, 1997, where she compares the Japanese response to their role in World War II unfavourably to that of the Germans. Chang’s work is a prime example of the tendency to take Germany as the ‘norm’ that Japan continually fails to emulate. For an elaboration of the standard neo-nationalist line on the matter, see Tanaka Masaaki, *What Really*

The Nanjing Massacre continues to be a flash point exciting passion on both sides of the debate, even to the point of denial that a massacre even took place. The unfortunate wrangling over the issue of the number of victims of the massacre is but one of the indications of the political stakes involved in representing the past.<sup>85</sup> Even more tragically, the extremity limning the outer edges of the argument does no justice to the very complex issues at stake in the interaction between the representation of the past and collective memory.

In conjunction with other factors and phenomena such as the continued political influence of the *Izokukai* and the success of Kobayashi Yoshinori's nationalistic manga publications, the recent rise to prominence of the JSTHR (Japan Society for History Textbook Reform) has led to an intensification of this and similar debates out of which, when taken together, emerge the contours of the 'Yasukuni view of history.'<sup>86</sup> The JSTHR sees itself as united by a concern about the current state of history education in Japan, which they see as coloured by a 'masochistic perception' of history.<sup>87</sup> Despite their avowed advancement of a 'liberal' agenda, the group proclaims their aim to be the dissemination of textbooks that transmit an 'appropriate,' 'normal,' and 'correct' view of the past.<sup>88</sup>

Both the *Yûshûkan* and the *Shôwakan* present this 'corrected' national history through carefully selected displays of authentic artifacts that present the audience with the ostensibly

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*Happened in Nanjing: The Refutation of a Common Myth* (1987), Tokyo: Sekai Shuppan, Inc., 2000. Other impromptu booths in the Kudanzaka area attack the notion that Japanese troops forced Okinawan civilians to commit suicide during the Battle for Okinawa, or that the Japanese military was implicated in the 'comfort women' system of sexual slavery.

<sup>85</sup> See Tanaka Masaaki, *op.cit.*

<sup>86</sup> How the Yasukuni Shrine itself represents Japan's wartime past will be the subject of the chapter on the *Yûshûkan*.

<sup>87</sup> In the late 1990s, the JSHTR sponsored controversial pilot publications as a counterattack to 'gloomy history,' culminating in two textbooks – The New History Textbook and the New Civics Textbook – approved (with numerous revisions) in April 2001 by the Ministry of Education and again in April 2006. In recent years, they have toned down their rhetoric of 'masochistic history,' and speak now only of 'unhealthy history.' See the group's official website, <http://www.tsukurukai.com/aboutus/index.html> (accessed 27 March 2012).

<sup>88</sup> Aims are available from the group's official website, <http://www.tsukurukai.com/aboutus/index.html> (accessed 27 March 2012).

unadulterated raw materials of history. And because the history narrated by the JSHTR textbooks and displayed by museums with loose ties to neo-nationalist groupings such as the JSHTR is presented as ‘common sense,’ there is no need for critique. The implication is that critique of national projects only corrupts the ‘basic principles,’ the purity of the national essence. Their anti-intellectual, affective appeal directly to ‘the citizens’ to reclaim their history reveals a paradox at the heart of the JSHTR project in particular, and the ‘Yasukuni view of history’ in general. Some supporters of the JSHTR do not deny that Japan invaded Asia, nor do they deny that ‘comfort women’ were ‘employed’ by the Japanese army.<sup>89</sup> Yet in their eyes, too much ‘history’ works to the detriment of what they perceive to be the task of ‘education’: moulding proud Japanese citizens. Channeling Louis Althusser, Aaron Gerow appraises the JSHTR perspective in the following terms: “Schools are seen as ideological state apparatuses devoted to the national interest that produce citizens/subjects rather than individuals with a capacity for criticism.”<sup>90</sup>

Espousing such a rigid view of civil society as it does, it is tempting to ask why the JSTHR has been so successful in advancing its agenda. Gavan McCormack claims that the group has garnered a certain amount of success by portraying its ideas as ‘liberal.’ In so doing, founding members such as Fujioka Nobukatsu and Nishio Kanji, along with their colleagues, have sought “to represent their position as a breakthrough from the stale and unresolved polarities of postwar discourse into something new and fresh.”<sup>91</sup> The JSHTR cause has also received a strong boost from another one of its founding members, Kobayashi Yoshinori, whose tireless advocacy of a proud and honourable history struck a profound emotional chord in post-

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<sup>89</sup> Cf. Gerow, in Selden and Hein, *op.cit.*, pp.84-85.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.84-85.

<sup>91</sup> McCormack, in Selden and Hein, pp.56-57. Of the various visual sources surveyed in my dissertation, it is in Kobayashi’s manga that we find some of the more deliberate attempts to manipulate affective response.

bubble Japan. It is here that Kobayashi brings his talents as a manga writer to bear. His manga generate the affective balm of a soothing patriotism for a contemporary audience of (largely male) youth languishing in a state of perceived emasculation brought on by the burst of the bubble economy and shrinking prospects for the future.

Fewer and fewer commentators would stop short at questioning the morality of the Allied air war that consumed Tokyo in a firestorm and then obliterated Hiroshima and Nagasaki, inflicting unspeakable suffering upon ordinary Japanese. What Kobayashi exploits to great effect, however, is how the selection of frames in a manga layout might serve to decontextualize that which gave rise to his particular graphic rendition of the events of the Second World War. For example, in the frame sequence depicting the fire bombings of Tokyo and the atomic bombings of Hiroshima, Kobayashi is drawing upon a very powerful graphic tradition critical of the atomic bombings, from the muralists, Maruki Toshi and Iri, renowned for their Hiroshima Panels, as well as the famous comic book of the immediate postwar period, *Barefoot Gen*.<sup>92</sup> However, the kind of self-reflexivity evident in the later work of the Marukis, as exemplified by their mural, *Crows*, depicting the fate of the Koreans left to die without medical attention in the wake of the bombings of Hiroshima – discriminated against in death as in life – is completely lacking in Kobayashi. What is of even more concern, such visually powerful sequences seem not to serve any end other than the aestheticized exaltation of a ‘pure’ sacrifice of individual lives in the service of the *kokutai* (national body). In Kobayashi’s black-and-white depiction of the past, the west was the evil force, and Japan was the angel that liberated Asia from the clutches of these imperialists.

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<sup>92</sup> See the visually impressive frame sequence running from pp.318-336 in Kobayashi Yoshinori, *Sensôron*, Tokyo: Gentosha, 1998.

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At times somewhat less shrill, the ‘Yasukuni view of history’ on offer at the Yûshûkan and the Shôwakan nonetheless closely parallels Kobayashi’s depiction of the past. The representation of the Second World War at German memorial sites of the 1990s and 2000s presents a different picture. After taking up museums and monuments in Berlin and Tokyo in more detail, I will return to the convergences and divergences of postwar commemorative practice in Germany and Japan in the late stages of this study. If this chapter presented the temporal aspects of history and memory, the next chapter turns to the spatial elements of commemoration.

## CHAPTER 2

### MNEMONIC TAPESTRIES: FRAMING THE COMPARISON OF MEMORIAL SITES IN BERLIN AND TOKYO

In Berlin, guidebooks and tourist brochures describe a ‘memory quarter’ where the star attractions are Daniel Libeskind’s architecturally challenging Jewish Museum, Peter Eisenman’s undulating field of stele designed to memorialize the murder of European Jews, and the Topography of Terror, which has presented itself to city residents in a number of guises over the decades.<sup>1</sup> City planners, scholars, memorial site trustees, politicians, and tourism industry representatives alike proclaim the merits of this ‘memory district’ that has sprung up since the 1990s in central Berlin’s Kreuzberg and Mitte districts, areas that once symbolized the division of Berlin and Germany. Though as yet no one in Tokyo refers in the same way to the area north of the Imperial Palace comprising Chidorigafuchi (which houses the grave of the unknown soldier), the Kudankaikan (former officers’ club and current home of the Association for Bereaved Families, or *Izokukai*), the recently-opened Shôwakan, and, of course, Yasukuni Shrine along with its dedicated museum, the Yûshûkan, a convincing case could be made for this area as constituting Tokyo’s ‘memory district.’ The related (but not quite ‘twin’) museum exhibits of the Yûshûkan and the Shôwakan provide the narration, contributing to the legitimation of a quasi-official memory of the events of the Asia-Pacific War.

Yasukuni, which means ‘country of peaceful repose,’ enshrines the souls of some 2.46 million soldiers who have fallen in wars since the inception of the modern Japanese nation-state

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<sup>1</sup> See Karen Till, *The New Berlin: Memory, Politics, Place*, Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2005, in which she discusses the conception and construction of a ‘memory district’ (pp.7-8 and pp. 200-202), its marketing (p.53), and its effect as a major destination on the Berlin tourist itinerary taking in Alexanderplatz, Unter den Linden, Brandenburg Gate, Potsdamer Platz, and Checkpoint Charlie.



during the Meiji era. Its spacious, leafy precincts are perched atop Kudanzaka, to the north of the Imperial Palace. The shrine dates to 1869, and attained national significance in 1879 as the place of final repose for heroic soldiers who had laid down their lives to build modern Japan. A museum, the Yûshûkan, documents the valiant exploits of these heroic souls. Not far away, just at the foot of the Kudanzaka, rises a seven-story cylindrical form wrapped in a corrugated metal façade, home to the Shôwakan, which opened in 1999 after a decade of quiet planning that eventually erupted into a further decade of contentious debate. The Shôwakan houses exhibition spaces that compensate belatedly for the lack of attention paid to the sacrifice of ordinary Japanese citizens left behind to tend the home fires while the soldiers were off at war in distant lands.

Back in Berlin, a decades-long debate was winding down – or, rather, entering a new phase. After nearly thirty years of contentious debate, three architectural and design competitions, and an aesthetically ambitious and technologically daring design that made it as far as a foundation and three stairwells before being ignominiously torn down in 2004, the Topography of Terror Foundation welcomed guests to the permanent abode of its Documentation and Information Center in May of 2010. Located nearly equidistant between the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe and the Jewish Museum in the ‘memory district’ that has sprung up in the shadow of the glitzy new buildings of Potsdamer Platz, what one commentator dubbed the foundation stone of this ‘memory district’ was, ironically, the last stone in the edifice to be completed. This irony is revealing insofar as it illuminates both the stakes of memory politics, along with the affectively charged aesthetic dimensions of commemorative practice in Berlin, Germany, and beyond. For while the Jewish Museum and the Monument to the Murdered Jews

of Europe commemorate the victims of National Socialism,<sup>2</sup> the Topography of Terror grapples with a much more prickly issue: how to come to terms critically with Germany's past as the *perpetrators* of the crimes commemorated at the Jewish Museum and the Monument to the murdered Jews of Europe.<sup>3</sup>

Wrapped in a gun-metal grey mesh façade and hugging the terrain of what once housed the headquarters of the Gestapo and the Reich Security Main Office (RSHA), this latest iteration of the relationship between building and 'authentic site' is anything but imposing. Whether praising or condemning Ursula Willms' building that emerged out of the spartan wasteland of the former Gestapo-Gelände, most critics and commentators agree that the building now housing the Topography of Terror permanent exhibition is 'reserved' and 'sober.'<sup>4</sup> With this architectural approach that respects the primacy of the site as material trace the curators of the original 1987 exhibition had finally gotten what they had always wanted, remarked Andreas Nachama, director of the Topography of Terror Foundation, on the occasion of the selection of the Willms design in 2006.<sup>5</sup> Palpable was his relief that the 'Zumthor debacle' had finally come to an end.<sup>6</sup> Why did it take this long for the citizen initiatives and scholars behind the Topography of Terror Foundation

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<sup>2</sup> This is already significant in that it is extremely rare for a country to erect a monument to the victims of its actions and policies. Indeed, no such monument exists in Japan, an issue we shall have further occasion to explore.

<sup>3</sup> While those citizens' groups and officials (both federal and state-level) tasked with formulating the call for proposals for the 2005 Topography of Terror design competition inserted the Topography of Terror firmly into the 'trio' of major memorial sites in Berlin, they were also cognizant of the different functions each site took on in terms of memory-work: "As the third in the large memory projects of Berlin's center, the Topography of Terror differentiates itself from the nearby Jewish Museum and the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe as a 'historical place' that prioritizes illuminating pedagogical work; it is not a typical memorial site (*Gedenkstätte*)."  
(See "Anlass und Ziel des Wettbewerbes," in Stiftung Topographie des Terrors, *Topographie des Terrors. Realisierungswettbewerb Topographie des Terrors – Katalog zur Ausstellung der Wettbewerbsarbeiten*, Berlin, 2006, p.20. The invocation of a 'historical site/place' is significant, as is the circumspect language of this call for proposals, issues I will take up in greater detail in the chapter on the aesthetics of sobriety.

<sup>4</sup> Some critics have been much more disparaging.

<sup>5</sup> Andreas Nachama, in Stiftung Topographie des Terrors, *Topographie des Terrors. Realisierungswettbewerb Topographie des Terrors – Katalog zur Ausstellung der Wettbewerbsarbeiten*, Berlin, 2006, p.7.

<sup>6</sup> The selection of Peter Zumthor's ambitious design proposal during the 1993 design competition (the second of the three design competitions calling for proposals to develop the Topography of Terror) set off a firestorm of controversy, both in terms of its aesthetic vision, and in terms of technical challenges. The design proved to be unrealizable within the constraints of a recently unified Germany and a cash-strapped Berlin.

to get what they have wanted since the ‘provisional’ Topography of Terror exhibition was installed as part of Berlin’s 750<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations in 1987? What can we learn from the years of debate since the late 1970s that marked the (re)discovery and multiple make-overs of this site of trauma?

Before returning to these questions in subsequent chapters, I will elaborate in this chapter upon what a focus on memorial sites contributes to such a comparison at the same time that I address why I have chosen to shine a critical light on the particular sites under consideration. As a subset of the category ‘memorial,’ the sites upon which I focus are material insofar as they enable us to approach the sites in terms of their visual, sonic, and tactile dimensions – all of which impinge upon the affective dynamics underpinning the aesthetic experience of a particular memorial site. In this sense, memorial sites contrast with the immateriality of, say, a memorial day or a festival, although this distinction is also problematic, insofar as memorial days and festivals have their material dimensions, and memorial sites, as I shall discuss at various points in this section, have their immaterial dynamics. As a subset of the category ‘museum,’ the memorial sites in Berlin and Tokyo are important for their charged historical dimensions, and illuminate the contested process of group and national identity formation as these groups struggle to come to terms with and work through past experience.

The central framing device for the memorial sites I take up is the distinction between didactic museums (what Tony Bennett refers to as the ‘exhibitionary complex’) and the counter-monument (theorized by James Young) that strikes at the foundations of didactic museums. Memorial sites in Berlin and Tokyo also illuminate how the past is transmitted as ‘experience’ at memorial sites. Exhibitions are a forum for re-presenting *other experiences*, often removed in space and, as is the case with memorial sites, time. Significantly, the transmission of historical

experience at memorial sites is highly mediated: the spatialized visual and textual narratives serve as conduits transmitting aspects of the past to generations who, increasingly, have no first-hand experience with the past being represented.

Given the fluid and protean character of memory, memorial sites present a spatio-temporal ‘condensation of memory,’ where notions of ‘authenticity’ play a significant role in attempts to anchor the fluid affective dynamics of a particular site. Memorial sites present the scholar of history and memory with an aesthetic reworking of historical events, belatedly (re)constructed and often transformed in the image of the present. The ‘transformation’ of the past effected at memorial sites is largely of a visual or spatial nature. Approaching the memorial site from the angle of the visual and the spatial highlights the materiality of the memorial site experienced by the visitor not just visually, but physically. The ‘museum experience’ is thus an embodied experience. But it is more than that as well, for the affective dynamics that contribute to one’s experience of a memorial site tend to elude direct empirical observation. Indeed, for all of Louis Althusser’s attempts to circumvent the Hegelian idealism of Marx’s notion of ideology, Althusser’s own notion of ideology as something that is rooted in material practice relies very heavily on a notion of ideology that is a relational – and immaterial – dynamic.<sup>7</sup>

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One key difference between my examination of sites in Berlin as opposed to those in Tokyo is scope. In Tokyo, my lens takes in almost exclusively what has been installed *in* the Shôwakan and the Yûshûkan, focusing on the ways in which ‘historical experience’ is put on display in the galleries of both museums, and the ways in which the poetics of these displays aim to produce a particular kind of ‘experience’ in those visiting the museums. The temporal dynamics distinguishing these two ‘experiences’ from one another – which are often concealed

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<sup>7</sup> I explore this further in the following two chapters.

in the poetics of the exhibition – contribute to our understanding of the interpellation of subjects and the formation of (ideal) citizens. In Berlin, these temporal dynamics of experience – ‘here-now’ and ‘here-then’ – also play a significant role in the affective dynamics influencing the experience of memorial sites. While taking up the actual exhibitions at the Topography of Terror and the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe insofar as they relate to the broader aesthetic debates about how architectural expressions of a given site interrelate with and form part of the urban landscape, in addition I incorporate an exploration of the socio-cultural processes whereby *that particular monument or museum space* came into being on *that particular site*. Although my focus is slightly different from one set of memorial sites to the next, nonetheless through their comparison we might come to a better understanding of the ‘origins’ and emergence of particular material expressions of cultural sentiments and significance at these affectively charged sites.

Before delving further into how memorial sites in Berlin in Tokyo reflect general issues, debates, and trends pertaining to the nature of collective memory of wartime experience in postwar Germany and Japan, let me say a few words about how the particular memorial sites under consideration relate both to one another and to the theoretical questions opened up by memorial sites. As this study unfolds, it might appear to the reader that the deck is stacked, so to speak, against ‘Japan.’ Painted in broad brush strokes, the Yûshûkan and, less explicitly, the Shôwakan, promote a neo-nationalist agenda that has close social, institutional, and political linkages with Yasukuni Shrine, the *Izokukai* (War Bereaved Families Association), and politicians of the right wing of the LDP (Liberal Democratic Party). The exhibitions are non-dialogic, and present the intended audience – one which is figured as almost exclusively ‘Japanese’ – with a didactic vision of Japan’s past that elides aggression and glorifies honour and

sacrifice. As we shall explore below, the exhibitions interpellate contemporary Japanese subjects in the name of a glorious national past buttressed by sacrifice and heroism.

On the other hand, the Topography of Terror and, to a lesser extent, the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, grasp toward a critical engagement with Germany's perpetrator past in a space that opens up the possibility of dialogue and critique. Where the Yûshûkan and the Shôwakan are 'closed' memorial spaces – aimed at a Japanese audience while policing the boundaries of Japanese collective memory – the memorial spaces of the Topography of Terror and the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe are 'open,' not only in terms of their situatedness in Berlin's urban space, but also in their willingness to engage a multiplicity of constituencies within and beyond Berlin and Germany, including – but not limited to – 'Germans' of all generations; German Jews; Jews not of German decent; members of ethnic and other non-heteronormative marginalized groups along with citizens of European nations that were victimized by the Germans in the Second World War.

*Prima facie*, the extremes represented by the Topography of Terror and the Yûshûkan – reductively put, 'progressive left' versus 'ultra-nationalist right' – would indeed appear to replicate that which I seek to critique at the broader level of the comparison: that is, the tendency to frame Germany and Japan as monolithic categories, and then, invariably, to hold 'Germany' up as the model for emulation.<sup>8</sup> What I hope to demonstrate over the remainder of this chapter, and then in the subsequent chapters of this study, is twofold: firstly, that critically engaged commemorative practices are more prominent in Berlin than in Tokyo, for reasons that have far less to do with dubiously-posed 'cultural traits' or relative political 'maturity' or 'immaturity' than they do with something altogether different. Instead, I explore a confluence of conditions

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<sup>8</sup> The international media resorts to this strategy with alarming regularity, as Philip Seaton documents in his article, "Reporting the 2001 textbook and Yasukuni Shrine controversies: Japanese war memory and commemoration in British media," *Japan Forum*, 17:3, 2005, pp.287-309.

stemming from shifting domestic socio-cultural landscapes, changing international geo-political conditions, and generational upheavals, all of which have contributed to the emergence of qualitatively different urban ‘memoryscapes’ in Tokyo and Berlin.

By engaging in close readings of the various memorial sites I take up over the course of this study, I hope, secondly, to show how the producers, trustees, and curators of memorial spaces accomplish radically different political (and aesthetic) effects through the deployment and manipulation – whether consciously or unconsciously – of ostensibly ‘neutral’ mechanisms such as affect or authenticity. What emerges is how the affective dynamics generated by producers of memorial sites (and underpinned by discourses of ‘authenticity’) contribute to an audience’s aesthetic experience of a given memorial site, which in turn produces particular political effects, such as nationalism or its critique. The result I am aiming at is a comparison not merely of discretely bounded national entities such as ‘Germany’ or ‘Japan, but rather a comparison of how different memorial sites in different places at different times (and experienced by a variegated audience whose experience is inflected by multiple subject-positions traversing generational cohort, gender, ethnicity, and the like) contribute to how debates about collective memory and identity constitute differential politics of memory.

#### **FROM ‘EXHIBITIONARY COMPLEX’ TO ‘COUNTER-MONUMENT’**

General theoretical interventions about the influential role of museums and monuments in the formation of national identity have been legion in the wake of the rise to prominence of a younger generation with no immediate experience of the war, but with sufficiently strong familial or socio-cultural ties to the generations that experienced the Second World War

directly.<sup>9</sup> In this overlapping of generational cohorts, the struggle over the transmission of identity to future generations takes on an even sharper edge when the memorial site under consideration is of an explicitly historical nature,<sup>10</sup> activating as it does conflicts between an authority that derives from scholarly-historical expertise, and an authority grounded in immediate experience, local context, or emotional-affective investments.<sup>11</sup> That this is not a strict dichotomy should be evident in light of the lines of inquiry I have been pursuing. As we shall consider when discussing the merits and limitations of the ‘aesthetics of sobriety’ that marks the curatorial practices of the Topography of Terror, the careful attention to accuracy and ‘authenticity’ need not preclude a museal poetics that puts affect to work in self-consciously provocative ways such that a memorial site resonates with a visiting public. Yet the challenges posed by dubious mythologizing versions of the past to the ‘authority’ of a critical historiography is real. So, too, are the less suspect feelings that particular groups harbour about the past,

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<sup>9</sup> In the wake of Pierre Nora’s magisterial three-volume collection of essays, *Realms of Memory*, compiled between 1981 and 1998, work in the burgeoning field of memory studies proliferated with each passing decennial marking the end of the Second World War. Though the number of publications have tapered off somewhat in recent years, it will be interesting to see whether 2015 (or the seventy-fifth anniversary in 2020) will see a renewed intensification of interest, and whether or how that interest will be shaped qualitatively by the passing of all but a handful of the generation with immediate experience of the events of the Second World War/Asia-Pacific War. For a review of the enormous impact of Nora’s work on ‘history and memory’ and the field that arose to study this dynamic and tense interaction, see Hue-Tam Ho Tai, “Remembered Realms: Pierre Nora and French National Memory,” *American Historical Review*, 106:3, June 2001, pp.906-922.

<sup>10</sup> This is not to deny that other museum genres do not also generate controversy and stimulate reflection on questions of identity and representation. But the controversies, even ill-will, seem to me to be intensified when the thematic content of a gallery, exhibition, museum, or memorial site ignores, touches upon, or squarely confronts the ‘crimes of the nation’ and other less glorious aspects of a national past. In their article, “Exhibiting World War II in Japan and the United States since 1995,” *Pacific Historical Review*, 76:1, 2007, Laura Hein and Akiko Takenaka note that political attacks on exhibits and museums of a historical nature have become all the more ‘public and vitriolic’ in recent years as curators find themselves caught between what Hein and Takenaka paint as stark and agonizing choices regarding Japan’s involvement in the Asia-Pacific War: “battle of self-defense or of imperial ambitions,” to say nothing of how to depict Japanese war crimes committed in other Asian countries (pp.62-63). Despite this rather Manichean portrayal of the options available to curators, Hein and Takenaka have a point when it comes to what certain groups perceive as slights to ‘national honour’ – especially when historical representation becomes a matter of transmitting an ‘image’ of the past to future generations.

<sup>11</sup> A fascinating illustration of this clash of competing constituencies is the stalemate that resulted from the planning of the 1995 Smithsonian exhibition commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the atomic bombings. For an in-depth analysis of this debacle and a visceral sense of the threat posed to critical historical scholarship, see Michael J. Hogan (ed.), *Hiroshima in History and Memory*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996, which brings together essays by, among others, Barton J. Bernstein, Herbert P. Bix, and John W. Dower.



especially when these feelings drive legitimate concerns about the representation of the experiences of a given community. What this points to is the fine balancing act between an uncritical valorization of communally shared experience and the rigours of a critical historiography that involves – yes – ‘objectivity,’ problematic as that term may be.<sup>12</sup> Two vastly different conceptions of the function of the museum and monument – Tony Bennett’s ‘exhibitionary complex,’ and James Young’s ‘counter-monument’ – shall form the outer ranges of the spectrum into which fit the memorial sites under consideration here.

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Arising out of a penetrating Foucauldian analysis of the taxonomic logic of nineteenth-century art and natural history museums from the late eighteenth through the nineteenth centuries, Tony Bennett’s theory of the ‘exhibitionary complex’ analyzes the process whereby orderly categorized and narrativized exhibitions subsequently “transformed the many-headed mob into an ordered crowd, a part of the spectacle and a sight of pleasure in itself” in Victorian England.<sup>13</sup> It is worth quoting Bennett at length in order to follow his suggestion that the museum is a crucial manifestation of the shift from the ‘classical’ (in the Foucauldian sense) to the modern episteme:

Not, then, a history of confinement but one of the opening up of objects to more public contexts of inspection and visibility: this is the direction of the movement embodied in the formation of the exhibitionary complex. A movement which simultaneously helped to form a new public and inscribe it in new relations of

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<sup>12</sup> See Steven D. Lavine’s essay, “Audience, Ownership, and Authority: Designing Relations between Museums and Communities,” in Ivan Karp, Christine Mullen Kreamer, and Steven D. Lavine (eds.), *Museums and Communities: The Politics of Public Culture*, Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992, especially pgs.138 and 149-150, for a probing discussion of the intricacies of tacking between ‘curator-driven’ and ‘community-driven’ projects and exhibitions as these play out in the interstices of ‘expertise’ and ‘feeling.’

<sup>13</sup> Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, theory, politics*, London and New York: Routledge, 1995, p.72. In the early chapters of his *The Birth of the Museum*, Bennett traces the epistemic emergence of the taxonomic drive in contradistinction to the curiosity cabinet, travelling fairs, and princely art collections. While uniqueness and originality is the logic that figured the collections of objects and artifacts of the Renaissance and early modern period, uniformity, representativeness, and substitutability informed the universalizing impetus of collecting and exhibiting well into the twentieth century. See Bennett, pp.17-58.

sight and vision. [...] The significance of the formation of the exhibitionary complex [...] was that of providing new instruments for the moral and cultural regulation of the working classes. Museums and exhibitions, in drawing on the techniques and rhetorics of display and pedagogic relations developed in earlier nineteenth-century exhibitionary forms, provided a context in which the working- and middle-class publics could be brought together and the former – having been tutored into the forms of behaviour to suit them for the occasion – could be exposed to the improving influence of the latter. A history, then, of the formation of a new public and its inscription in new relations of power and knowledge.<sup>14</sup>

In short, this mode of exhibition was authoritarian in spirit, presenting a pre-packaged distillation of knowledge for passive public consumption. Not only was the museum involved in the delineation of working-class and middle-class subjectivities; as the collecting enterprise became increasingly linked with the colonial enterprise, different European nationalities began to see themselves as a citizen of a particular nation.<sup>15</sup> In a sense, the museum ‘displays’ to its citizenry the ordered, historicized evolution of the modern, liberal nation-state, providing a mirror in which the viewing subject could see him- or herself reflected (through a national art tradition, for example, or as part of a broader Western art and architectural tradition in contradistinction to non-Western cultures). At the same time that the museum enacts a ‘disciplinary function’ – middle-class modes of behaviour are modeled; visitors are both observers and observed – these modes of discipline are meant to be internalized by the citizens such that they themselves become active producers of their own subjectivity.

What is interesting about Bennett’s formulations with respect to the memorial sites under consideration here are two things: firstly, insofar as the museum functions as the cipher of the rise of the modern liberal nation-state in Bennett’s account, its forms and functions crystallized

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<sup>14</sup> Bennett, pp.73-74.

<sup>15</sup> Annie Coombes, “Museums and the Formation of National and Cultural Identities,” *Oxford Art Journal*, 11:2, 1988, pp.57-68, follows a similar line of inquiry in advance of Bennett’s work. In her essay, “Defining Communities through Exhibiting and Collecting” (contained in *Museum Communities*), Christine Mullen Kreamer makes explicit reference to Bennett’s exhibitionary complex, summarizing it as “a process whereby lower- and middle-class Britons came to imagine themselves as a homogeneous entity counterposed to a racially different and exotic ‘other’” (p.369). It is also significant to note in this context of national identity-formation that the museum was theoretically open to all.

over the nineteenth century and throughout the twentieth century into what we might call the ‘classical (or ‘classic’) museum.’ One might also profitably link up these theorizations of the ‘museum-function’ with concurrent developments in the aesthetics of war or victory monuments and memorials throughout the nineteenth and well into the twentieth centuries, a truly ‘monumental’ tradition (in the Nietzschean sense) which favoured, by turns, triumphalist narratives, heroic battle scenes, or the pathos of national suffering.<sup>16</sup> It is against this received tradition of the ‘classical’ museum (and its ‘museum-function’) that the ‘counter-memorialists’ and ‘active museum participants’ of the 1970s and 1980s in Berlin and in Germany more generally tilted their critical lances. Worth noting is the relative success of numerous recent memorial sites and museums in eroding the authoritarian hold on knowledge production exerted by the ‘classical museum.’<sup>17</sup> But while the staff involved with many a contemporary memorial site or museum has exerted great effort in destabilizing the ‘classical’ museum figured by Bennett’s ‘exhibitionary complex,’ not all memorial sites exhibit this dialogic openness.<sup>18</sup>

Aiming to subvert this dominant (and didactic) form of museum display, proponents of counter-memorials and ‘active museums’ such as the nascent Topography of Terror sought to erode the

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<sup>16</sup> For interesting historical discussions of shifts in the cultures of collecting, organizing, and exhibiting as aspects of knowledge production that complement Bennett’s account, two essays contained in Susan A. Crane’s edited work, *Museums and Memory*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000, are particularly noteworthy: Suzanne Marchand’s “The Quarrel of the Ancients and Moderns in the German Museums,” which traces how the nascent nineteenth-century ‘ethnological sciences’ – historical geography, ethnology, art history, folklore studies, prehistory, archaeology, and paleontology – aspired to convert material evidence into historical narratives (p.181), with the visuality of the displayed object gradually displacing the literary as the source of aesthetic experience (p.197); and Alexis Joachimides’ “The Museum’s Discourse on Art: The Formation of Curatorial Art History in Turn-of-the-Century Berlin,” which traces the eclipse of ‘connoisseurship’ in the organization of exhibitions and the production of knowledge. Peter M. McIsaac’s *Museums of the Mind: German Modernity and the Dynamics of Collecting*, University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2007, provides an original look at how the ‘museum function’ and the nineteenth-century notion of *Bildung* formed the backdrop for the ‘inventoried consciousness’ of certain contemporary literary figures such as W.G. Sebald.

<sup>17</sup> A prime example of ways in which curators have contributed to the gradual erosion of the ‘classical museum’ is Michael Fehr’s “A Museum and Its Memory: The Art of Recovering History,” in Crane (ed.), *Museums and Memory*. Fehr’s is an entertaining and idiosyncratic essay that recounts the resistances to his curatorial attempts at provocatively re-installing the Karl Ernst Osthaus-Museum in the town of Hagen, Germany.

<sup>18</sup> The situation in Japan encapsulates this with its ‘center-periphery’ differences. In critiquing the representational practices of the memorials of the ‘center,’ it is important to bear in mind that memorial sites on the ‘prefectural periphery’ do engage with innovation in terms of creating spaces of contestation and negotiation.

prosthetic function of museums and monuments at the same time that they encouraged citizens to take an active, participatory role in their own education by engaging with the exhibitions situated on affectively-charged historical sites.

This clarion call for redoubled efforts in the direction of what we might figure as an active, critically self-reflexive pedagogy ties into a second point, this one concerning the ‘production’ (or even ‘auto-poiesis’) of subjects and subjectivities.<sup>19</sup> Dissatisfied with the didacticism of traditional ‘classical’ museum displays, the proponents of this new museology and of conceptually challenging counter-monuments sought to reverse the flow of affective potentiality. Less as a meaning to be imposed by an exhibition crafted in such a way as to manipulate and ‘engineer’ the desired affects in the service of an ideal, the proponents, architects, and designers of new monuments, museums, exhibition-displays, and information centers viewed ‘meaning’ as something arising out of the encounter with these new forms of commemoration, something the spectator ‘discovered’ or crafted for him- or herself. These new forms and modes of commemoration seek to critique the manipulative manufacture of affect that effectively imposes a standardized narrative through sometimes barely visible means.<sup>20</sup> However – and this is a crucial point I will return to in subsequent chapters – these new forms of commemoration are *no less* invested with (and in) affective potentialities than are the more conventional modalities and forms of commemoration. Arguably, these new modes of commemoration also manipulate affect in the service of the production of a new kind of German

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<sup>19</sup> I will take this up in more detail in a subsequent chapter when articulating my notion of a critical-reflexive pedagogy.

<sup>20</sup> And sometimes ‘invisible,’ by way of sound, lighting, layout. One need only think of the exhibition strategy deployed at the *Haus der Geschichte* in Bonn to reflect upon how much GDR (German Democratic Republic) history is confined to suffocating spaces, often behind ‘fences’ or other sorts of barriers, at times in darker recesses of the building, in contrast to the natural light filtering in through skylights bathing the FRG (Federal Republic of Germany) narrative in an aura of ‘enlightened’ legitimacy.

(or otherwise) citizen, albeit one of a decidedly less nationalistic disposition in the case of some memorial sites in Berlin and Germany.

That said, however, the ‘counter-monumental impulse’ that James Young articulates in both his *At Memory’s Edge* and *The Texture of Memory* nonetheless represents a decisive break with previous techniques and modalities of memorialization, whether by way of a museum or monument.<sup>21</sup> It is not by chance that the counter-monumental impulse arose in the 1970s and 1980s, issuing forth from a generation that had no immediate experience with the events with which they attempted to engage on a conceptual level.<sup>22</sup> As Young relates, this new generation was “ethically certain of their duty to remember, but aesthetically skeptical of the assumptions underpinning traditional memorial forms.”<sup>23</sup> Moreover, this generation exhibited a profound suspicion of the degree to which the traditional museal and memorial aesthetics had been tainted by the Nazis.<sup>24</sup> Young writes:

With audacious simplicity, the countermonument thus flouts any number of cherished memorial conventions: its aim is not to console but to provoke; not to remain fixed but to change; not to be everlasting but to disappear; not to be ignored by passersby but to demand interaction; not to remain pristine but to invite its own violation and desanctification; not to accept graciously the burden of memory but to throw it back at the town’s feet.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Like Bennett’s formulation of an ‘exhibitionary complex,’ Young’s figuration of the critical thrust of the ‘counter-monument’ also owes a debt to Foucault’s notion of ‘counter-memory.’

<sup>22</sup> Matthias Hass probes considerably deeper into the historical context of 1960s and 70s student radicalism, environmentalism, and opposition to nuclear weapons that fed into the ‘counter-monumental’ impulse of the 1980s than does Young. This tradition of social activism would eventually give rise to the Kreuzberg-centered citizens’ initiatives of the 1980s that articulated the concept of the ‘active museum’ out of their engagement with the newly (re)discovered ‘Gestapo-Gelände.’ See Matthias Hass, *Gestaltetes Gedenken. Yad Vashem, Das U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, und die Stiftung Topographie des Terrors*, Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 2002, pp.155-159.

<sup>23</sup> James E. Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1993, p.27.

<sup>24</sup> For reasons alluded to in the Introduction and the previous chapter, the same kind of perception with regard to traditional museal and memorial aesthetics as tainted is less in evidence in Japan, where despite numerous protests over the course of the 1960s and into the 1970s against authority, there was a thoroughgoing generational upheaval directed at traditional forms of commemoration than in Germany.

<sup>25</sup> Young, *The Texture of Memory*, p.30. An example of a counter-monument is the Monument against Fascism of Jochen Gerz and Esther Shalev-Gerz, situated in the Hamburg suburb of Harburg, a ‘performative piece’ which was dedicated on 10 October 1986 and gradually sunk into the ground, eventually ‘disappearing’ by 27 September 1991. (See Young, *At Memory’s Edge: After-Images of the Holocaust in Contemporary Art and Architecture*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000, pp.127-139).

Perhaps the most audacious counter-memorial proposal came from Horst Hoheisel, who had already achieved a degree of renown for his ‘negative-form’ Aschrott-Brunnen Monument in Kassel (1987), during the first call for proposals (1994-1995) for what eventually became the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe. His proposal: to blow up the Brandenburg Gate and sprinkle the crushed and ground rubble over its former site. Provocatively, “rather than filling in the void left by a murdered people with a positive form, the artist would carve out an empty space in Berlin by which to recall a now absent people.”<sup>26</sup> Despite the radicality of such gestures, we might still leave open the question as to whether the *excesses* of the counter-monumental impulse – as distinguished from the motives – reflect a tendency to act out the traumas of the Second World War lingering in German collective memory. Might this kind of violent, destructive, transgressive provocation implicit in these forms of ‘protest commemoration’ that compulsively scratches at the scars of memory betray an unwillingness – or inability – to critically engage with the past? Might this not be a provocation that desires, paradoxically in its antipathy to ‘permanence,’ to repress reminders of the past? Though not in keeping with the exuberant spirit of the counter-monument (the thrust of which I find compelling, I must admit) similar kinds of questions posed somewhat differently informed the deliberations of those involved with the Topography of Terror – which, incidentally, was conceived of as a wound in the center of Berlin, an irritant to the social and urban fabric of the city.

As is by now evident, the counter-monument’s oppositional nature marks the very limits of the entire memorial enterprise.<sup>27</sup> Though the Willms exhibition pavilion that opened recently

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<sup>26</sup> Young, *At Memory’s Edge*, p.90.

<sup>27</sup> While the counter-monumental impulse itself is not much in evidence in Tokyo, nonetheless critically reflexive museums, institutes, and memorial sites dot the capital and its environs. Examples include the Women’s Active Museum, the Japanese War Responsibility Center (which publishes a seasonal journal), the Maruki Gallery in Saitama (which displays the Hiroshima Panels depicting the trauma of the atomic bombings), and the Peace

on the Topography of Terror bears little resemblance to these radical gestures of departure,<sup>28</sup> nonetheless its very subduedness and astute attention to the educational function of the Topography of Terror exhibition as it relates to its surroundings bear the faint traces of the critical effervescence out of which both the *Aktives Museum* and *Initiative zum Umgang mit dem Gestapo-Gelände* citizens' initiatives emerged.<sup>29</sup> Given that the Topography of Terror was a prime example of a site of contestation and negotiation over the course of the 1980s and 1990s, it is worth asking whether the decidedly unassuming manner in which the site now presents itself can maintain the 'cutting-edge' that was a hallmark of the site's hitherto fluid contestability now that it has assumed a permanent form.

#### **CAPITAL CONNECTIONS: THE MEMORYSCAPE OF BERLIN AND TOKYO**

In the Introduction to this study, I outlined some of the ways in which the postwar experience in each respective place has its striking similarities, significant differences, and unexpected resonances when compared with one another. I suggested that these similarities, differences, and resonances resist easy comparison, and that, moreover, significant contrasts have had a bearing on the shaping of Tokyo and Berlin's memoryscape. So, too, do the varieties

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Museum of Saitama. On a national level, peace museums exist in a number of prefectures, including the prominent Kyoto Museum for World Peace, the Osaka International Peace Center, and, of course, the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum and the Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum. While all are critically informed in terms of their exhibitions, none can be termed 'counter-monumental' in terms of their conception and design. This might say more about the differential exigencies of generational conflict in Japan and Germany than it does about a commitment to critical engagement with the past.

<sup>28</sup> Of note is the greater degree of latitude granted to conceptual ideas by the 1983 call for proposals as compared to the 2005 call for proposals for development of the Topography of Terror, a point I intend to take up in the chapter on the Topography of Terror. Out of the 194 submissions submitted in 1983 and judged in 1984, many proposed conceptual-symbolic engagements with the Gestapo-Gelände, while the submissions for the 2005 and judged in 2006 were markedly more functional than conceptual. See *Dokumentation: Offener Wettbewerb Berlin, Südliche Friedrichstadt – Gestaltung des Geländes des ehemaligen Prinz-Albrecht-Palais*, Berlin, 1985, published by the Internationale Bauausstellung Berlin 1987 under the auspices of the Senator für Bau- und Wohnungswesen.

<sup>29</sup> The *Aktives Museum Faschismus und Widerstand Berlin* (Active Museum Fascism and Resistance, formed in 1983), along with the *Initiative Zum Umgang mit dem Gestapo-Gelände* (Citizens' Initiative Dealing with the Gestapo-Terrain, formed in 1986) are the two main umbrella groups bringing together a broad spectrum of citizens' groups concerned in one way or another with the Topography of Terror.

of narratives told (or not) about historical responsibility sites of memory in each respective capital city become legible. These contrasts influence what kinds of narratives about historical responsibility are told (or not) at sites of memory in each respective capital city.

As the seat of government and thus the site at which domestic politics intersects most visibly with international politics, capital cities draw a metonymic line linking current governmental power and past state formations. The capital is thus (usually) where the majority of memory projects commemorating national triumphs, trials and tribulations are undertaken and given visibility: visible, tangible reminders of past traumas, visible tokens of atonement, visible commitments to accountability. In this sense, projects that are or are *not* undertaken shed much light on a current state's sense of historical responsibility vis-à-vis past crimes and atrocities. Some may raise the valid objection that bracketing the atomic bombings from a study of Japanese memorial sites creates an enormous lacuna.<sup>30</sup> And indeed, I do not discount the international prominence of memorial sites such as those in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. But significant as these sites are in commemorating and mourning the losses inflicted by the atomic bombings, and as instrumental as these sites are in educating future generations about the horrors and trauma of atomic warfare, they focus predominantly on the context of national victimhood. Moreover, they exist at a remove from the centers of power that, historically, bore some burden of responsibility for the atrocity inflicted upon the residents of Hiroshima and Nagasaki insofar as the Japanese state's aggressive actions in the Asia-Pacific War contributed to the extremely controversial American decision to drop the bomb.<sup>31</sup> I do not mean to gainsay the trauma of the

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<sup>30</sup> A similar objection could be raised to my bracketing of Holocaust memorial sites, both within Germany, and beyond its current borders.

<sup>31</sup> The debate surrounding this topic is heated, to say the least. See, for example, John Dower, *Japan in War and Peace: Essays on History, Culture and Race* (1993), London: Harper Collins, 1996, especially the essay, "Race, Language, and War in Two Cultures," along with his *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War*, New York: Pantheon, 1987. See also Mark Selden and Laura Hein (eds.), *Living with the Bomb: American and Japanese*



atomic bombings and the role this ‘foundational’ trauma has played in figuring postwar collective memory on a national level, nor do I intend to imply that these memorial sites do not also deal, however cursorily, with the broader context of Japan’s role in the war is rather cursory at both sites.<sup>32</sup> Rather, what I would like to indicate is that the liturgical function of these sites as, primarily, sites of warning (Never again!) and sites of mourning has left a vacuum in broader national treatments of Japan’s role during the Asia-Pacific War.<sup>33</sup>

As a national museum located in Japan’s capital city, and as a potential destination of international tourism, many observers expected the Shôwakan to fill this gap by providing a counter-weight to the (legitimate) mourning of the victims of atomic warfare. With its configuration as a secular space focusing on the everyday, the Shôwakan could have sent an international signal by engaging more critically with Japan’s devastating colonial adventures and aggression against its neighbours, but instead the exhibition remains resolutely provincialized, replicating the narrative of *Japanese* suffering that, at the very least, it could have contextualized. While Berlin was gearing up to open the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe in 2005 – a memorial site with significant state support, and dedicated to the victims of

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*Cultural Conflicts in the Nuclear Age*, Armonk, NY: Eastgate (M.E. Sharpe), 1997, as well as Hogan (ed.), *Hiroshima in History and Memory*.

<sup>32</sup> I take up these issues in depth in my M.A. study, “To These Children Who Know Nothing of War: The Representation of Traumatic Events in Japan as Memory Fades into History,” M.A. thesis, McGill University, 2001. See also John Whittier Treat, *Writing Ground Zero: Japanese Literature and the Atomic Bomb*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995, and James J. Orr, *The Victim as Hero: Ideologies of Peace and National Identity in Postwar Japan*, Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2001. In response to requests for more background to their representations of the atomic bombings, the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum in 1994 and the Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum in 1996 incorporated materials dealing with Japan’s aggression as a means of contextualizing the atomic bombings.

<sup>33</sup> The liturgical function has intensified with recently opened national memorial buildings in both Hiroshima and Nagasaki: the Hiroshima National Peace Memorial Hall for Atomic Bomb Victims, opened in 2002, and Nagasaki National Peace Memorial Hall for Atomic Bomb Victims, opened in 2003. Both sites are subterranean and dimly lit, contributing to the air of solemn contemplation. The cool-toned glass and exposed concrete structure in Nagasaki features a central sanctuary that resembles the nave of a gothic cathedral. This is no coincidence, for though both sites are ‘kinenkan,’ they employ not the kanji characters for ‘memorial hall’ but for ‘prayer hall.’ In fact, the website for the Nagasaki Peace Memorial Hall states explicitly that the function of both the Hiroshima and Nagasaki peace halls is the provision of a place to pray for the victims of atomic warfare and to contemplate peace. (See <http://www.peace-nagasaki.go.jp/english/about/index.html> – accessed 29 May 2011).

German crimes – Japanese authorities deflected criticism of past state involvement in victimizing its Asian neighbours onto yet another project reinforcing the postwar foundational narrative of absolute Japanese victimhood: the Hiroshima National Peace Memorial Hall for Atomic Bomb Victims, opened in 2002, and Nagasaki National Peace Memorial Hall for Atomic Bomb Victims, opened in 2003. This last point ties into another telling issue: the relative prominence or absence of engagement with particular eras of a nation's history in prominent places such as capital cities. Given this intertwining of domestic and international concerns in the capital, it is also a lightning rod of sorts that invites increased scrutiny from 'outside.' The unease generated by prime-ministerial visits to Yasukuni Shrine is but one example of this scrutiny, as is the East Asian regional attention directed at Tokyo every time a new series of middle school history textbooks is released.

After the fall of the Berlin Wall and the transfer of the German capital from Bonn to Berlin, those engaged in the first instance with advocating for a particular kind of memorial at the Topography of Terror and the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, and then subsequently with the planning and execution of the memorial were acutely conscious of international perceptions, especially in light of Berlin's past as capital of the Third Reich. Aware that the site of the Topography of Terror was significant not merely for German but for European history, the Expert Commission called into being in 1989 by the local Berlin government and charged with devising recommendations for the future of the site yoked this significance to the site's new-found centrality after the fall of the Berlin Wall. The authors of the Expert Commission's report saw in decisions regarding the future of the site "not merely an obligatory task, but rather a unique chance for Berlin and the two German states that are now growing together to send visible and wide-ranging sign that our society grasps completely that the

necessary engagement with this part of our history is absolutely indispensable to our self-understanding – not only in the present, but in the future.”<sup>34</sup> In short, such memorial sites were meant as a signal to the international community that both state and civil society placed a premium on their historical responsibility to engage with painful and traumatic pasts.

In Germany, the relative absence at official levels of the fragmentation with respect to Germany’s aggressive and genocidal actions during the Second World War has given rise to a situation unique among erstwhile perpetrator nations: what James Young calls the “courageous and difficult act of contrition on the part of the government” reflected in the choice of commemorative spaces in the center of Berlin.<sup>35</sup> Many an astute commentator on the vicissitudes of memory-work in postwar Germany would see this visual manifestation of an ‘act of contrition’ as somewhat belated; the impetus for such a commemorative engagement with the nation’s crimes did not arise at the highest levels of federal and regional government until the mid-1980s, and then only hesitantly.<sup>36</sup> That said, whatever the ramifications of ‘memory tourism,’ high-profile memorial sites have sprung up with the blessing of the state on highly-prominent prime real estate in the center of Berlin. In contrast to Tokyo, which was already built up long before the 1980s, it is important to note that postwar Berlin was a city bespeckled by

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<sup>34</sup> See “Abschlussbericht der Fachkommission zur Erarbeitung von Vorschlägen für die künftige Nutzung des „Prinz-Albrecht-Geländes“ („Gestapo-Geländes“) in Berlin-Kreuzberg,” March 1990, p.18. See also pp.12-13 of this report for considerations of the Topography of Terror as an integral place in the urban fabric of newly-unified Berlin.

<sup>35</sup> Young, *At Memory’s Edge*, p.223. Other commentators, however, harbour suspicions that such intense state-level involvement could have a deleterious effect on the continued vitality of memory debates. See Harald Schmid, “Immer wieder ‘Nie wieder!’: Begründungsprobleme, Mythen und Perspektiven der deutschen Erinnerungskultur,” in *Dachauer Hefte* (25), November 2009.

<sup>36</sup> Suspicions lingered well into the last decade that the Berlin Senate (cabinet) was not serious about its commitment to the critical engagement with the Nazi past (as represented by the Topography of Terror), but were more content to commemorate the victims as a means of ‘national atonement’ at sites such as the Monument to the Murdered Jews of Europe. See also P1Pr13/3 (Abgeordnetenhaus von Berlin), 25 January 1996, pp.102-104 for a record of the heated state-level parliamentary debates at the time of the ‘Grand Coalition’ between CDU and SPD politicians. Particularly strident in their critique of the Berlin Senate’s perceived lack of seriousness in confronting the more difficult aspects of Germany’s past were representatives of the AL (Alternative List) and the PDS (Party of Democratic Socialism).

vacant lots, of which the Gestapo-Gelände was only one of the most prominent examples.<sup>37</sup> The fall of the Berlin Wall, and the concomitant opening up of what had hitherto been the death strip dividing East from West Berlin, contributed yet more available land, much of which was state-owned.<sup>38</sup> Similar urban planning options that yielded memorial sites of national atonement such as the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe were simply not available in Tokyo in the 1990s and 2000s, even if the political will to erect such a memorial existed.

Though ‘Peace Halls’ critical of Japan’s aggressive role during the Asia-Pacific War are a common feature at the prefectural level, nothing on the magnitude of the self-indicting ‘mega-memory projects’ of Berlin graces the center of Tokyo. The museums that do figure prominently in the center of Tokyo – the Yûshûkan on the grounds of the Yasukuni Shrine, and the Shôwakan, an object of intense debate and even a lawsuit in the 1990s – are, rather, an adulation of Japanese martial heroism and a paean to Japanese sacrifice on the home-front respectively.<sup>39</sup> One might even venture to posit the existence of a ‘traumatic geography,’ in which the painful, uncomfortable, inconvenient memories are banished to the periphery. Safely confined to the margins of a peaceful postwar modernity, these inconvenient revenants of historical responsibility – which threaten to upset the dominant postwar narrative not only of prosperity but the status of the Japanese as the ultimate victims of the Second World War<sup>40</sup> – are effectively

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<sup>37</sup> Wim Wenders’ 1987 film, *Wings of Desire*, evocatively captures the broad swaths of vacant space in a West Berlin still bearing the scars of war on the eve of the fall of the Wall.

<sup>38</sup> As Jennifer Jordan notes in her *Structures of Memory: Understanding Urban Change in Berlin and Beyond*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006, memorial sites springing up on privately-owned land is a highly unlikely proposition, especially if they are of a critical or controversial nature.

<sup>39</sup> In this sense, I consider the Shôwakan and the Yûshûkan as coterminous with one another, the one gendered feminine and the other masculine. The Shôwakan celebrates motherhood and the defense of the home-front, while the Yûshûkan extols the values of virile martial heroism of the fathers, husbands, sons and brothers engaged in a war outside of the Japanese ‘homeland.’

<sup>40</sup> See, among others, James J. Orr, *The Victim as Hero*. ‘Ultimate victimhood’ references, of course, the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

repressed in favour of memories that invite positive identification with the luster of postwar Japanese techno-consumerist society.<sup>41</sup>

A related reading is also possible, a Freudian one that focuses on the continual invocation to mourn and honour the fallen at memory sites such as the Yûshûkan, and, to a lesser degree, the Shôwakan,<sup>42</sup> as an indefinite deferral of engagement with the issues of historical responsibility.<sup>43</sup> The site of the Yûshûkan museum at Yasukuni Shrine is haunted, as it were, not only by those who ‘heroically laid down their lives’ in the service of nation-state and emperor, but also by contemporary debates about what it means to confront, mourn, take leave of the past. When considering the question of how sites of memory link up with questions of historical responsibility, it is important to bear in mind that the Yûshûkan is situated *within* a space already charged with the task of mourning and commemorating the fallen soldiers: Yasukuni Shrine. By that very fact, the view of history espoused by the Yûshûkan is profoundly interwoven into the fabric of the ‘Yasukuni issue’ that has been smoldering over the course of the postwar period, flaring up intermittently around debates over history textbooks, prime-ministerial visits to Yasukuni, and the separation of church and state (Article 20 of the Japanese Constitution).<sup>44</sup>

And yet, while there is no shortage of left-leaning intellectuals in Japan who have spoken out critically against both the narrative tendencies and affective dynamics of the Yûshûkan and

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<sup>41</sup> Indeed one has to invest quite a bit of effort into locating the prefectural peace halls in the vicinity of Tokyo (for they occupy decidedly non-prominent locations), and then a subsequent amount of time in journeying to these destinations on the periphery of the capital. For example, the Kanagawa Peace Hall is located in a residential area between stations along the Tôkyû Tôyoko Line running between Tokyo and Yokohama, while the Saitama Peace Hall is located at the foot of the mountains of Saitama prefecture, a fair distance by train, bus, and foot from anywhere in Tokyo.

<sup>42</sup> ‘To a lesser degree’ because the latter half of the Shôwakan exhibition space is given over to a narrative of national redemption and rebirth through consumption.

<sup>43</sup> Sigmund Freud, “Mourning and Melancholia,” in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Vol.14, trans. James Strachey, London: The Hogarth Press, especially pp.243-244 and 255-257. See also J. Victor Koschmann, “National Subjectivity and the Uses of Atonement in the Age of Recession,” in *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 99:4, Fall 2000, pp.753-757.

<sup>44</sup> See the work of Takahashi Tetsuya, who has written extensively on the ‘Yasukuni issue.’ His concept of the alchemic conversion of suffering into nationalist sentiment, outlined in Takahashi Tetsuya, *Yasukuni mondai*, Tokyo: Chikuma Shinsho, 2005, pp.43-54, is particularly helpful.

the Shôwakan,<sup>45</sup> this has not yet translated into a successful bid for a memorial site ‘at the center,’ one dedicated to the critical engagement of Japan’s aggressive actions during the Asia-Pacific War and late-nineteenth and twentieth century imperialism more generally.<sup>46</sup> Institutions of a critical nature do exist, but they are generally small-scale, independent institutions that often rely on the dedication of volunteers to carry out their work. One such example is the Women’s Active Museum on War and Peace (WAM) on a quiet side street near Waseda University. Both exhibition space and site of activism, its aim is to preserve the memories of suffering of women forced into sexual slavery by the Japanese military and its agents.<sup>47</sup> If I suggest that the WAM is an example of a peripheral memorial site within the metropole, I say ‘peripheral’ not to devalue the important work that this museum engages in, but as a means of signaling its difference – and Tokyo’s difference – from, say, the Topography of Terror and several other memorial sites located in Berlin. Whereas the Topography of Terror is situated on an ‘authentic site’ that was vacant at the time the citizens’ initiatives began their push for a monument in the early 1980s, there are no such ‘authentic sites’ relating to so-called ‘comfort women’ that have achieved the same kind of resonance in Tokyo.

But this is not all. As mentioned, the Topography of Terror (and several other memorial sites in Berlin and Germany that adopt a critical stance toward recent German history) has benefitted from state support, even if that support has not always been guaranteed, let alone

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<sup>45</sup> This is not through lack of effort. See Tanaka Nobumasa, “Ima towareru mono, kokuritsu ‘Shôwakan’ to shimin ga tsukuru heiwa myûjiamu,” in *Hakubutsukan Mondai Kenkyû* (26), 1999, p.26, where Tanaka recounts his own participation in an ultimately unsuccessful lawsuit against the government over the siting and content of the Shôwakan.

<sup>46</sup> See, for example, the special issue of *Gendaishisô*, 33:9, August 2005, on the ‘Yasukuni issue.’ See also Hosaka Masayasu, “Yûshûkan no tenjibutsu ga shimesu rekishikan,” in *Sandei-mainichi*, July 23, 2006, p.56-57, where he takes the Yûshûkan to task for its narrow focus on war and heroism, and for its linking of Japanese modernity with its martial spirit. Tellingly, there is nary a trace of the history postwar democracy in the Yûshûkan.

<sup>47</sup> The Women’s Active Museum states on its website that it is the first *active* museum “to focus on violence against women during wars and armed conflict from a gender perspective.” <http://www.wam-peace.org/english/index.php> (accessed 28 May 2011).

magnanimous. But in a city such as Tokyo where land is at a premium, and at a particular historical moment when the nationalist right has achieved a high degree of socio-cultural prominence, the support of Japanese local and federal levels of state for prominent memorial sites sharply critical of the state, potentially located within the ambit of well-travelled tourist circuits, and therefore highly visible to non-Japanese visitors – is, to put it mildly, less than forthcoming.<sup>48</sup> The WAM is but one example of a view to the past that has been marginalized in postwar Tokyo; its relative lack of prominence and absolute lack of state support helps shed light some of the mechanisms that stifle the resonance of certain views within the public sphere.<sup>49</sup>

In short, what this preceding discussion of the contrast between Tokyo and Berlin underscores is the convergence of several factors identified by Jennifer Jordan in her *Structures of Memory*, factors that contribute to the relative prominence of a memorial site at a particular place and time: availability of publicly owned land, favourable urban zoning regulations, state or citizen support, and, finally, the crucial element of resonance.<sup>50</sup> I would add that resonance is historically and culturally contingent, and has a bearing on the other factors. For the moment,<sup>51</sup> in comparison to the prominent treatment of historical responsibility reflected in the existence of and debates surrounding the ‘trio’ of memorial sites in contemporary Berlin, the main twentieth-

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<sup>48</sup> Some of the state’s more virulently nationalistic representatives, including then-prime minister Abe Shinzô, had denied as recently as 2007 that the ‘comfort women’ system amounted to sexual coercion. Bearing the title, “The Facts,” Japanese politicians from both the LDP and DJP took out a full-page ad in the *Washington Post* (14 June 2007) to contest House Resolution 121 sponsored by U.S. Representative Mike Honda. Honda sponsored the resolution as a protest against Abe’s public retreat from previous official apologies offered to ‘comfort women.’

<sup>49</sup> Its very existence, though, is symptomatic of alternatives to the dominant narrative that are difficult for the state to repress.

<sup>50</sup> See Jennifer Jordan, *op.cit.*, pp.9-14.

<sup>51</sup> That ‘memory-work’ is far from static is something that virtually every commentator on history and memory knows, but fewer seem to state explicitly. I say ‘for the moment’ as a means of underscoring the existence of a lively debate in Japan that may yet find a higher degree of resonance in the public sphere.

century history museums in Tokyo ignore the issue of historical responsibility at best (Shôwakan),<sup>52</sup> or deny it at worst (Yûshûkan).<sup>53</sup>

That a generation of committed groups and individuals in Germany have, on balance, done an admirable job of late negotiating the thorny by-ways of recent German history is abundantly in evidence; but this does not mean that the process was seamless. Though I travel quite far down paths that highlight the contested nature of memory in both Japan and Germany, where I eventually part company with scholars such as Philip Seaton is in my refusal to overemphasize the *effects* of contested memory in Japan. To be fair, Seaton's target is the 'orthodox' interpretation of Japanese war memories spun by travel guides and other Western media. His aim is to challenge the tendency of the Western media to divide memorial sites into two categories: ones that glorify the military, and ones that fixate on victimhood. The resulting orthodoxy is one that depicts the Japanese as combining a defense of past aggressive actions with a 'victim mentality.'<sup>54</sup> Seaton is right in emphasizing the 'rifts' that figure collective memory. Government policy and public remembrance are separate issues; 'official' and 'unofficial' views do not necessarily overlap. However, his righteous indignation toward what I think he correctly identifies as biases in Western media coverage runs the risk of obscuring the strength of the hand held by contemporary Japanese neo-nationalists who have a profound influence on what gets said in textbooks and what does not, as well as what kinds of memorial sites get built, and which

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<sup>52</sup> With regard to the Shôwakan, several commentators have pointed to the lack of historical interpretation that would situate and contextualize the narrative of home-front sacrifice and subsequent Japanese recovery in terms of Japan's aggressive war in Asia. I revisit this in the chapter on the Shôwakan.

<sup>53</sup> Again, this is not meant to short-change the work of organizations such as the Center for Research and Documentation on Japan's War Responsibility, which publishes a periodical with work addressing this issue. See also the two volume set published by the center-right Yomiuri newspaper company, *Sensô Sekinin*, 2 vols., Tokyo: Chuokoron Shinsha, Inc, 2006, and Naoki Sakai (ed.), *Nashonaruru hisutorii wo manabi suteru*, Tokyo: Tokyo Daigaku Shuppansha, 2006 for recent work that directly addresses the question of war responsibility and historical responsibility.

<sup>54</sup> See Philip A. Seaton, *Japan's Contested War Memories: The 'Memory Rifts' in Historical Consciousness of World War II*, London: Routledge, 2007, pp.2-9.



ones do not. Comparing the relative visibility of various kinds of memorial sites in contemporary Germany and contemporary Japan, along with where they are located, illuminates the potential blind spots in otherwise well-meaning arguments.

Herein lies the value of a comparative approach, for though memory is indeed contested in Japan, compared with Germany the nationalist right has been in the ascendancy in the Japanese public sphere since the mid-1990s, consequently strengthening the hand of an already conservative state loathe to confront its historical responsibility. This has had an impact on the visibility (or invisibility) of commemorative practices and projects – in short, their prominence. Such a statement does not mean that Germany has more adequately addressed its past than has Japan, but nor does it deny that critical commemorative projects are more prominent in places like Berlin than they are in Tokyo.

#### **THE VICISSITUDES OF AUTHENTICITY: AESTHETICS, EXPERIENCE, AFFECTIVE DYNAMICS**

In recalling the spectrum of museal techniques ranging between ‘the exhibitionary complex’ and the ‘counter-monumental impulse,’ it is important to note that none of the memorial sites under consideration here are ‘ideal types’ representing the one or the other. However, for heuristic purposes I will situate these memorial sites from time to time along this spectrum, while occasionally introducing readings that complicate and destabilize these positionings. Also, comparing Tokyo’s Yûshûkan and Shôwakan with Berlin’s Topography of Terror and Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe does not preclude mention of resonances with other memorial sites in Japan and Germany.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> For example, the focus on postwar consumerism that drives the latter half of the Shôwakan exhibition resonates with the narrative strategies of Bonn’s *Haus der Geschichte*, where the fruits of production and consumption in the Federal Republic are spatially contrasted with the German Democratic Republic. This is perhaps unsurprising given

As this brief articulation of differing representational strategies illustrates, the kinds of objects on display, and the way in which they are installed, has a bearing on the kind of experience the visitor to a particular memorial site might have. This experience – which can range from (sublime) wonder, shock, repulsion to resonance and recognition<sup>56</sup> – hinges upon the differential ways in which ‘authenticity’ (figured variously as an artifact, a document, a (re)creation, a site, a trace, even an authentic witness) acquires significance in different contexts. However, insofar as authenticity acquires significance in relationship to context, I would take this further and suggest that authenticity exists only ‘in context’: that is to say, ‘authenticity’ is socially contingent and temporally dependent, resulting from an act of judgment that pronounces something authentic. The quest for authenticity often betrays a desire for presence, our inability to ‘reconstruct’ the past in all of its plenitude and haecceity notwithstanding. The ‘authentic artifact,’ ‘authentic place,’ or ‘authentic trace’ becomes so only to the extent that it takes up a position in an exhibition syntax (in the case of the artifact), or is designated as such due to its erstwhile past function, especially as this function impinges upon present needs (in the case of place).

Each kind of experience evoked by an encounter with ‘authenticity’ at a memorial site works toward different ends in terms of historical consciousness, ranging from an acceptance or valourization of the status quo or nation to contestation of the official rendition.<sup>57</sup> The Shôwakan installs its galleries to represent various rooms of the home as they were before, during, and after the war. In addition, the use of sound creates a sensation of ‘being there’ in the thick of the aerial

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the influence of American capitalism on the postwar recoveries of both (West) Germany and Japan, but the similarities bear mentioning.

<sup>56</sup> See Stephen Greenblatt, “Resonance and Wonder,” in Ivan Karp and Steven D. Lavine (eds.), *Exhibiting Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*, Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991.

<sup>57</sup> Admittedly, of course, there is never any guarantee that the intentions of architects, designers, and curators will have the desired effect on a public that visits or otherwise comes into contact with memorial sites.

bombardments. Via this mechanism of ‘dioramic’ presencing that characterizes the displays of the Shôwakan, the exhibition designers seem to grasp after an illusive ‘authenticity.’ Through the installation of everyday material objects that creates a phantasmatic ‘real’ staged for easy consumption, the curatorial practices of the Shôwakan effectively call forth an affective bond linking the Japanese national family across cataclysm and redemptive recovery under the sign of the father-emperor. Some representational strategies and techniques, however, such as those advocated by the *Aktives Museum* associated with the Topography of Terror, even those of the information center attached to the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, while still motivated to a large degree by problematic aspects of the discourse of authenticity, offer up a perspective on authenticity that functions in a critical fashion. The idea is that a critical engagement with the authentic site of National Socialist perpetration, along with authentic documents testifying to this fact, will produce a ‘shock of non-recognition’ in the hopes of inducing in the visitor a reorganization of knowledge or experience.<sup>58</sup>

What all of this points toward are the slippery temporal dimensions of authenticity. Authentic when, and for whom?<sup>59</sup> Andreas Huyssen champions a certain kind of authenticity as an antidote to the endless flow of media images.<sup>60</sup> “One reason for the newfound strength of the museum and the monument in the public sphere may have something to do with the fact that

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<sup>58</sup> See Ivan Karp, “Culture and Representation,” in Karp and Lavine (eds.), *Exhibiting Culture*, pp.22-23. I take up the ‘affective pedagogical’ oscillation between shock and reflexivity in more detail in the chapter on the aesthetics of sobriety. There I will also engage more fully with one of the problems arising out of arising out of the Topography of Terror’s resolutely documentary approach: the assumption that ‘authentic site’ and ‘authentic documents’ provide a transparent window onto the past. What this approach ignores is the affective potentiality that inheres in sources other than documents as a means to produce a defamiliarizing shock in those with no immediate experience with the events represented. Foreclosing as it does on sources of a literary or visually-artistic nature, this approach is also potentially limited with regards to the dynamics of traumatic memory.

<sup>59</sup> In a chapter entitled “Forgetting Places,” Jennifer Jordan brushes against the grain of authenticity by asking why authentic sites such as former SS and SA torture cellars, forced labour camps, and synagogues do not become ‘authentic sites.’ See Jordan, *Structures of Memory*, pp.134-173.

<sup>60</sup> That said, Huyssen is no romantic fetishizer of authenticity and experience.

both offer something that television denies: the material quality of the object,” writes Huyssen.<sup>61</sup> Crucially, this alternative to the televisual flow of information rests on the materiality of both the displayed *museum object* and the materiality of the sited *museum* itself. The materiality of the object – its ‘thereness’ and (relative) permanence – impedes the flow of information, leaving more time for contemplation. Huyssen provides a historical account of the auratic nature of the object, its subsequent demystification, and the new potentialities of the object as material trace to ‘anchor’ the past against the flow of amnesia-inducing evanescent information. That is to say, dissatisfaction with the transitoriness of contemporary mediated and mediatized culture drives the *desire* for a meaningful engagement with materially anchored traces of a rapidly receding past.<sup>62</sup>

If I empathize with Huyssen’s desire to slow down the flow of information while expanding the horizon of the past, Huyssen is, perhaps, being overly sanguine. Though the monument/museum is, indeed, less fleeting than a televisual image, might not its very ‘permanence’ also contribute to its soon becoming part of the background scenery, something to be taken for granted? Is there not a way in which the completed monument conceals the secret of its own contested origins, even if those involved with a particular memorial site understand the site as a space of cultural contestation and negotiation? We might go so far as to contend that the completed monument is an ironic testament to the forgetting Huyssen seeks to counter: an erasure of the conflict and negotiation that produced this particular memorial on this particular site at this particular moment in time.

Again, authentic when, and for whom? Taken to absurd lengths, one could justify the excavation and preservation of all of Berlin as an ‘authentic monument’ to National Socialism.

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<sup>61</sup> Andreas Huyssen, *Twilight Memories: Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia*, London and New York: Routledge, 1995, p.255.

<sup>62</sup> See Huyssen, pp.252-255.

Indeed, as Reinhard Rürup, former academic director of the Topography of Terror foundation, provocatively asserts apropos of the ongoing Topography of Terror debates about the value of the authenticity of the site, the only truly ‘authentic’ Gestapo-Gelände is the one at Prinz-Albrecht-Strasse 8 still peopled by men in SS and Gestapo uniforms going about their business under the prevailing power structure of the time.<sup>63</sup> As a means of circumventing some of the more dubious uses to which the notion of ‘authenticity’ can lead, Rürup suggests thinking in terms of ‘historical significance’ as opposed to ‘authenticity.’<sup>64</sup>

Aleida Assmann, who has written prolifically on memory work in Germany, also confronts the temporal slippage alluded to by Rürup as it relates both to the musealization of traumatic sites such as Auschwitz, and the transmission of experience from one generation to the next.<sup>65</sup> As she relates, traumatic sites call forth an immense range of affects, depending on group and generational affiliation. But the affective aura of a site – ‘history as immediate experience’ – is nearly impossible to transmit by means of textual or visual media. Drawing on the work of novelist and playwright, Peter Weiss, Assmann delineates the ‘here-then’ of the place of the victim – ‘here was the gate through which they walked, these were the walls that housed them’ – in order to draw a sharp distinction between the ‘here-now’ that constitutes the surroundings of the visitor.<sup>66</sup> In this connection, Assmann goes on to register Holocaust survivor Ruth Klüger’s dissatisfaction with the preserving of concentration camps as ‘authentic sites.’ For Klüger, the

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<sup>63</sup> Reinhard Rürup, “Die Berliner *Topographie des Terrors* in der deutschen NS-Gedenkstättenlandschaft: Erfahrungen als wissenschaftlicher Direktor,” in *vorgänge* Heft 1, 2005, p.82. Speaking of his own role as curator of the original ‘provisional’ Topography of Terror exhibition, Rürup takes a surprising stance with regard to authenticity, writing: “[Back in 1987], it was about the presentation of a historical place that commemorated the crimes of National Socialism, that remembered both victims and perpetrators. Incidentally, contrary to what one often hears and reads, the exhibition did not concern itself with questions of ‘authentic place.’ For not only would such a place pre-suppose that the buildings still stood, but moreover that the uniforms were still present, that the members of the SS and the Gestapo were still going about their business on the site, and that the power relations of the time still held” (p.82).

<sup>64</sup> Rürup, p.82.

<sup>65</sup> See Aleida Assmann, *Erinnerungsräume: Formen und Wandlungen des kulturellen Gedächtnisses*, München: C.H. Beck, 1999, pp.328-339.

<sup>66</sup> Assmann, pp.332. The contrasted terms in German are ‘einst’ and ‘jetzt’ indexed, paradoxically, in ‘hier.

risk of falsification of the traumatic site occurs when the significance of the historical place – the ‘here-then’ – is folded into the horizon of the ‘here-now’ of the visitor.<sup>67</sup> Asserts Klüger, “The conservation of this place in the interest of authenticity signifies, inevitably, a loss of authenticity. Preserved, the place is already obscured and supplanted.”<sup>68</sup> Following Rürup’s suggestion cited above regarding historical significance, I propose that we think of the ‘here-then’ as signaling the *indexicality* of the historical the event – a version of Roland Barthes’ ‘that-has-been’ of the photograph<sup>69</sup> – at the same time that it marks the limits of *authenticity* in the present. The irresolvable paradox of reception at any memorial site is that ‘we’ can never be ‘there,’ no matter what kinds of authentic ‘experience effects’ a particular representational technique. As Assmann suggests in relation to the Topography of Terror, however, this is not to say that a historically significant site cannot still act as a ‘*mémoire involuntaire*’ in the Proustian/Benjaminian sense, as a persistent force against forgetting.<sup>70</sup>

While this paradox of reception certainly marks a limit, it resists figuring the ‘here-then’ as a privileged, ‘originary moment’ of sublime witness while also serving to deflate any tendency to elevate the putative ‘authentic’ object, trace, or place to the status of an auratic object of fascination. Here is another point at which a comparison of the Topography of Terror and the Shôwakan yields much about the differential ways in which a category such as authenticity ‘means’ differently in different contexts. The Topography of Terror relies on the ‘authenticity of documentation,’ whereas the Shôwakan leans on the ‘authenticity of relic,’ a strategy that aims at reality effects by means of historical re-creations. These roles that the

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<sup>67</sup> Klüger asks what a concentration camp is: a place? A place-scape? A landscape? No term seems to work. She proposes, instead, *Zeitschaft*, or ‘time-scape,’ “in order to convey what a place in time is – at a particular time, neither before nor after.” (Assmann quoting Klüger’s *weiter leben*, in Assmann, p.334).

<sup>68</sup> Assmann quoting Klüger, *weiter leben*, in Assmann, p.333.

<sup>69</sup> See Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (1980), trans. Richard Howard, New York: Hill and Wang, 1981.

<sup>70</sup> Assmann, *op.cit.*, p.336.

category of authenticity performs in different contexts also evoke qualitatively different experiences and affects, ranging from (sublime) wonder, through shock and repulsion, to recognition and resonance, and beyond to a kind of Brechtian distanciation, or defamiliarization that has as its aim the re-organization of knowledge and experience. In turn, the different valences of experience work toward different political ends in terms of a greater or lesser degree of historical consciousness, resulting in a range of responses spanning acceptance or validation or valourization of or acquiescence in the status quo, to contestation of the dominant narrative. A site such as the Topography of Terror carries a much different affective charge than the Shôwakan and the Yûshûkan, or the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, as I shall discuss in more detail in subsequent chapters. Underscoring the linkages between the subject-forming mechanism of interpellation and the affective dynamics of museum displays, the Shôwakan engenders an identification with the sacrifices of the women and children widowed and orphaned by war, while in a similar fashion the Yûshûkan seeks, at times, to evoke a mystical experience of bonding with the heroic sacrifices of soldiers who laid down their lives for the nation.

Though the interpellatory force is much more subdued at the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe than at the Shôwakan and the Yûshûkan, nonetheless the memorial site illuminates in a particularly salient manner the dynamics of collective memory whereby social space condenses around a matrix of affective relations. This forging of a collectivity of commemoration in turn ‘produces’ the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe as an ‘authentic site’ of atonement for past crimes.<sup>71</sup> Viewed from this perspective, the

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<sup>71</sup> Echoing Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger in their edited collection of essays, *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983, I would argue that the dynamics of collective commemoration of the victims of National Socialist crimes results in an ‘invention of authenticity’ on the site of the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe. Indeed, the status as ‘authentic site’ (or not) marks a major difference between the Topography of Terror and the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, dating back to the initial 1988 Perspektive Berlin proposal promoted by journalist Lea Rosh to erect a monument on the Gestapo-Gelände.

commemorative thrust of the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe is not far from the sentiments expressed in the 1972 brochure for a monument to Count von Stauffenberg (later revamped and reopened as the Memorial to German Resistance in 1980) bearing the statement: “The Resistance liberates us from the charge of collective guilt.”<sup>72</sup> Substituting ‘the Monument to the Murdered Jews of Europe’ for ‘resistance’ yields a similar result with respect to the expiation of collective guilt. It was precisely this tendency toward the evocation of a dubious national unity centering on the commemoration of victims of Nazi aggression that the citizens’ initiatives involved with the planning of the Topography of Terror sought to disavow, and which the Topography of Terror as memorial site resolutely resists. Stefanie Endlich, a member of the *Initiative zum Umgang mit dem Gestapo-Gelände* and a jury member for all three of the design competitions eliciting proposals to develop the Topography of Terror, argues strenuously that the ‘site of the perpetrators’ offers no such opportunity for the easy unburdening of guilt, and, moreover, no possibility of identification with the victims. As she writes: “The ‘grand national reconciliation,’ the ‘catharsis’ [...] at the wall of mourning that unites heroically-minded war veterans and war resisters in common mourning over the dead [...], has no place at the site of the perpetrator.”<sup>73</sup> Speaking at a 1986 public hearing that took place under the auspices of the Academy of the Arts, Gerhard Schoenberger, former head of the *Aktives Museum* citizens’ initiative, articulated his vision of the role of any future museum on the Gestapo-Gelände not in terms of a ‘perpetual atonement,’ but instead as an attempt to comprehend what went wrong through the making available of extensive documentation to the visiting public. For

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<sup>72</sup> Cited by Stefanie Endlich, “Über die Schwierigkeit sich der NS-Geschichte zu nähern,” in Jörg Huber, Martin Heller, and Hans Ulrich Reck (eds.), *Imitationen: Nachahmung und Modell: Von der Lust am Falschen*, Basel and Frankfurt: Stroemfeld/Roter Stern, 1989, p.250.

<sup>73</sup> Stefanie Endlich, “Über die Schwierigkeit sich der NS-Geschichte zu nähern,” p.250.



Schoenberner (and many others), the reason underwriting the need for such a museum was simple: “because no one ever speaks of the perpetrator, and no one ever speaks of the causes.”<sup>74</sup>

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The way in which the differential status of ‘perpetrator’ and ‘victim’ is figured by various groups at different times in different places plays a significant role in the commemorative politics of Germany and Japan. How the particular memorial sites under consideration take up this burden of historical responsibility with respect to the transmission of experience to those generations for whom the events of the Second World War is an increasingly mediated affair constitutes a keystone of my discussion of memorial sites. Before returning to a more finely-grained discussion of the memorial sites themselves, however, I will spend the next few chapters detailing how we can ‘read’ the interplay between affect, experience, aesthetics, and interpellation at memorial sites.

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<sup>74</sup> See Gerhard Schoenberner’s comments cited in Akademie der Künste, *Diskussion zum Umgang mit dem ‘Gestapo-Gelände’: Dokumentation*, Berlin, 1986, pp.27-29. Schoenberner envisioned an ideal situation in which the younger generations were given the opportunity to find answers for themselves, to become ‘coworkers’ in the critical engagement with the past. As he suggests: “If one could, namely, make it clear to young people that this place is not about perpetual atonement, but rather the attempt to grasp what happened in this country and why, the readiness on the part of visitors to listen and to collaborate in learning about the past would be that much greater” (p.29).

## CHAPTER 3

### AESTHETICS, AFFECTIVE DYNAMICS, AND THE MUSEUM EXPERIENCE

Trite as the phrase may sound, ‘lest we forget’ rings all the more true as those with immediate experience of the events of the mid-twentieth century pass on. Increasingly, though, ‘our own’ experience of these pasts comes to us in the form of a mediated memory, encountered in history textbooks, in the museum, or through various images circulating in the public and private sphere.<sup>1</sup> Convincing psychoanalytically-inflected arguments pertaining to secondary traumatization and ‘post-memory’ notwithstanding, though the represented *pasts* of image and text can most certainly be traumatic, my own experiences of these pasts, mediated as they were textually, visually, aurally, and in a haptic fashion, are anything but ‘traumatic.’<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, though I or someone of roughly my age and younger might not be ‘traumatized’ except but perhaps ephemerally by images of the past, I am still affected, sometimes profoundly.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, many of violence and warfare are shocking – and therein lies their uncanny resonance and power, both of attraction and repulsion. With this significant generational tipping point toward those who experience the Second World War less as memory than as history, the imperatives of commemoration are also undergoing changes.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> When I say ‘our own,’ I mean those roughly my age and younger, born in the 1970s or later.

<sup>2</sup> For the moment, I will leave open the question of the desirability of re-traumatization, whether this occurs homeopathically (Eric Santner), or is a result of ‘postmemory’ (Marianne Hirsch), or is a product of a shock that defamiliarizes the viewer with his or her relationship to the past in the present. See Eric Santner, “History beyond the Pleasure Principle: Some Thoughts on the Representation of Trauma,” in Saul Friedlander (ed.), *Probing the Limits of Representation: Nazism and the ‘Final Solution’*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992, pp.146-147, and Marianne Hirsch, “Surviving Images: Holocaust Photographs and the Work of Postmemory,” in Barbie Zelizer (ed.), *Visual Culture and the Holocaust*, New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2001, pp.215-246.

<sup>3</sup> Obviously, it bears emphasizing that one’s ‘subject-position’ continues to play a role here.

<sup>4</sup> In particular, the chapters on the Topography of Terror take up these continually shifting mnemonic imperatives as successive generations have grappled with the former headquarters of the Nazi terror apparatus.

Against the backdrop of the injunction to remember as ‘memory’ of the Second World War fades into ‘history,’ I seek here to explore the political potential of a historical pedagogy enhanced by an engagement with visuality. In the service of a critically-engaged pedagogy, images arguably tend to carry more of a charge than do textual representations of the past.<sup>5</sup> There are plenty of exceptions, of course – atom bomb literature, testimony surrounding the Shoah, to name but a few. If I appear to prioritize the visual over the textual in my analysis, it is not because I see visuality as in some way superior to textuality in terms of the capacity to generate affect, but rather because historians have paid far less attention to those aspects of experience that escape conventional forms of archiving. In this conception of things, I understand ‘image’ as a material trace with which we come into contact, and ‘affect’ as an immaterial dynamic that influences this encounter. I should emphasize, though, that an ‘image’ is more complicated than this distinction would have it, for an image has the potential to straddle the material and the immaterial. What I mean is that I understand the ‘image’ in a broad sense to encompass not only material traces such as photographs, but immaterial expressions as well, such as an ‘image’ of the past for or against which we can have an affective response.

In terms of memory studies in general, taking up the affective dynamics of image, text, space, and place that manifest themselves at memorial sites builds on trauma theory’s insistence

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<sup>5</sup> The debate about the salutary or perfidious aspects of images is as old as Plato’s writings on art and mimesis in *The Republic*. Closer to our time period, Edward Earle, “The Stereograph in America: Pictorial Antecedents and Cultural Perspectives,” in Edward Earle (ed.), *Points of View: The Stereograph in America: A Cultural History*, Rochester, NY: Visual Studies Workshop, 1979, tracks the discussion back to the early nineteenth century. Earle looks, firstly, at the debates about the values of pictures in education. Commentators thought that images used solely for embellishment were a distraction that “encouraged laziness,” while others submitted that an image could “stimulate thought in a way that literature could not” (p.11). Next, Earle turns to more recent studies claiming that “the capacity to recognize and recall pictorial information is greater than for written notations or oral statements” (p.11). For this statement, he relies on Matthew Erdelyi and Joan Becker, “Hypermnesia for Pictures: Incremental Memory for Pictures but Not for Words in Multiple Recall Trials,” *Cognitive Psychology*, January 1974.

on attempting to understand those dynamics which do not leave traces in conventional archives.<sup>6</sup> Studying the dynamics of affect has multiple beneficial repercussions, first and foremost with regard to how the interaction between the past, historiography, and aesthetic productions (photographic, filmic, museal, musical, artistic, and literary) influence individual and collective memory in the present.<sup>7</sup> The challenge, in the years prior to 1989 as it is now, presents itself in the notion that to come to terms with the past lurks the danger of domesticating it, the desire to turn the page, and, if possible, to expunge the disturbing memories from collective memory.

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<sup>6</sup> I could just say ‘affect’ here (and indeed I use ‘affect’ and ‘affective dynamics’ interchangeably) – but the reason I use ‘affective dynamics’ is to convey a sense of the notion of ‘affectio’ that is central to Baruch Spinoza’s conceptualization of the affects, which I take up below. ‘Affectio,’ translated (to my mind, unsatisfactorily) as ‘affection,’ seeks out the relationship between bodies: the way in which I am affected by another body, be that body another person, an object, or my surrounding environment, and the way my body affects other bodies. My focus on affective dynamics as a legitimate historiographical category of study would not be possible without the work of a long list of scholars who made the study of trauma theory a legitimate intellectual enterprise. Dominick LaCapra has done the most to introduce the notion of traumatic memory into the discipline of history. His essays in works such as *History and Criticism*, Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1985, set the stage for his later explicit writings on trauma in *Representing the Holocaust: History, Theory, Trauma*, Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1994; *History and Memory after Auschwitz*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998; and *Writing History, Writing Trauma*, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001. A small sampling of other authors who have done much to advance the study of trauma include: Eric Santner, *op.cit.* and *Stranded Objects: Mourning, Memory, and Film in Postwar Germany*, Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1990; Saul Friedländer (ed.), *op.cit.*; Ernst van Alphen, *Caught by History: Holocaust Effects in Contemporary Art, Literature, and Theory*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997; Michael Rothberg, *Traumatic Realism: The Demands of Holocaust Representation*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000; and E. Ann Kaplan, *Trauma Culture: The Politics of Terror and Loss in Media and Literature*, New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2005.

<sup>7</sup> Although I might not refer directly to the following texts, all have helped me shape my conception of affect. Even if my deployment of affect in this study bears little resemblance to Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari’s creative reading of Spinoza’s notion of affect, my point of departure was, initially, Deleuze and Guattari’s, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1980), trans. and foreword by Brian Massumi, Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1987. Subsequent to this, Brian Massumi’s *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation*, Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2002, helped me to think beyond the ‘linguistic turn’ and appreciate the importance of the sensing body. My own ‘return’ to Spinoza, however, fundamentally altered how I conceive of affect. Where Deleuze, Guattari, and Massumi tend to overemphasize Spinoza’s critique of Descartes’ mind/body dualism, my reading of Spinoza takes seriously his position as a rationalist. If affect defines the human condition, the mind keeps the ‘human bondage to the affects’ in check. See Baruch Spinoza, *Spinoza: Selections*, edited by John Wild, New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1930. Other works that have helped me think through affect include: Jeremy Gilbert, “Signifying Nothing: ‘Culture,’ ‘Discourse,’ and the Sociality of Affect,” in *Culture Machine* (6), 2004; Gilles Deleuze, “Lecture Transcripts on Spinoza’s Concept of *Affect*,” 24 January 1978, <http://www.webdeleuze.com/php/sommaire.html> (accessed September 2008); Anna Parkinson, *Affective Passages: Emotion and Affect in Postwar West German Culture*, Ph.D. Diss., Cornell University, 2007; Barbara H. Rosenwein, “Worrying about Emotions in History,” in *The American Historical Review*, 107:3, June 2002; Sara Ahmed, “Collective Feelings: Or, the Impressions Left by Others,” in *Theory, Culture and Society*, 21:2, 2004, and *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, New York: Routledge, 2004; Nigel Thrift, “Intensities of Feeling: Toward a Spatial Politics of Affect,” in *Geografiska Annaler. Series B. Human Geography*, 86:1, 2004; and Patricia Ticineto Clough and Jean Halley (eds.), *The Affective Turn: Theorizing the Social*, Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2007.

Herein lie the fears of some commentators that limit events like ‘the Holocaust’ and ‘Hiroshima’ are all too easily naturalized and domesticated through narrativization or through visual fatigue.<sup>8</sup>

In light of the ever-present possibility of visual fatigue, or of unreflective consumption of images of the past, a turn to affect affords an understanding of how images have an impact upon the sensating and perceiving subject, and of how images even interpellate and constitute that subject. As sensating bodies, we cannot escape affect, emotion, and feeling. But by honing our abilities as researchers and as consumers of images to ‘read’ images and spaces, we might learn more of how these images and spaces affect us – and in so doing, we might obtain a stronger critical perspective to pass on to students regarding the dynamics of affects generated for a particular purpose by a particular representation.<sup>9</sup>

Representations of traumatic pasts continue to proliferate. And what is more, contemporary representations are becoming increasingly mediated, often directly or obliquely making reference to or engaging in dialogue with previous post-war representations of these pasts.<sup>10</sup> Thus my aforementioned interest in asking whether there has been a generational shift away from questions of the traumatic limits of representation shifts the focus in the direction of how the continued *circulation* of images and representations affects later generations.<sup>11</sup>

Comparing memorial sites in both Japan and Germany during the 1980s and 1990s enables me to

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<sup>8</sup> See, in particular, Santner, “History beyond the Pleasure Principle: Some Thoughts on the Representation of Trauma,” on narrative fetishization.

<sup>9</sup> Here I have in mind representations that attempt to conceal their ideological underpinnings in naturalized accounts of the nation, such as the *Yūshūkan*, Kobayashi Yoshinori’s nationalistic manga, and the like.

<sup>10</sup> For example, Claude Lanzmann’s *Shoah* (1985) is in critical dialogue with Alain Resnais’ *Nuit et Brouillard* (1955). Kobayashi Yoshinori’s nationalistic manga are in dialogue with an entire visual tradition of anti-war sentiment, including Maruki Toshi and Iri’s Hiroshima Panels, and Nakazawa Keiji’s *Barefoot Gen*. Even counter-memorial works such as those by Jochen Gerz and Renata Stih and Frieder Schnock that seek to overturn conventional monumentalization are in dialogue both with previous monumentalizing representations and with contemporaneous debates in art and aesthetics.

<sup>11</sup> Tilman Fichter, “Zur Vorgeschichte des Denkmals: Fünf Generationen nach Auschwitz,” in Lea Rosh (ed.), *Die Juden, das sind doch die anderen’: Der Streit um ein deutsches Denkmal*, Berlin and Vienna: Philo, 1999, provides an illuminating account of generational changes in postwar Germany. He bases his account on Karl Mannheim’s classic 1927 essay on generations. See Karl Mannheim, “The Problem of Generations,” in Paul Kecskemeti (ed.), *Karl Mannheim: Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1952.

consider how affect is engendered in and through ‘images’ of the past, and how these images of the past might seek either to circumvent despair or produce hope with regard to the future.

In short, it is my contention that we can also have an affective relationship (pride, despair, hope, pleasure, suffering, desire) with respect to ‘images’ of the past.<sup>12</sup> If this be granted, we might enhance the study of poetics<sup>13</sup> as it pertains to the encoding and engendering of affect – in a word, the aesthetic dynamic at work in the production of versions of national pasts. For example, what image of Japan vis-à-vis the antecedents and outcome of the Asia-Pacific War will educators, politicians, artists, filmmakers, scholars, and others active in the sphere of cultural production seek to mould and bequeath to future generations? Will it be a monolithic construct that paints ‘Japan’ and ‘the Japanese’ as either victims or perpetrators, or will it be a kaleidoscopic image that accounts for multiple subject-positions? How do discrete *images* – conceived as either those installed within the space of a museum, or as the architectural expression itself on a given site<sup>14</sup> – function in the poesis of this overarching ‘image’ or version of the past?

Obviously, what we have here are aesthetic questions, both in terms of the poesis of an ‘image’ (understood in both its broad and narrow sense), as well as affective and empathic responses to images – what I figure in terms of aesthesis.<sup>15</sup> Comparing the aesthetic experience

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<sup>12</sup> I base this contention on Spinoza’s characterization of our affective relationship with images: “A man is affected by the image of a past or future thing with the same affect of joy or sorrow as that with which he is affected by the image of a present thing.” See Baruch Spinoza, *Ethics*, in John Wild (ed.), *Spinoza: Selections*, Part III, Proposition XVIII, pp.224. Spinoza develops this idea on pp.224-226 and *passim*.

<sup>13</sup> Here I use poetics in its sense of making – poesis – as it applies to the images displayed at cultural institutions like memorial sites.

<sup>14</sup> Examples here include Daniel Libeskind’s Jewish Museum Berlin, and Peter Eisenman’s Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe. The antipathy toward a particular understanding of aesthetic expression evinced by the trusteeship of the Topography of Terror has had an enormous impact on the current iteration of the Topography of Terror in its capacity as a memorial site.

<sup>15</sup> I have formulated these thoughts based on readings of Immanuel Kant’s *The Critique of Judgment* (1790), translated by J.H. Bernard, New York: Prometheus Books, 2000, Friedrich Schiller’s *On the Aesthetic Education of Man (In a Series of Letters)*, trans. with an Introduction by Elizabeth M. Wilkinson and L.A. Willoughby, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967, together with critical responses to Kant and Schiller by figures such as Terry Eagleton, *The*

of memorial sites in Tokyo and Berlin reveals much about the experience of warfare and its subsequent representation and commemoration over time. Rather than concentrating almost exclusively on the dynamics of the reception of cultural artifacts while paying attention to the ‘production’ end only insofar as the poetics of the work are geared toward triggering a particular response (empathic unsettling), I conceive of ‘aesthetics’ in a threefold sense. *Aesthesis* is the experience itself, pleasurable or otherwise. The question that opens up is how this ‘experience’ can be communicated across space and time. *Poeisis* denotes this attempt to represent the past experience – of the Second World War, of the Shoah, of the Third Reich, of the atomic bombings, of aerial bombardment – across space and time in some sort of symbolically mediated form, such as art, film, photography, or literature. A key point here is what happens during the *passage* from the experience itself to the representation of that experience; that is, what happens when someone who has experienced aspects of warfare firsthand, or someone who has survived a traumatic event like the Holocaust or the atomic bombings, attempts to convey his or her experiences. At the *level of poeisis* (and, to clarify, *not* at the level of the initial aesthesis or immediate experience), when someone sets about representing the experience of warfare, that person only ends up writing, talking, or producing images *about* that experience.<sup>16</sup>

At the same time that I am interested in how the poetics of museal display aim, consciously or not, to generate a particular response among its visitors – the ‘production’ of experience – I am also interested in how the subjectivity of ‘those who come after’ is constituted out of their ‘experiences’ and encounters with varying modes of museal display.<sup>17</sup> Thus the third

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*Ideology of the Aesthetic*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1990, and Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* (1979), translated by Richard Nice, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984.

<sup>16</sup> In saying this, I do not intend to privilege the moment of witnessing an event as somehow being more ‘authentic’ than testimony about an event; rather, I mean only to mark the difference between an immediate experience and the representation of that experience.

<sup>17</sup> We can think of these encounters with these representations of the past in relation to Joan Scott’s notion of experience, in which experience is something that constitutes a subject. In her essay, “The Evidence of Experience,”

element in this process of production and reception is ‘*aesthesis* at a distance,’ or the reception of the representation. What kinds of feelings, emotions, or affect does a particular representation of a (past) experience generate in a spectator, reader, listener, or inquirer? (The last of these ‘subject-positions’ is important for historiography, for it is my contention that unless a historian or inquirer him- or herself has ‘experienced’ an event first-hand, his or her representation of the past always begins from ‘*aesthesis* at a distance’).

As is well known, the Kantian sublime intermingles pleasure and discomfort. Since Kant made this observation, many commentators have pointed out that the contemplation of ‘aestheticized’ scenes of violence and death can entail some sort of voyeuristic pleasure or frisson.<sup>18</sup> Indeed, the curators at the Topography of Terror are suspicious of any representation of the Nazis that replicates the fascist mode of romantic aestheticization of politics. They are equally wary of how too close a flirtation with the affective or emotional dynamics of museal representation that are less easy to control – such as the potential fascination generated by the exhibition of Nazi paraphernalia – could give rise to a dubious identification with the Nazis.

Attentiveness to the effect (at the level of reception) of this intermingling of beauty and

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in *Critical Inquiry* (17), Summer 1991, Scott critiques E.P. Thompson for positing ‘working class experience’ as the ontological foundation of working class identity without ever considering how class itself might produce difference. In Thompson’s unifying account of class, other subject-positions like race, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, and history become subsumed under the marker of a common identity (see pp.784-785). At other points in the essay, she takes various thinkers to task both for insisting that seeing is the origin of knowledge (p.776) and for offering the ‘evidence of experience’ as a means of dissipating the murky mist of representational codes that disguise praxis. “What could be truer,” Scott asks, “than a subject’s own account of what he or she has lived through?” (p.777). In answering this rhetorical question, Scott critiques the unreflexive acceptance of the evidence of experience in the following terms: “Questions about the constructed nature of experience, about how subjects are constituted as different in the first place, about how one’s vision is structured – about language (or discourse) and history – are left aside. The evidence of experience then becomes evidence for the *fact* of difference, rather than a way of exploring *how* difference is established, how it operates, how and in what ways it constitutes subjects who see and act in the world” (p.777).

<sup>18</sup> A non-exhaustive list of scholars and works critical of this frisson includes: Barbie Zelizer, *Remembering to Forget: Holocaust Memory through the Camera’s Eye*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998; Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, New York: Picador, 2003; Mark Rheinhardt, Holly Edwards, and Erina Duganne, *Beautiful Suffering: Photography and the Traffic in Pain*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2007; and Susan Crane, “Choosing Not to Look: Representation, Repatriation, and Holocaust Atrocity Photography,” in *History and Theory* (47), October 2008, pp.309-330.



sublimity as an *experience* in its own right also aids in the understanding of how various combinations of image and text within the aural and spatial environment of the museum might rouse readers to desire the ‘ideal’ of sacrifice – a case whereby an ‘aesthetic experience’ of reading or viewing engenders a will to identify with or desire a ‘lofty,’ ‘beautiful’ ideal such as ‘purity of race’ or ‘the nation.’ As the museal strategies deployed by the Yûshûkan’s curatorial staff indicate, the possibility of ‘pleasure’ cannot be ruled out of ‘our’ reception of a representation of violence or warfare. The implicit background assumption I am making here is that by understanding how these aesthetic effects are open to manipulation, we might acquire enough critical distance to resist the blandishments of attractive yet pernicious versions of national pasts. This point goes to the heart of the difference between a museum like the Yûshûkan, and one like the Topography of Terror.

#### **EXPERIENCE MEDIATED AND IMMEDIATE: THOUGHTS ON THE ‘MUSEUM EXPERIENCE’**

In discussing the importance of images in museum exhibitions, Yamabe Masahiko states that “taking in the exhibitions *experientially* is of utmost importance.”<sup>19</sup> Referring to the peace museums in Saitama and Himeji, he notes that the museums function as a “device whereby one can experience (*taiken*) the aerial bombings.”<sup>20</sup> In the peace museum in Kyoto, the installation helps spectators experience (*taiken*) what was life was like under air raid conditions.<sup>21</sup> Yamabe’s formulations raise an interesting problem that runs through discussions about the aesthetic

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<sup>19</sup> Yamabe Masahiko, “Nihon no heiwa hakubutsukan no tâtatsuten to kadai,” in Rekishi Kyôiku Kyôgikai (ed.), *Heiwa hakubutsukan/Sensô shiryôkan gaido bukku*, Tokyo: Aoki Shoten, 2000, p.257 (my emphasis).

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p.257.

<sup>21</sup> This is precisely the move the Shôwakan makes, and highlights one of the problems in not sufficiently elaborating upon terms and categories. I am in no way advocating strict definitions for labile concepts and categories, but rather an attentiveness to the complexity of certain categories. Because Yamabe (and not only Yamabe) does not spend much time reflecting upon a term as crucial to his essay as experience, we are left with hazy criteria for distinguishing between the kinds of ‘experience effects’ generated by a ‘progressive’ museum such as the one in Kyoto, and a decidedly less ‘progressive’ museum, such as the Shôwakan, both of which attempt to portray what life was like under air-raid conditions.

experience of memorial sites. That is, as those with ‘authentic experience’ pass on, the museum is increasingly called upon to do the work of memory via the ‘transmission of experience.’ But what is the nature of this experience? Is it transmissible, or even recoverable? In what forms and modes? A subsequent question arises: What kinds of differences exist between ‘immediate experience’ (*Erlebnis*) and the ‘mediated experience’ (*Erfahrung*) of the museum?<sup>22</sup>

Museums, monuments, and memorial sites that concern themselves with historical events are in the business of transmitting a version or image of the past to present and future generations by representing the experience of the past. But an aporia opens up here, for it is the aesthetic *effect* of museal poetics that visitors to a memorial site experience. Visitors may well experience this poesis as a kind of *Erlebnis*, or immediate experience, in the present. That said, it is crucial to bear in mind that this is an immediate experience of the past – coming in ‘contact’ with it – that is removed from the ‘original’ *Erlebnis*.<sup>23</sup> This is not an aporia that threatens to completely undermine the cultural function of the museum; it is, however, one that is often side-stepped in many discussions of memorial sites in which much is made of the tangibility of the past ‘at hand’ in the museum.

Though contemporary observers and spectators may well ‘experience’ cultural artifacts representing past events as a kind of ‘immediate experience,’ it is important never to lose sight of the fact that what a visitor to a memorial site such as Auschwitz experiences in its immediate presence is a memorial site *in the present* – a secondary *Erlebnis*, aesthesis removed to a safe

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<sup>22</sup> I have found it useful to think of experience in the dual sense it has in German and in Japanese. *Erlebnis* is the immediate sensation, feeling, or emotion which is, as yet, largely unmediated by the filtering screen of language. *Erfahrung*, on the other hand, is experience marked by the passing of time, of reflection. It is experience that has been ‘integrated,’ mastered, or worked through with varying degrees of success. Japanese, too, affords a temporal distinction in its iteration of experience, where *taiken* conveys a sense of something that happens to a body, while *keiken* conveys a sense of passage and duration corresponding to the German term, *Erfahrung*. The closest approximations in English would be immediate experience and mediated experience.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Aleida Assmann’s critically nuanced notion of ‘affective contact zones’ in her *Erinnerungsräume: Formen und Wandlungen des kulturellen Gedächtnisses*, München: C.H. Beck, 1999, pp.328-339.

distance. Accepting this contention need not entail a privileging of a kind of ‘originary experience’ of direct witness over its pale copy, despite the investment of some curators in a museal poetics that aims at producing an ‘Erlebnis-effect’ for the audience that mimics a kind of ‘originary experience.’<sup>24</sup> This is not to dismiss the potentially beneficial pedagogical effects of an ‘immediate experience’ of a museum or site, insofar as the experience can lead to a productive defamiliarization that induces the visitor to reevaluate his or her relationship to the past.<sup>25</sup> Rather, acknowledging that the experience of a memorial site – immediate, gripping, sublime, disorienting, and powerful as it may be – is only ever aesthesis at a temporal remove is a powerful critical tool that can help scholars unmask the dubious production of what are, at any rate, secondary, even illusory, ‘Erlebnis-effects’ that aim at an identification over empathy with the past.

In the case of this project, I explore how curatorial strategies and museal poetics produce a representation to be received and consumed by a viewing or visiting public. Before going any further, it is important to note that museums, monuments, memorial sites, contemporary documentary films using reel footage, history textbooks are all produced from what I have termed ‘aesthesis at a distance,’ or secondary aesthesis. Assuming that the artists, architects, site designers, and curators involved with contemporary memorial sites are, themselves, increasingly and for the most part those born well after the Second World War, their *own* crafting of the content of the museum exhibition or architectural expression of the building or site proceeds from, and is in dialogue with, the ‘already represented’ experiences of others – in other words, the representations of wartime experiences that span the postwar period. In this way, the

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<sup>24</sup> Bonn’s *Haus der Geschichte* goes so far as to entitle its catalogue *Erlebnis Geschichte*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Cologne: Gustave Lübke Verlag, 1998, and structures its exhibition around opportunities to ‘touch’ the past (a 1950s VW Beetle is but one particularly memorable example) and ‘experience’ installations such as reconstructed entry checkpoints into the GDR that beep ominously.

<sup>25</sup> I revisit this in more detail in the chapter on the aesthetics of sobriety.

designers and curators of, say, the Topography of Terror are in dialogue with the historiography of National Socialism and the Holocaust as they plan exhibits, with postwar aesthetic debates over the nature of documentary representation, and with memorial sites developed over the course of the postwar period in Germany and in other countries. At the same time, they are engaging in and shaping a critical dialogue with contemporary museal strategies driving institutions such as the Jewish Museum Berlin, the information center at the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, and the German Historical Museum.

What this formulation of the ‘aesthetic process’ also avoids is the notion that the ‘creator’ of cultural artifacts is some almighty, autonomous auteur from whose head springs unmediated works of genius. Instead, this new formulation acknowledges that the author, painter, director, composer is him- or herself also a part of the feedback loop of aesthetics. As I have construed it, this is an open system of aesthesis-poiesis-secondary aesthesis. Crucially, secondary aesthesis is not an endpoint, but rather a starting point for further re-interpretations and representations of the inheritance of texts and images flowing from a particular event. As such, the way I have formulated this open ‘loop’ attempts to account for the passage from the experience itself to the *representation* of the experience, encounters with these representations, and subsequent representations stemming from our ‘immediate experience’ of what are often moving representations in film and photography, in museums, and at memorial sites. As such, this open system of poetics and reception adds a new dimension to Marianne Hirsch’s notion of post-memory,<sup>26</sup> taking us beyond the secondary traumatization of the generation born to survivors of traumatic events.

In addition, following Michel Foucault’s suggestion that the subject not be entirely abandoned, but “should be considered, not to restore the theme of an originating subject, but to

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<sup>26</sup> See Hirsch, *op.cit.*

seize its functions, its intervention in discourse, and its system of dependencies,<sup>27</sup> the producer of cultural artifacts emerges as one who is influenced by the aesthetic (or anti-aesthetic) traditions or transgressions of his or her particular spatio-temporal milieu. Inserting the producer of cultural artifacts back into this ‘aesthetic feedback loop’ also has an advantage when trying to understand the relationship between aesthetics and affect by shedding light on how curators, artists, intellectuals, and others involved with the poetics of memorial sites are both influenced by and influence statist ideological agendas.

An approach focusing on aesthetics thus opens up an avenue onto the interrelationship between affect, empathy, and response. Such an approach subsequently goes back to the question of poesis; that is to say, why, and for what *effect* were certain images produced and put into circulation in the first place? For example, in the museum, the poesis of visual narrative relates to how the layout of the spatialized narrative, the installed galleries, image and text, lighting and sound position the museum-goer, and links up with attempts on the part of curators to persuade visitors to identify as members of a particular ethnicity or group.

The point of an exploration of the affective dynamics of aesthetic experiences of the past is that it begins with objects and relics, material sites, institutions, textbooks, and tangible images such as art, photographs and film – a materiality that, even if imagistic, contributes to the formation of an ‘image’ of a (national) past. Memory made material engenders affect. And these affective dynamics – ‘legible’ and discernible at memorial sites – can be used, manipulated, and abused in a plethora of ways by various socio-cultural groupings to promote or marginalize

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<sup>27</sup> Michel Foucault, “What is an Author?”, in Chandra Mukerji and Michael Schudson (eds.), *Rethinking Popular Culture: Contemporary Perspectives in Cultural Studies*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991, p.461. Foucault summarizes the ‘author-function’ as follows: “[It] is tied to the legal and institutional systems that circumscribe, determine, and articulate the realm of discourses; it does not operate in a uniform manner in all discourses, at all times, and in any given culture; it is not defined by the spontaneous attribution of a text to its creator, but through a series of precise and complex procedures; it does not refer, purely and simply, to an actual individual insofar as it simultaneously gives rise to a variety of egos and to a series of subjective positions that individuals of any class may come to occupy” (pp. 456-457).

identities and perspectives. At the same time that memory – that crucible of a given community or collectivity’s emotional life in the present – serves to legitimize the nation historically, it also shapes identificatory ‘horizons of expectation’ (*pace* Reinhard Koselleck) vis-à-vis the future.<sup>28</sup> That is, the past represented at a memorial site is a cultural production intended to engender a particular response, and to convey particular ‘experience’ of the past. This production is, itself, a *representation* of an experience: experience dually refracted. In other words, it is a ‘mimesis of a memory’ in which curators represent an experience (Erlebnis) they may or may not have had.

### **SPINOZA: AFFECTIVE DYNAMICS AS A RELATIONAL TERM**

When we pause to consider how members of a particular ethnicity or group might empathize with or identify with a particular material image on display, or more general ‘image’ of a ‘national history,’ a question immediately emerges: how are individuals affected by images? How do those born well after events in question come to know of the past through participating in acts and rituals of commemoration? In attempting to answer this question, it is important to consider how material traces or immaterial dynamics inform our encounter with and experience of the past on display.

Now, one might legitimately wonder why historians and other inquirers should concern themselves with affect. Affect itself is extremely difficult to gauge, impossible to quantify. But yet we see images, hear sounds or melodies, taste food and drink, and are affected in agreeable or disagreeable ways. Indeed affect, as Baruch Spinoza suggests, is a constitutive element of the

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<sup>28</sup> Historical responsibility is similarly Janus-faced. Reinhard Koselleck conceptualizes this simultaneously forward and backward-looking dynamic in his essay, “‘Space of Experience’ and ‘Horizon of Expectation’: Two Historical Categories,” in Reinhard Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time* (1979), trans. Keith Tribe, New York: Columbia University Press, 2004.

human condition.<sup>29</sup> Along with trauma and its relationship to the unconscious, which has been studied in particular by historians dealing with history and memory,<sup>30</sup> affect is one of those immaterial though vaguely discernible dynamics that belongs to what I would term ‘the archive of the unseen.’ Like trauma, it is allusive and elusive. It is not something that deposits material traces in a conventional archive.

Spinoza begins his critique of those who have written about the affects by chastising them for considering “man in nature as a kingdom within a kingdom” who “disturbs rather than follows [nature’s] order.” These scholars appear to believe that “[man] has an absolute power over his own actions; and that he is altogether self-determined.”<sup>31</sup> Spinoza aims, instead, to account for ‘unreasoned acts’ that are beyond the power of the mind. According to Spinoza, “it follows that when men say that this or that action of the body springs from the mind which has command over the body, they do not know what they say, and they do nothing but confess with pretentious words that they know nothing about the cause of the action.”<sup>32</sup>

What is at stake is a confusion that sees acts resulting from ardour or passion as rooted in freedom. Spinoza takes the actions of, among others, the timid man who thinks that “it is with free will he seeks flight” and the drunkard who believes “that by a free command of his mind he speaks the things which when sober he wishes he had left unsaid” to establish his position that it is an awareness – or lack of awareness – of the affects that determines whether we experience joy or sorrow, whether our behaviour is motivated by action or passion. Of note is the notion that a person who is driven by his or her passions is said to be ‘passive.’ Key here is also the middle term between joy/action and sorrow/passion: desire. In fact, for Spinoza, “*Desire* is the essence

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<sup>29</sup> Baruch Spinoza, *Ethics*, Part III, in John Wild (ed.), *Spinoza: Selections*, pp.204-217.

<sup>30</sup> See the footnote above in which I list influential scholars and works that have shaped trauma theory.

<sup>31</sup> *Ethics*, Part III: On the Origin and Nature of the Affects, p.205.

<sup>32</sup> *Ethics*, Part III, Proposition II, Scholium, p.210.

itself of man in so far as it is conceived as determined to any action by any one of his affections.”<sup>33</sup> In a passage that demonstrates both Spinoza’s awareness of the importance of the bodily drives and appetites, and the extent to which the circulation of affective dynamics lies at the heart of human action or inaction, he writes:

In truth, [the timid man and the drunkard] have no power to restrain the impulse which they have to speak, so that experience itself, no less than reason, clearly teaches that men believe themselves to be free simply because they are conscious of their own actions, know nothing of the cause by which they are determined: it teaches, too, that the decrees of the mind are nothing but the appetites themselves, which differ, therefore, according to the different temper of the body. For every man determines all things from his affect.<sup>34</sup>

Using two distinct terms to convey the nuances which the English word ‘affect’ cannot contain, Spinoza characterizes affect as both a capacity and encounter.<sup>35</sup> In his articulation of the affects, Spinoza, writing in Latin, uses *Affectus* is the ability to affect or be affected, while *affectio*, rendered rather awkwardly in English as ‘affection’ or ‘passion,’ is an encounter between another body, broadly defined, and my own body. As a relational term, *affectio* drives perception, ‘carrying’ the idea of our own or another body to the mind.<sup>36</sup> As Brian Massumi distinguishes between the terms in his translation of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari’s *Thousand Plateaus*, “[*Affectus*] is [...] a prepersonal intensity corresponding to the passage from one experiential state of the body to another and implying an augmentation or diminution in that

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<sup>33</sup> *Ethics*, Part III, Proposition LIX, Definition I, p.265.

<sup>34</sup> *Ethics*, Part III, Proposition II, Scholium, p.212.

<sup>35</sup> See *Ethics*, Part III, Definition III, Postulates 1 and 2, p.207.

<sup>36</sup> See Spinoza, *Ethics*, in John Wild (ed.), *Spinoza: Selections*, pp.157-175. Apropos of this relationality, Spinoza writes: “The human mind does not know the human body itself, nor does it know the body exists, *except through* ideas and affections by which the body is affected” (Part II, Proposition XIX, p.170, emphasis mine). Emphasizing the importance of embodied experience, Spinoza continues in a similar vein: “The human mind perceives no external body as actually existing, *unless through* the ideas and affections of its body” (Part II, Proposition XXVI, p.175). It is important to bear in mind that although Spinoza writes of *affectio* as a relational term between two bodies that influences our capacity to be affected (*affectus*), that is, how the mind becomes aware of its own body through encounters with other bodies, Spinoza does not see the mind and body as separate, but rather seeks to upend the Cartesian dualism of body and mind.



body's capacity to act.<sup>37</sup> [*Affectio*] is each such state considered as an encounter between the affected body and a second, affecting, body (with body taken in its broadest possible sense to include "mental" or ideal bodies)."<sup>38</sup> As such, the interplay between *affectus* and *affectio* is intimately bound of with Spinoza's conception of virtue, which is, for him, the power of the mind to control the 'affections,' or 'passions,' that affect the body.<sup>39</sup> Indeed, this is the entire aim of the rationalist project Spinoza lays out in his *Ethics*. Though we may be conscious of our actions and desires – and often we are not – we still might not know the causes of our actions. To understand the causes of our actions, Spinoza tells us, we need to understand the affects.<sup>40</sup> If we fail to do so, we suffer, passively beholden to drives and instincts.<sup>41</sup>

As alluded to above, Spinoza is significant in that he took the body seriously. For Spinoza, who articulated his theory of the affects in contradistinction to Descartes' dualism of mind and body, the relations of one's own body to other bodies, and the effect that relation has

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<sup>37</sup> Here, Massumi is referencing an oft-quoted passage from Spinoza. In Part III, Definition III of the *Ethics*, *affectus* is the modification or variation produced in a body (including the mind) by an interaction with another body which increases or diminishes the body's power of activity: "By affect I understand affections of the body by which the body's power of acting is increased or diminished, aided or restrained, and at the same time, the ideas of these affections" (*Ethics*, Part III, Definition III, p.207).

<sup>38</sup> Brian Massumi, "Translator's Forward: Pleasures of Philosophy," in Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. xvi.

<sup>39</sup> Spinoza, *Ethics*, Part III, p.205.

<sup>40</sup> Starting with the primary affects of joy, sorrow, and desire, Spinoza catalogues a comprehensive list of affects that at times bear resemblance to the virtues in Aristotle's *Ethics*, but in such a way that the affects shade into one another. For example, Spinoza defines love as "joy with the accompanying idea of an external cause" (Part II, Proposition LIX, Definition VI, p.269), and hatred as "sorrow with the accompanying idea of an external cause" (Part II, Proposition LIX, Definition VII). In the following several definitions, Spinoza deals with a wide-ranging variety of affects, including: inclination, aversion, devotion, derision, hope, fear, confidence, despair, remorse, commiseration, favour, indignation, contempt, envy, compassion, self-satisfaction, humility, repentance, pride, despondency, self-exaltation, shame, regret, vengeance, ferocity, audacity, consternation, moderation, ambition, avarice, luxuriousness, drunkenness, and lust. He even characterizes emulation, gratitude, and benevolence as affects. Of note is the way in which many of these affects call forth *relations* of empathy or antipathy between two bodies. For Spinoza's explanation of the affects he catalogues, see pp.266-282.

<sup>41</sup> For Spinoza's discussion of how we suffer at the expense of affect unchecked by reason, see *Ethics*, Part IV: Of Human Bondage, or the Strength of the Affects, pp.282ff. Spinoza's philosophizing here and elsewhere in the *Ethics* anticipates both Sigmund Freud's study of the instincts and drives and his focus on the latent and manifest content of affect in dreams. See, for instance, *Ethics*, Part II, Demonstration, p.209, and Part II, Proposition II, Scholium, pp.209-213. Though I do not deal with Freud's notion of the affects here, his treatment of them in *The Interpretation of Dreams* complements those parts of Spinoza's theorizing that gesture toward but never pursue psychological factors. See, in particular, Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900), New York: Avon Books, (reprinted from the *Standard Edition*, Vols. IV and V, trans. and edited by James Strachey, 1953), 1967, pp.497-595.

on perception and subsequent cognition, was not something that could be side-stepped by philosophy. After arguing that “man is composed of mind and body, and [...] the human body exists as we perceive it,” Spinoza drives home the point against Descartes: “We see not only that the human mind is united to the body, but also what is to be understood by the union of the mind and body. But no one can understand it adequately or distinctly without knowing adequately beforehand the nature of our body.”<sup>42</sup>

Mind and body thus perceive in unison; perception joins the intellect with the senses. Insofar as Spinoza suggests that affect is a constitutive element of the human condition, our subjectivity is constituted by the affects that impinge upon our bodies. Our virtue consists in our power over our actions, which amounts to our ability, in the first instance, to recognize affect for what it is and, in the second instance, to bring the affects under control.<sup>43</sup> One’s power of acting is augmented to the degree to which one comes to understand the nature of the affects, in particular the primary ones of joy, sorrow, and desire.<sup>44</sup> An understanding of the affects thus frees us from what Spinoza calls the human bondage of the affects, thereby enhancing one’s power to formulate what he calls ‘adequate ideas’ in contradistinction to ‘opinions,’ which remain at the level of unchecked affect.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> *Ethics*, Part II: On the Nature and Origin of the Mind, Proposition XIII, Scholium, p.157. Spinoza takes up his critique of Descartes again later in *Ethics*, Part V: Of the Power of the Intellect, or of Human Liberty, Preface, pp.364-367.

<sup>43</sup> Spinoza addresses the power of the mind over the affects in several places, most thoroughly in Part IV, Proposition XXIII, p.305, and Part V, Proposition XX, Demonstration, pp.381-383.

<sup>44</sup> It is important to reiterate here that Spinoza does not value the affects as negative. Indeed, joy is at the root of love. Rather, Spinoza searches out the ways in which reason can channel the affects. Affect oscillates between action or passion, and relates to the extent to which we are or are not the ‘adequate cause’ of our actions (*Ethics*, Part III, Definition I and Definition II, p.206).

<sup>45</sup> For Spinoza, virtue is contrasted not with vice, but with impotence. Virtue is power: power over actions and affects. Impotence, on the other hand, is slavery to the affects. See *Ethics*, Part IV, Proposition XXXVII, Scholium 1, pp.317-318. In the Appendix to Part IV, Spinoza depicts the power of the mind over the affects as a positive force: “The desires which follow from our nature in such a manner that they can be understood through it alone, are those which are related to the mind, in so far as it is conceived to consist of adequate ideas.” These kinds of desires relate to action. Juxtaposed to these desires are those “whose power and increase cannot be determined by human

## SPINOZAN-INFLECTED AFFECTIVE DYNAMICS, MEMORIAL SITES, AND IMAGES OF THE PAST

An understanding of the dialectic between ‘adequate ideas’ and ‘opinion’ is a tentative step in the direction of understanding how some images of the past attempt to position or interpellate the viewer in relation to the dominant narrative, while others intentionally short-circuit these mechanisms of positioning.<sup>46</sup> For all that, affect remains difficult to grasp. While attempting to differentiate affect from emotion, Brian Massumi places the sensating body within a sensually over-determined environment.<sup>47</sup> For Massumi, affect is an unstructured experience of intensity that cannot be fully realized in language because affect is prior to or outside of consciousness.<sup>48</sup> As he notes: “The body doesn’t just absorb pulses or discrete stimulations; it infolds *contexts*.”<sup>49</sup> Massumi continues: “Intensity [which characterizes affect] is asocial, but not presocial – it *includes* social elements but mixes them with elements belonging to other levels and functioning and combines them according to a different logic.”<sup>50</sup>

If it be accepted that the body continually infolds ‘pre-social, pre-personal’ contexts, even as the mind struggles to form what Spinoza calls ‘adequate ideas’ out of these sensations and perceptions, I would like to suggest that a focus on affect has interesting repercussions when it comes to exploring how we receive and interact with the images of the past that surround us. Further, I would like to propose that by studying the aesthetic dynamics of the image in terms of poesis and aesthesis, we come closer to achieving an understanding of how immaterial affective

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power, but by the power of objects that are without us.” The first of these desires “indicate our power” while the second kinds of desires “indicate our impotence and imperfect knowledge.” See *Ethics*, Part IV, Appendix II, p.353.

<sup>46</sup> The Topography of Terror is a good example of the resistance to received traditions.

<sup>47</sup> Massumi explores this in his “Translator’s Forward” to Deleuze and Guattari’s *A Thousand Plateaus*, and more thoroughly in his *Parables for the Virtual*, pp.23-45.

<sup>48</sup> Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual*, pp.25-28. This is a modification of Spinoza’s insistence that affect involves sensation, perception, and cognition virtually simultaneously.

<sup>49</sup> Massumi, p.30.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p.30

relationships and encounters (*affectio*) between bodies and things (including ‘texts’) impinge upon the sensating and perceiving subject. Any ‘text,’ be it written, visual, spatial, aural, has the capacity to transmit affect and to mediate experience. The ‘image’ of a national or transnational history produced by history textbooks, by Kobayashi Yoshinori’s nationalistic manga, or by museums such as the Topography of Terror, the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, the Yûshûkan or the Shôwakan are but a few examples of how the ‘affectio’ transmitted during reader or viewer reception of an ‘image’ or of an emplotted narrative ‘triggers’ affects or engenders an affective response within the reader or viewer.

In short, affect plays an important role in figuring the relationship between our bodies, our environment, and others. In other words, affective dynamics undergird our embodied experience of memorial sites. Recalling the relational aspect of affect posited by Spinoza, *affectio* is the process whereby affect is transmitted between bodies, signaling the extent to which it is impossible to make a clear distinction between the sensating ‘individual’ and his or her ‘environment.’ Of paramount importance is the possibility that an as-yet (or perhaps permanently) non-conscious or unconscious resonance with a particular image or message might hold more weight than what is consciously perceived. Carrying this further, we may achieve an awareness of how the poetics of visual narratives such as the ones on display in the Yûshûkan and at the Shôwakan attempt to situate the museum visitor and generate a particular affective response vis-à-vis a particular image or version of the past. The Topography of Terror does something similar, but to a radically different effect, as we shall see. And I should hasten to add that what I call for in studying affect is *not* a ‘remoulding’ of a subject that should have ‘proper’ affects – to do so would be to repeat Katô Norihiro’s desire for a unified national subject.<sup>51</sup>

Rather, I aim at an awareness of how the mechanisms of this ‘moulding’ of a national subject (or

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<sup>51</sup> See Katô Norihiro, *Haisengoron*, Tokyo: Chikuma Bunko, 2005.

any subject-position, for that matter) operates, on what affective levels, and via what kinds of aesthetic tropes.

### READING AFFECT AND HISTORY TOGETHER AT THE MEMORIAL SITE

As Pierre Nora argued in the introduction to his landmark collection of essays on sites of memory, place (*lieu*) has replaced milieu as the repository, bearer, and transmitter of memory. Despite this and many other observations about the affective resonance of *place*, only a small number of historians have considered the spatial dynamics of the relationship between history and memory; namely, what goes on at the actual site where memory and history intersect. As Aleida Assmann relates, memorial sites such as concentration camps are ‘affective contact zones’ that generate an uncanny proximity between past event and present visitor, all the while maintaining the insurmountable boundary between the ‘here-then’ and the ‘here-now.’<sup>52</sup>

Commemoration itself implies a coming together. When groups gather together to remember, the act itself generates ‘presently situated’ affects that arise out of the social dynamics of an encounter in a given place. In her discussion of the sociality of affect, though Ahmed does not discuss memorial sites but rather social space in general, her theorizing on the sociality of emotion adds a new dimension to the complexity of experience I have been describing. Ahmed notes how emotion ‘takes place’ in a ‘contact zone of impressions’ in order to posit that emotions mediate between the psychic and the social.<sup>53</sup> In this variation of Spinoza’s relational conception of *affectio*, memorial sites have the potential to generate empathy not only among those gathered there in the present, but also across time with those no longer present. Following Ahmed’s logic,

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<sup>52</sup> Aleida Assmann, *Erinnerungsräume*, in particular, pgs.331 and 337. Assmann does not use the exact term ‘affective contact zone,’ but her discussion of affect and of the mediation between past and present at particular places – figured as ‘memory media’ (*Gedächtnismedien*) that maintain contact with invisible pasts – makes the term apt.

<sup>53</sup> Sara Ahmed, “Collective Feelings,” p.30.

we might profitably think of memorial sites as ‘affective machines’<sup>54</sup> that convert distance into proximity by generating empathy with or antipathy for others across space and time.<sup>55</sup> As ‘affective machines,’ memorial sites can generate anxiety, guilt, or shame vis-à-vis the past (the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe). They can instill fear of the ‘historical Other’ projected into the present (the Topography of Terror). Present and future desire may be fuelled by nostalgic (Shôwakan) or heroic (Yûshûkan) depictions of the past, just as vague feelings of uncertainty in the present might be stoked by representations of a more certain and glorious past.

The discursivity of collective memory – the degree to which it is an artifact, the degree to which it and its cultural products such as memorial sites are legible – serves as a valuable prism through which to approach how affect circulates at a concrete site such as a memorial site. Elusive as affect is, my focus on the circulation of affective dynamics at memorial sites rounds out more resolutely ‘material’ approaches to imagined communities and invented traditions. Since collective memory and identity are, by turns, ‘constructed,’ imagined, and invented, but yet are affective and highly labile, the difficulty (or at least the ‘task’) for me here is to articulate how my focus on a relation – affect – which is not immediately ‘concrete’ or available for positive verification *is yet* available for empirical study and speculation.<sup>56</sup>

Affect is a relation, but it is a relation between objects: visiting subject, place, space, ‘image’, relic, object on display. In this conception of things, we can think of the ‘image’ in its

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<sup>54</sup> This is a variation of Benjamin Brower’s idea of the museum as a ‘preserving machine.’ See Benjamin Brower, “The Preserving Machine: The ‘New’ Museum and Working through Trauma--the *Musée Mémorial pour la Paix* of Caen,” *History and Memory*, 11:1, 1999.

<sup>55</sup> See Ahmed’s critique of cosmopolitanism, pp.34-38. At times, this collapsing of distance is suspect, as Ahmed points out, especially when a memorial site appropriates a past in the service of identification with contemporary political agendas. This critique resonates with Aleida Assmann’s discussion of the insurmountable experiential threshold between the there-then and the there-now that she develops with regard to Auschwitz as name and place subject to a myriad of uses and abuses in the present.

<sup>56</sup> For what it is worth, I part company with social constructivists, for even when constructivists are sensitive to the differences between time periods, their image of collective memory as a ‘concretion of group identity’ is still too static a metaphor. I prefer, instead, to think of collective memory as a kaleidoscopic reflection of the fluidity of identity-formation.

broadest sense as the material trace with which we come into contact (that is, experience), and affect as the immaterial but palpable dynamic subtending this encounter. Affective dynamics produce effects about which we can speculate or draw certain conclusions. These discernible effects of affective dynamics form the reason why attentiveness to the *space* that a memorial site inhabits is so important not only to a study of the relationship between history and memory, but also to an understanding of how collective memory is shaped and transforms over time. Just as trauma is not conventionally archivable but still leaves ‘traces’ that are decipherable (sometimes but dimly) in works of art, literature, film, and photography, affect is a relation that, while not concrete in the positivistic sense, is a dynamic whose effects are discernible at memorial sites.

Approaching the past via affect enables us to consider how these corporeal experiences in the present moment affect one’s encounter with the past transmitted as mediated experience. My own attempt to formulate an ‘aesthetics of reception’ is speculative, based on my own ‘reading’ of memorial sites and the exhibitions installed therein as a discursively legible text. Some might object to such an approach, but I find the move justifiable because an attentive reading of the guidebooks, catalogues, and other self-presentations of the sites reveal much about the way a particular curatorship intends the museum to be experienced and by whom. In addition, careful ‘readings’ of the environment – lighting, sound, layout, design – of the memorial site itself shed light on how curators intend their exhibits and displays to be experienced. Lighting can be natural or synthetic; subdued or concentrated; dispersed or focused. Sound can be digetic and non-dietic; music or noise; hushed or clamorous. Space can be flowing or constricted, with sweeping vistas or winding galleries. Layout might follow a linear or ‘baroque’ logic, which may or may not be an intentional design feature. Design may be ‘contemporary’ or ‘period-authentic’; ‘low-budget’ or ‘high-tech’; bold and daring or subdued. Also of import is the degree to which a

daring design calls attention to itself or to the integrity of the site or the content of the exhibition.<sup>57</sup>

With the above considerations in mind, I would like to propose that by studying the aesthetic experience of memorial sites in terms of poesis (representation) and aesthesis (reception), we come closer to achieving an understanding of how immaterial affective relationships and encounters (*affectio*) between bodies and things impinge upon and contribute to the formation of the sensating and perceiving subject. But not only does a turn to affective dynamics contribute to an understanding of how the historical consciousness of different generational cohorts and among different demographic groups is formed; it also aids in the development of a critical pedagogy that is sensitive to both the salutary and less savoury ways in which affect can be generated and manipulated.

By now it should be clear that although I advocate a renewed focus on bodily sensation as a means of approaching the transmission of the past at memorial sites, I am not studying affect so as to celebrate it.<sup>58</sup> I am concerned, rather, with how the intermingling of sensation, perception, and cognition (what in Spinozan terms would be *affectus*) has a bearing on experience, and, by extension, identity-formation. Together with this capacity for the individual to be affected, I am concerned, moreover, with how the relational aspects of encounters between bodies, objects, and ideas (*affectio* in Spinozan terms) manifest themselves in representations of the past running the gamut from text and image to material site. If I see the trusteeship of the Topography of Terror

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<sup>57</sup> My discursive-textual approach to memorial sites that takes the sensating body seriously is but one possible way to approach the study of how affective dynamics influence visitors to memorial sites. It does not preclude anthropologically oriented attempts to understand the circulation of affective dynamics. In fact, an interesting complement to what I attempt to decipher here would be to interview a vast array of participants who interact with memorial sites, ranging from memorial site directors, curators, architects, academic staff, memorial site tour guides, through local and national politicians and officials involved with the planning and operation of sites, to a broad sampling of visitors themselves.

<sup>58</sup> For an example of a work that blurs the distinction between a theorization of affect and an adulation of affect, see the essays collected in Patricia Ticineto Clough and Jean Halley (eds.), *The Affective Turn*.



as evincing an at-times phobic reaction to the less manageable aspects of affect in their ethics and politics of museal display, nonetheless I remain sympathetic to their cognizance of the ways in which the darker potentialities and intensities of affect can be harnessed to nationalist, racist, or genocidal political aims.<sup>59</sup>

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More than most approaches to understanding the past, the study of collective memory as a branch of historical studies is concerned with the traces of the past – material or otherwise – in the present. A museum or memorial site is, paradoxically, something we experience ‘immediately,’ and yet the content is highly mediated – a mimesis of a memory, a representation of someone else’s experience. Studying the encounter with the museum, or the ‘museum experience,’ opens up a kind of reception theory of transmitted pasts. Though we are affected, sometimes unconsciously or pre-consciously by text, image, sound, smell, and space, we are, nonetheless, still readers and interpreters insofar as we bring our own previous experiences to bear upon the museum experience. Figuring the museum experience in terms of a reception theory of transmitted pasts takes us beyond what more social-historically or sociologically inflected studies of memory ignore or overlook with their focus on (rational) actors in society, and on the individual and institutional agents that engage in memory politics.<sup>60</sup> In a word, an attentiveness to the immaterial dynamics of experience that circulate on material sites and in material spaces has the potential to enliven debates in historical and memory studies alike.

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<sup>59</sup> Herein lie the connections between affect and an aesthetics of the sublime that I take up in the chapter on the Yūshūkan. Despite his rather surprising conclusion linking affect in politics with “a new kind of cultural engineering” (p.75), Nigel Thrift’s essay, “Intensities of Feeling,” on the spatial politics of affect provides an astute reading of affect that resolutely refuses to yoke affect to the irrational (p.60) while at the same time pointing toward the marshalling of aggression and the channeling of anger throughout the history of warfare (p.64).

<sup>60</sup> Matthias Hass’s otherwise admirable study, *Gestaltetes Gedenken. Yad Vashem, Das U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, und die Stiftung Topographie des Terrors*, Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 2002, evinces this tendency, as does Franziska Seraphim’s excellent study of the social aspects of war memory, *War Memory and Social Politics in Japan, 1945-2005*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006.

## CHAPTER 4

### APPROACHING THE CRITIQUE OF MEMORIAL SITES: TOWARD A METHOD OF READING AFFECTIVE DYNAMICS

#### **BETWEEN INTERPELLATION AND RESISTANCE: MEMORIAL SITES AS IDENTITY-PRODUCING MACHINE AND SITE OF CONTESTATION**

Why study memorial sites as a component of broader questions concerning the relationship between history and memory? As I suggested in my discussion of the affective dynamics of aesthetic experience in the previous chapter, memorial sites enable historians to approach those aspects of the past that escape ready documentation, such as ideology concealed within the folds of an exhibition. Ideology is just one of the kinds of immaterial dynamics that contribute subtly to (national) identity formation in the present. With increasing frequency since the 1980s, scholars have turned to memorial sites to study the role of actors and institutions in the negotiations and conflicts animating the processes whereby memorial sites emerge as part of the urban fabric. Much of this work takes its cue from critical urban geography studies, and is historical-sociological in nature.<sup>1</sup> Those works issuing from the direction of the social history of memory studies are similarly concerned with institutions.<sup>2</sup> Important as they are, what these studies leave largely untouched are the visual, aural, and haptic dimensions of spatialized

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<sup>1</sup> For recent examples, see Rudy Koshar, *From Monuments to Traces: Artifacts of German Memory, 1870-1990*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000, along with Karen Till, *The New Berlin*, and Jennifer A. Jordan, *Structures of Memory: Understanding Urban Change in Berlin and Beyond*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006.

<sup>2</sup> Edward T. Linnenthal's *Preserving Memory: the Struggle to Create America's Holocaust Museum*, New York: Penguin Books, 1995, presents a narrative account of the emergence of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum that is strong on the personalities involved. As Matthias Hass relates in *Gestaltetes Gedenken. Yad Vashem, Das U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, und die Stiftung Topographie des Terrors*, Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 2002, questions of culture and memory converge at concrete sites "upon which memory materializes and subsequently institutionalizes itself in the form of museums or memorial sites (*Gedenkstätten*)" (p.24).

historical narrative afforded by the study of both the site itself and what is exhibited on or in that site. A notable exception is the work of Andreas Huyssen. Apropos of the memory boom of the 1980s and 1990s, Huyssen suggests that the museum redeems the contemporary moment of cultural amnesia. Huyssen's argument is an eloquent defense of the cultural function of museums in a time of the speed of change, intensity, and the televisual flow and disorientation that characterizes mass culture.<sup>3</sup> Museums resist what he calls the 'progressive dematerialization of the world': "Via the activity of memory, [...] the museal gaze expands the ever shrinking space of the (real) present in a culture of amnesia, planned obsolescence and ever more synchronic and timeless information flows, the hyperspace of the coming age of information highways."<sup>4</sup>

At the same time that memorial sites have been justifiably studied as privileged mechanisms contributing to national identity formation, they are more than that. A visit to a memorial site is intensely personal; its enveloping sensual environment has the potential to reawaken memories of experience undergone (*Erlebnis*) or activate experiences learned in school or through other forms of social or cultural interaction (*Erfahrung*). This last point is important, for the personal values and experiences we bring to our encounter with a given memorial site are, in significant ways, derived from and patterned by our membership within a given community or collectivity.<sup>5</sup> Many commentators are sensitive to the ways in which identities are not only multiple and performative, but are also both 'made and experienced.'<sup>6</sup> Fewer, however, are

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<sup>3</sup> Andreas Huyssen, *Twilight Memories: Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia*, New York and London: Routledge, 1995, pgs.7 and 34-35.

<sup>4</sup> Huyssen, p.34.

<sup>5</sup> It is also important to note that membership in a given community or collectivity is not restrictive. For example, one can be 'German' or 'Japanese,' and yet belong to a multiplicity of different communities and sub-cultures that exist both within and across national boundaries. For the sake of argument here, though, I am taking 'community' or 'collectivity' in its broad sense: the way in which the community in question is the source of dominant, even hegemonic, collective values, memories, and identity.

<sup>6</sup> In his essay, "On Civil Society and Social Identity" (in Ivan Karp, Christine Mullen Kreamer, and Steven D. Lavine (eds.), *Museums and Communities: The Politics of Public Culture*, Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992), Ivan Karp draws out the points of conflict and overlap between individual experience,

attentive to the affective environment that surrounds and envelops the visitor to the memorial site. A heightened awareness of these often intangible affective dynamics generated by very material places and objects sanctions further claims we can make about how memorial sites ‘suggest’ identities to visitors to memorial sites. Indeed, the experience of and at the memorial site is a product of an intermingling of the visitor’s prior experiences together with a suggestive ‘production’ of experience that reflects the experience of a nation or other collectivity back at the visitor, or what we might call national identity on display.<sup>7</sup>

But memorial sites are not only machines of identity formation, for they have the potential to resist this rigorously one-way dynamic of interpellation, containing within themselves the seeds of contestation of identity formation, to be sure, but also of representations of the past that tend toward exclusion or worse. In contrast to those memorial sites that leave little space for the visitor to even recognize the ideological-affective pull that a memorial site exerts, some memorial sites remain open to the experience a viewer brings to the museum as potential ‘co-producer’ of his or her experience of a given memorial site. Creators and trustees of such memorial sites attempt to build an awareness of the ideological underpinnings of a given site *into* the fabric of the exhibition or memorial site itself. A reflexively-wrought exhibition, museum, or memorial site has the potential to call into question and problematize ascribed categories of identity – crucially, by including the visitor in this process.

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collective memory, and public culture, as these are filtered through identity. He is sensitive to the inherent instability of ascribed identity rooted in public culture, noting two points. First, not all personal conceptions of identity arise out of our experience of social space and public culture. Other ‘settings’ are in play, from the family to the sacred space of worship. Second, people perform their identities in ways that often contradict official definitions of group identity, with the mode of performance expressing more about how an individual feels about his or her identity than does the content. To further nuance to these claims, we might add that at a memorial site, what is often an intensely personal subjective experience takes place within a social context.

<sup>7</sup> Christine Mullen Kreamer’s essay, “Defining Communities through Exhibiting and Collecting” (in Karp, Kreamer, and Lavine (eds.), *Museums and Communities*), proceeds in a similar vein. Studying the history of specific collections or exhibitions “reveal[s] the ways in which social groups and the objects that can be made to stand in for them are presented by museums and perceived by communities” (p.367).

In this dialogic relationship between curator, visitor, and memorial site, the stakes are different than what they are in the case of didactic display of ‘the’ national past. The challenge is to fashion exhibitions (or site layouts) that present multiple perspectives, ones that account for local and ‘national’ narratives of victimhood, mourning, perpetration, and aggression while remaining open to the productively destabilizing ‘intrusion’ of the transnational into safely bounded national histories.<sup>8</sup> But herein lies the difficulty, for in doing so, responsible curators are faced with the simultaneous task of devising representational strategies that are critical of their own ideological predilections, and that unsettle the preconceived notions of visitors to their exhibitions.<sup>9</sup> What is at stake is the presentation of a richness of perspectives that does not flatten the past into a ‘positive’ national story that promotes, often uncritically, what conservative commentators in both Germany and Japan see as a healthy nationalism predicated upon a nation’s past glory.<sup>10</sup> Increasingly, curators strive, instead, to challenge the visitor’s prior assumptions regarding membership in a particular collectivity while presenting him or her with the means to (re)fashion a self-reflexively critical relationship with his or her received ‘official memory.’ If we grant that a person’s relative degree of historical consciousness exerts an influence on his or her identity in the present, another important task for memorial site designers and exhibition curators is to anticipate preconceptions so as better to challenge how personal memories – shaped by both familial interaction and education, and continually interacting with ‘collective memory’ – brush up against broader historical discussions.

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<sup>8</sup> For a series of essays that challenges readers to unlearn national histories, see Sakai Naoki (ed.), *Nashonaru hisutorii wo manabi suteru*, Tokyo: Tokyo Daigaku Shuppansha, 2006.

<sup>9</sup> See Karp, “On Civil Society and Social Identity,” p.22.

<sup>10</sup> Such were the aims of certain supporters of the German Historical Museum in its incipient planning stages during the early 1980s. In much the same way that a ‘positive’ national identity that no longer had to exist ‘in the shadow of Hitler’ served as the motivation for proponents of ‘normalization’ of Germany’s National Socialist Past during the *Historikerstreit* of 1986-1987, an antipathy to the ‘masochistic’ ‘Tokyo Trial view of history’ animated neo-nationalist commentators in 1990s Japan.

Enter the visitor. The curatorial stakes of museal display or site design have a direct bearing upon the extent to which a visitor (or entire socio-cultural group) is either interpellated – that is, subjected and subjectivized – by an encounter with the memorial site, or is an active co-producer of his or her ‘experience’ of the past. Of course, this is not a strict either/or dichotomy that sets up extreme polarities of determinism or agency, but rather a spectrum of possibilities that accounts for the ways in which a visitor stitches together his or her experience with, in, and at the memorial site within a set of constraints that is different from memorial site to memorial site.

In recent decades, curators, artists, architects, and trustees involved with memorial sites have developed a keen awareness of the extent to which visitors are acted upon in subtle (and sometimes not so subtle) ways by both the physicality of the memorial site and its attendant immaterial dynamics. Some, such as those involved with the Topography of Terror, have attempted, with varying degrees of success, to take this one step further by reinscribing the visitor into what they have termed ‘the active museum.’<sup>11</sup> Others, such as those involved with a memorial site such as the Yûshûkan, may well be aware of the powerful effect that their museal displays are capable of evoking; however, they appear content to conceal the implications of their glorification of a powerful militarized nation-state from their audience by not providing sufficient context or alternative interpretations for their emotionally driven displays.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Throughout the study, I will use the term ‘active museum’ and ‘*Aktives Museum*’ interchangeably. The latter term refers more specifically to the Berliner citizens’ initiative of the same name.

<sup>12</sup> To be generous, the discrepancy between memorial sites such as the Topography of Terror and the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe on the one hand, and the Yûshûkan and Shôwakan on the other, might be attributed to the relative lack of professionalization of the latter’s curatorial staff. With the exception of the Peace Hall museums and memorials in Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the Kyoto Museum for World Peace at Ritsumeikan University, many staff members at museums of a historical nature in Japan are not professional museologists. Often they are career civil servants who occupy their posts for between three and five years as part of the regular rotation through the local and national government bureaucracy. In the case of the Yûshûkan, the exhibition directors are Shinto priests (See Laura Hein and Akiko Takenaka, “Exhibiting World War II in Japan and the United States since 1995,” *Pacific Historical Review*, 76:1, 2007, pp.82-83). At the Shôwakan, staff with any decision-making powers have

As many a recent commentator on the museum attests, responsible curatorial practice involves not only a high degree of transparency in conveying to the public the rationale behind choices of topics, overarching narratives, and the images, objects, and captions that contribute to this whole, but also demands professional expertise in terms of how to mount exhibitions and installations that anticipate and negotiate the complexities of a given issue. This involves a delicate balancing act in order to square the circle of scholarly-historical expertise and authority with the strong feelings and emotions vis-à-vis the past harboured by the variegated groups and communities that comprise a particular public for a given memorial site.<sup>13</sup> As Susan Crane depicts it, the museum is a cultural institution where individual expectations and academic-institutional intentions interact to produce a range of memories “personal yet publicly formed.”<sup>14</sup>

The visitor, then, is not an entirely passive consumer of the museal product insofar as he or she interprets the exhibition through the screens and filters of prior experience. Nonetheless his or her prior experience is the product of a framework that is culturally mediated and socially situated. What this describes is the interplay between ‘interpellation’ and what I would figure as a kind of ‘agency’ (or, more specifically, a capacity for resistance) arising out of prior experience. Crucially, as this interplay is socially situated *reception*, the visitor’s culturally mediated prior experience (*Erfahrung*) mingles with the immediate experience of perceiving –

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close ties with the Bereaved Families Association. See also Tanaka Nobumasa, “Ima towareru mono, kokuritsu ‘Shôwakan’ to shimin ga tsukuru heiwa myujiamu,” in *Hakubutsukan Mondai Kenkyû* (26), 1999, p.28, where he draws out these connections, and notes, in addition, that the museum planning committees do not make the time, place, and contents of their meetings public.

<sup>13</sup> See Steven D. Lavine, “Audience, Ownership, and Authority: Designing Relations between Museums and Communities,” in Karp, Kreamer and Lavine, *Museum Communities*, especially pp.138-139, 149, and 155-156.

<sup>14</sup> Susan A. Crane, “Memory, Distortion, and History in the Museum,” *History and Theory*, 36:4, December 1997, p.46. For her, ‘distortion’ is a productive category that refers not to facts and interpretations, but arises, rather “from the lack of congruity between personal experience and expectation, on the one hand, and the institutional representation of the past on the other” (p.44). The result of this incongruity poses a challenge to the visitor that induces a reorganization of experience, affording the “opportunity to create new meanings” (p.45), as Crane puts it.

primarily visually but also aurally, haptically, and proprioceptively – the memorial site and its installations, all the while subtly registering its affective charge.<sup>15</sup>

The ‘museum experience’ is thus a visual and embodied response on the part of a visitor. The experience is a product of a complex inter-relationship between the following elements: curators, artists, architects, and trustees involved with the production both of the physical memorial site and its exhibitions; publics and state representatives involved in negotiating how this process of production unfolds; the memorial site itself (museum, monument, exhibition); and, of course, visitors to the memorial site.<sup>16</sup> In keeping with Ivan Karp’s suggestion that we shift our focus away from (passive) audiences to (active) publics – how audiences become communities – I will often refer to ‘the visitor’ as opposed to ‘the audience’ to capture ways in which individual members of communities or collectivities might actively participate in their experience.<sup>17</sup> I propose that scholars studying the relationship between history and memory approach memorial sites as significant – indeed privileged – cultural institutions through which contemporary publics ‘experience’ the past and attain a greater or lesser degree of historical awareness, which is itself something that is both *brought to* one’s interaction with a memorial site, and subsequently *shaped by* the experience of visiting a memorial site. For this study, the memorial site constitutes not only the condensation of memory politics surrounding national

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<sup>15</sup> As touched upon in the previous chapter, this affective charge might be unconscious or preconscious, or ‘sensed’ as a vague intuition. Its status as a relational term means that it is not always something that is readily available to cognitive processes or amenable to analysis. The difficulty, indeed near impossibility, of locating this affective dynamic (whether *affectio*, interpellation, or any other conceivable relation) with any certainty or precision is what makes it such a powerful – and easily manipulated or abused – component of the experience of memorial sites.

<sup>16</sup> Although I have not yet said much about the role of the state in the design, planning, and maintenance of memorial sites, we will have ample opportunity to consider the role and influence of the state in the chapters on the Topography of Terror.

<sup>17</sup> See Ivan Karp, “Museums and Communities: The Politics of Public Culture,” in Karp, Kreamer and Lavine (eds.), *Museum Communities*, pp.12-13. It is imperative to bear in mind, of course, the extent to which that individual is ‘acted upon’ or ‘subjected’ (*pace* Althusser) by his or her experience with the memorial site). Also, not all communities or publics have equal power in influencing curatorial decisions. In the extreme case of the Yûshûkan, the perspectives of entire constituencies such as Koreans, Chinese, Taiwanese, and Okinawans are roundly ignored in an exhibition geared toward forming patriotic Japanese citizens. Indeed, these groups are *denied* identity within the framework of a nationalistic historical narrative.



identity formation, but signals ways in which the affective dimensions of site and exhibition might be mobilized (consciously or unconsciously) by site designers and exhibition curators in the service of a particular ideology, and subsequently received – in some cases actively, more often passively – by visitors over time.<sup>18</sup>

### **MEMORIAL SITES AND THE PRODUCTION OF COLLECTIVE IDENTITIES: IDEOLOGY, INTERPELLATION, AND THE ‘NATURALIZED’ PRESENTATION OF CULTURAL CODINGS**

How is it, Louis Althusser asks, that the capitalist system ensures the reproduction of a ‘competent’ labour force under conditions so integrated into everyday consciousness as to seem ‘obvious’?<sup>19</sup> In a similar vein, we might also ask how it is that memorial sites weave tapestries of collective memory that contribute to the (re)production of national citizens and identities.

Althusser’s innovative reformulation of Karl Marx’s notion of how ideology influences subject-formation contributes three key components to our discussion about how memorial sites have a bearing upon collective memory and collective identity.<sup>20</sup> First, his reformulation develops a theory of ideology as materially embodied practice that unfolds within the mechanism of what Althusser terms ‘ideological state apparatuses’ (ISAs). Second, it furnishes a notion of ideology as a relational term that acts upon subjects as they interact with ‘ideological state apparatuses.’

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<sup>18</sup> It is with this line of inquiry that I hope to fill in gaps left by the otherwise informative and impressively wide-ranging works linking visual studies with cultural history by, among others, Jay Winter, *Remembering War: The Great War Between Memory and History in the Twentieth Century*, New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 2006, and Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *The Past Within Us: Media, Memory, History*, London and New York: Verso, 2005.

<sup>19</sup> See Louis Althusser, “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatus (Notes Toward an Investigation)”, in *Lenin and Philosophy and other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster with an Introduction by Fredric Jameson, New York: Monthly Review Press, 2001, pp.85-88.

<sup>20</sup> To arrive at his formulation of ideology, Althusser introduces a complex additional layer of reality into Marx’s theory of the state, a layer that accounts for ideology as praxis. In the classic Marxist formulation, the State is a repressive apparatus, a ‘machine’ of repression that enables the ruling classes to ensure their domination over the working classes (law, judiciary, police, army, prisons, schools, and the like). Althusser intervenes to draw a distinction at the level of the superstructure between a politico-legal ‘repressive’ state apparatus (law and police), and an ideological state apparatus that functions more subtly on ethical, religious, political, and aesthetic levels. See Althusser, pp.92-95.

Third, it provides an understanding of how this seemingly ‘natural,’ invisible, and not immediately apparent relational process functions by way of ‘interpellation.’

With regard to the first point on ideological state apparatuses, not all of the memorial sites I consider in this study are ‘ideological state apparatuses’ in the technical sense of the word. The question as to whether a given museum is an ISA or not is one that is not always immediately apparent. The Topography of Terror, the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, and the Shôwakan receive annual funding from the state, and were constructed with heavy infusions of state funds. Politicians sit on the advisory boards of the foundations set up to run the Topography of Terror and the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, but the foundations themselves are independent, operating at arm’s length from the state. On the other hand, the Shôwakan is run by the Bereaved Families’ Association (*Izokukai*), whose existence as an interest group with strong government connections has a history spanning most of the postwar period.<sup>21</sup>

The case of the Yûshûkan is more complex. Attached as it is to a Shinto Shrine, the Yûshûkan is supposed to be separate from the state. Though it might not be state-run – no *formal* relationship exists with the state in terms of funding or personnel – nonetheless its informal linkages with the state are strong, and both the shrine and museum function to produce a particular type of contemporary subjectivity moulded in conformity to a particular view of the past. As evidenced by the political response to Li Ying’s 2008 film, *Yasukuni*, prominent politicians of the LDP’s right wing support the ‘Yasukuni view of history’ that was supposedly

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<sup>21</sup> It was the *Izokukai* that petitioned the state in 1979 to build a museum in honour of the both the civilians who perished, and those survivors who bore the burdens of bereavement in the immediate aftermath of the war. See Kerry Smith, “The Shôwa Hall: Memorializing Japan’s War at Home,” in *The Public Historian*, 24:4, Fall 2002, Ellen H. Hammond, “Commemoration Controversies: The War, the Peace, and Democracy in Japan,” in Laura Hein and Mark Selden (eds.), *Living with the Bomb: American and Japanese Cultural Conflicts in the Nuclear Age*, Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1997, and Tanaka Nobumasa, “Keishô sarenai rekishi: ‘Senbotsu Tsuitô Heiwa Kinenkan’ (kashô) kôsô wo ou,” in *Kikan Sensô Sekinin Kenkyû* (1), January 1994, for accounts of the origins of the Shôwakan.

impugned by Li Ying's film.<sup>22</sup> In addition, informal institutional linkages exist between the Association of Shinto Shrines and the Bereaved Families' Association.<sup>23</sup> Given the high degree of personnel overlap between the Ministry of Health and Welfare and the Bereaved Families' Association over the years (former Prime Minister Hashimoto Ryûtarô served as head of the Bereaved Families' Association after a stint with the Ministry of Health and Welfare), the informal, loosely triangulated relationship between the Association of Shinto Shrines, the Bereaved Families' Association, and the state qualifies Yasukuni/the Yûshûkan *qua* memorial site as a quasi-ideological state apparatus.

In light of the complex issues with designating memorial sites as 'ideological *state* apparatuses,' it might be helpful to think of these mechanisms instead as 'ideological apparatuses' that, in many cases, buttress and reinforce national identity. This relates to the second component mentioned above of Althusser's formulation of how ideology influences subject position, namely, the notion of ideology as relational. The modified term 'ideological nation-state apparatus' captures the ways in which memorial sites weave together collective memories that contribute to collective/national identity.<sup>24</sup> One might raise the objection that not all of the memorial sites explored here aim to reinforce national identity, but rather to problematize it. This much is true, and we will explore in depth below the ways in which memorial sites such as the Topography of Terror resist the blandishments of an overly-crystallized consensus regarding national identity. That said, though, all memorial sites share one

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<sup>22</sup> An eclectic discussion of the reception of Li Yi's *Yasukuni* and the firestorm of protest it touched off can be found in Mori Tatsuya, Suzuki Kunio, and Miyadai Shinji (eds.), *Yasukuni: Jôetsu chûshi wo meguru dai-giron*, Tokyo: Tsukuru Shuppansha, 2008.

<sup>23</sup> For an in-depth, standard-setting discussion of these linkages, see Franziska Seraphim, *War Memory and Social Politics in Japan, 1945-2005*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006, especially pgs.71, 77, and 81-82. See also John Breen (ed.), *Yasukuni, the War Dead, and the Struggle for Japan's Past*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2008, and Tanaka Nobumasa, "Ima towareru mono, kokuritsu 'Shôwakan' to shimin ga tsukuru heiwa myôjiamu," 1999.

<sup>24</sup> The term 'ideological nation-state apparatus' is useful but cumbersome, so I will use it only the one time here.

thing in common: their (ideological) perspectivalism. The difference lies in the degree to which those who wield an influence over how a memorial site expresses and presents itself to the public conceal or openly problematize and foreground their ideological commitments.

In terms of the final point about how this seemingly ‘natural,’ invisible, and not immediately apparent relational process functions by way of ‘interpellation,’ since ideology is a relational term for Althusser, it readily links up with our earlier discussion of *affectio*. The relational aspects of *affectio* help us understand how individual subjects ‘derive’ their ideas through interactions with institutions. For Althusser, particular ideologies always express class positions, whatever their form (religious, political, legal, ethical, etc.).<sup>25</sup> For our purposes, we might profitably modify this so that ideologies express not only ‘class positions,’ but also national positions of inclusion or exclusion, or positions of collective memory vis-à-vis the past in terms of perpetration or victimhood. In the same way that ideology never says ‘I am ideology,’ an institution such as a museum or memorial site rarely announces itself as culturally or ideologically coded, but instead ‘comes across’ to the visitor as a seamless production of image and caption, light and shade, colour and texture installed in a seemingly logical, even ‘natural,’ progression. As such, Althusser’s thoughts on ideology contribute an understanding of how memorial sites *affect* visitors and subtly mould their impressions.

### **Apparatuses of Ideological Transmission**

Althusser takes his leave from Marx’s notion of ideology as a system of ideas and representations, pursuing instead the ways in which ideology is embodied materially through everyday practices and rituals. Althusser calls ideological state apparatuses “a certain number of realities which present themselves to the immediate observer in the form of distinct and

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<sup>25</sup> Althusser, “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatus,” p.109.

specialized institutions.”<sup>26</sup> In addition to recognizing such social groupings as the church, the family, the army, the media, sports clubs, trade unions, and the like, Althusser asserts the primacy of the school as an ideological state apparatus wherein children learn rules of ‘good’ behaviour, rules of morality, and rules of civic engagement.<sup>27</sup> In a move reminiscent of Foucault’s theorizing of the diffuse operations of power, Althusser puts his finger on the school as the site where subjects acquire (self)discipline, the “rules of respect for the socio-technical division of labour and ultimately the rules of the order established by class domination.”<sup>28</sup> Althusser’s crucial innovation lies in his identification of the ‘apparatus’ that embraces both institution and individual in the process of interpellation. And it is ideology that emerges as the *relational term* that links individual and institution within the ‘ideological state apparatus.’<sup>29</sup>

Though Althusser does not mention museums or monuments, given the avowed pedagogical function of memorial sites, the parallels between schools and memorial sites are striking. Memorial sites play a key role in the shaping of collective or national identities in a manner similar to the ways in which the ideological state apparatus of the school interpellates subjects who subject themselves to the rigours of capitalist production. Without explicit recourse to Althusser, Susan Crane remarks that “[w]e learn how to behave in museums, what to expect from them, what to buy, and how to remember the occasion. Our museum experiences instruct us in social codes of behavior, condition a sense of cultural literacy, and instill the value of art, the

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<sup>26</sup> Althusser, p.96.

<sup>27</sup> As Althusser argues, “The ideological State apparatus which has been installed in the *dominant* position in mature capitalist social formations as a result of a violent political and ideological class struggle against the old dominant ideological State apparatus, is the *educational ideological apparatus*” (p.103, emphasis in the original).

<sup>28</sup> Althusser, p.89.

<sup>29</sup> Here it is worth bearing in mind that an apparatus is not static. It is a complex combination of instruments and tools that work in concert toward the performance of a particular function. It is a mechanism; as such, individuals, groups, memorial sites, the state, educational structures, and the like form components of the ‘ideological state apparatus’ as a mechanism in motion. As Althusser asserts, “an ideology always exists in an apparatus, and its practice, or practices” (p.112). Not only does ideology exist in an apparatus, but individuals live ‘in’ ideology, “in a determinate (religious, ethical, etc.) representation of the world whose imaginary distortion depends on [an individuals’] imaginary relation to [his or her] conditions of existence” (p.113).

past, and science.”<sup>30</sup> Given the prime role of the transmission of historical experience at these sites, I would make the case for the historical museum/memorial site to be considered as an ideological apparatus that attempts to instill certain cultural and national values. Further, I would suggest that memorial sites can be seen as an extension of the school, even if operating at relative arm’s length from the state.

### **The Affective Dynamics of Ideology as Materially Embodied Practice**

In contrast to Marx’s notion of ideology as something that is illusive and dream-like, Althusser sets himself the task of demonstrating how ideology is, rather, materially embodied practice that serves to produce subjectivities. Althusser develops his notion of ideology in dialogue with Marx, for whom ideology is a proto-Freudian, purely negative phantasm manufactured by those who know what to do with power.<sup>31</sup> In contrast to this position which sees ideology as a system of ideas and representations predominating in a particular social grouping and exerting a hold on the individual mind, instead Althusser grounds these ideas in everyday rituals (of duty or belief) and actions (going to school; moving through institutional space, and the like). Ideology is positive, endowed with a structure and functioning that makes it an ‘omni-historical’ but entirely immanent reality that is materially embodied in and by institutions.<sup>32</sup> Insofar as ideology is a mediating term supported and reproduced by institutions, it exists, firstly, in practice before ever inhabiting individual consciousness as a particular world

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<sup>30</sup> Susan Crane, “Memory, Distortion, and History in the Museum,” p.46. Her sense of how the museum models conduct dovetails with Tony Bennett’s arguments in his *The Birth of the Museum: History, theory, politics*, London and New York: Routledge, 1995.

<sup>31</sup> See Althusser, p.108. Echoing Spinoza’s sentiments concerning the ‘human bondage of the affects,’ Althusser contends that priests and despots have produced falsified representations of the world as a means of enslaving other minds and dominating other imaginations (pp.110-111). At the end of his essay, Althusser declares the task at hand: since ideological state apparatuses constitute the form in which ruling class or nationalistic ideology is *real*-ized, they are the “form in which the ideology of the ruled class must *necessarily* be measured and confronted” (p.126). Though Althusser wants to distance himself from the notion that ideology is nothing but false consciousness, this formulation, along with his notion of misrecognition, seems to return to a notion of false consciousness that can be dispelled only through ideology critique – or, in the case of memorial sites, an awareness of how affective dynamics ‘interpellate’ subjects and shape their conceptions of collective memory.

<sup>32</sup> Althusser, pp.107-109.

view. Writes Althusser, ideology “represents the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence.”<sup>33</sup>

It is this relational aspect of ideology that is reminiscent of the role of *affectio* in Spinoza. An attentiveness to this affective dynamic foregrounds the importance of the sensating body in aesthetic experience (of memorial sites and the like) at the same time that it is sensitive to the ways in which affect is either potentially manipulated by curators, or ignored by commentators and critics. As Althusser was an avid reader of Spinoza, it is therefore not entirely surprising that his conception of ideology as a relational term should bear resemblance to Spinoza’s *affectio*. For Althusser, ideology is, in the first instance, located *in* the ideological state apparatus. Althusser argues emphatically that the existence of an individual’s ideas is material: “his ideas are his material actions inserted into material practices governed by material rituals which are themselves defined by the material ideological apparatus from which derive the ideas of that subject.”<sup>34</sup>

But ideology is also a relational term (as is *affectio*), for the subject derives his or her ideas by engaging with a particular ideological state apparatus. In the case of the memorial site, we might posit ways in which *affectio* ‘bears’ or conveys ideology and cultural connotations to the individual ‘in the act’ of his or her aesthetic experience of the museum or the memorial space.<sup>35</sup> As a relationship between bodies, ideology conveys the intended message of the institution to the sensating individual.<sup>36</sup> When an individual visits a memorial site, the individual

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<sup>33</sup> Althusser, p.109. Frederic Jameson points out the influence of Jacques Lacan on this particular thesis in his “Introduction” to *Lenin and Philosophy and other essays*, pp.xiii-xiv.

<sup>34</sup> Althusser, p.114.

<sup>35</sup> Such a line of inquiry links up with Roland Barthes’ interest in uncovering the coded and connoted aspects of certain cultural practices or images that present themselves as ‘natural’ and self-evident. I will take this up below.

<sup>36</sup> Recalling Spinoza’s discussion of *affectio* from the previous chapter, bodies can be human bodies, non-human bodies, or objects. As a relational term, ideology, like *affectio*, is difficult to ‘locate’ with any precision. As I noted in my discussion of Spinoza above, affect is ‘within’ a particular body as *affectus*, which mediates between and partakes of sensation and cognition. But it is also a dynamic that unfolds ‘between’ bodies as *affectio*, producing the

‘enters into’ an embodied relationship with the institution of the memorial site as constituted by the ‘ideological (state) apparatus.’ After getting him- or herself to the memorial site, the individual walks around the site, sees the exhibitions, and senses his or her surroundings, including other visitors present at the site or in the museum.<sup>37</sup> Sometimes these sensations and perceptions attain the level of cognitive awareness while a visitor moves through this spatialized narrative, but often they remain inchoate and vaguely conscious inklings.

A plethora of possible affects arise out of this embodied encounter with a memorial site, some of which intermingle with one another to intensify one another, some of which produce conflicting tensions. A non-exhaustive list of affective responses might include pride in a heroic national past; shame at horrendous deeds perpetrated by other members of one’s group; uneasiness or discomfort at chilling images of violence or death; desire toward or repulsion against a particular image of the past presented by the exhibition; possible disgust with oneself for being attracted by voyeuristic pleasure. Other reactions include fear of the ‘Other’ represented by the exhibition, whether this ‘Other’ is an ‘absent presence’ that threatens to destabilize a harmonious national narrative (such as ‘comfort women’ or Taiwanese, Korean, Chinese, Okinawan victims of colonial aggression not given a voice by the *Yûshûkan* or *Shôwakan* in the case of Japan), or a ‘historical Other’ such as the Nazis, who are simultaneously recognizable by contemporary Germans as ‘ordinary Germans’ (*pace* Daniel Goldhagen) who yet committed unspeakable deeds ‘alien’ to postwar democracy. As suggested, often these vague sensations are confused and at odds with one another, potentially producing a sublime intermingling of pleasure, intoxication, discomfort, and disorientation at representations of

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‘primary colours’ of affect – joy, desire, sorrow/pain – both within bodies and as an ‘affecting’ dynamic between bodies.

<sup>37</sup> It is important to note that even the lone visitor is never alone with his or her engagement with a particular memorial site, the experience of which is socially mediated.



spectacles such as dazzling national triumphs, or even apocalyptic violence. A representation of a particular aspect of the past might even have the power to generate anxiety as a kind of ‘secondary traumatization.’<sup>38</sup>

The point is that all of these engagements with ideological apparatuses are examples of embodied ideology: the sensating body ‘incorporates’ ideology as it engages with the apparatus of the memorial site.<sup>39</sup> Affective response to memorial sites emerges as a product, first, of museal poetics on the part of curators, artists, and architects, and then relatedly as product of an individual’s confrontation with the memorial site as an ideologically and culturally coded apparatus. Next, affective response arises out of and is conjoined with social interactions with others at a memorial site: *affectio* is infectious. Finally, all of this is filtered through an individual visitor’s prior experiences with the ‘past’ gleaned from school curricula, the media, and the relative degree of personal interest that might contribute to a particular individual being more or less ‘informed’ about aspects of the past and issues and controversies surrounding its representation. But this processing of the sensations and perceptions, this filtering, happens only in the last instance.<sup>40</sup> Before ideology ever becomes a matter of conscious *Weltanschauung*, it is barely registered as such by a sensating individual interacting with an ‘ideological state apparatus.’ Writes Althusser, “The individual in question *behaves* in such and such a way, *adopts* such and such a practical attitude, and, what is more, *participates* in certain regular

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<sup>38</sup> Marianne Hirsch’s notion of post-memory outlined in her “Surviving Images: Holocaust Photographs and the Work of Postmemory,” in Barbie Zelizer (ed.), *Visual Culture and the Holocaust*, New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2001, comes to mind in this connection. Though he does not refer to secondary traumatization as such, Ulrich Baer develops an argument that keeps open the possibility in his *Spectral Evidence: The Photography of Trauma*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002, especially pp.11-13.

<sup>39</sup> Or, as Brian Massumi puts it in his *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation*, Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2002, the body ‘infolds contexts’ (p.30).

<sup>40</sup> As Jameson relates in the Introduction to Althusser’s *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, Althusser is reacting to the Hegelian idealism of Marx’s formulation of ideology. But before it ever becomes a matter of consciously held individual or group *Weltanschauung*, before it ever inhabits individual minds, ideology is first and foremost institutional, that is, material (p.xi-xii).

practices which are those of the ideological apparatus on which ‘depend’ the ideas which he has in all consciousness freely chosen as a subject.”<sup>41</sup> A key point Althusser highlights with respect to an individual’s interaction with an ideological apparatus is the extent to which a subject’s ideas are derived from an encounter with an ideological state apparatus by way of materialities of displacement (movement: going to a mass, to school, to a museum); materialities of gesture (kneeling down, sign of the cross, comportment at a memorial site); and materialities of word (prayer, act of contrition: penitence and atonement for crimes permitted by a collective entity).<sup>42</sup>

An important aspect of these practices is their ritual dimension.<sup>43</sup> Ideological apparatuses have certain unofficially codified ‘rules of engagement’ that govern how someone interacts with them. For example, museums and memorial sites compel visitors to move in a certain way: slowly and deliberately (no running!); according to the suggested itinerary; and not beyond certain lines or into certain spaces. Monuments and museums also prescribe certain kinds of behaviour: do not touch the exhibits; avoid speaking in a loud voice. The itinerary contained in the pamphlet, guidebook, or catalogue even suggests ‘ways of seeing’ the exhibition, usually in an organized chronological sequence or in a rationally ordered thematic way – sometimes going so far as to suggest how much time could be allotted to various components of the exhibition, depending on how deeply the visitor would like to ‘experience’ the exhibition. In short, ideologies are *real-ized* in institutions, and through an individual’s engagement in their rituals

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<sup>41</sup> Althusser, p.113 (emphasis mine).

<sup>42</sup> See Althusser, pp.114-115.

<sup>43</sup> Writes Althusser, “These practices are governed by the *rituals* in which these practices are inscribed, within the material existence of an *ideological apparatus*” (p.114). He offers as examples attending mass in church; funerals; sports club matches; political party meetings. Indeed, as many commentators on the museum point out, memorials, monuments, and museums function as a barely-concealed displacement of the sacred, playing a central role in the interpellation of subjectivities and in the ritual of national citizenship. See, in particular, Carol Duncan, “Art Museums and the Ritual of Citizenship,” in Ivan Karp and Steven D. Lavine (eds.), *Exhibiting Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*, Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991, pp.88-103. See also Jennifer A. Jordan, *Structures of Memory: Understanding Urban Change in Berlin and Beyond*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006, pp.178-182, for a Durkheimian-inflected discussion of how the significance of the sacred object (and site) is “derive[d], not from any intrinsic spatial attributes, but rather from its representation in people’s minds as a symbol for collective sentiments” (p.179).

and practices.<sup>44</sup> The ritualized codes that informally govern visits to memorial sites ‘materialize’ ideology in ways that determine *how* individual visitors comport themselves vis-à-vis the memorial site and one another, as well as how they engage with, even incorporate the material on display or the ‘lessons’ taught by the site.<sup>45</sup>

### **Interpellation and Ideology**

In what follows, I will give an example of how this interpellative, affective dynamic might unfold at certain memorial sites to ensure the propagation of a particular version of collective memory. As I have already suggested, of the memorial sites taken up in this study the Yûshûkan represents perhaps the most explicit example of the workings of ideology’s interpellatory mechanisms. Accordingly, let us briefly consider the hypothetical case of a young adult Japanese citizen with no immediate experience of the Second World War who decides to visit the Yûshûkan. To add further levels of interpellation, let us say that this person is of high school age who goes to the Yûshûkan as part of a high school outing.<sup>46</sup> The Japanese high school trip is itself already a ritualized, materially embodied practice that forms a component of the educational ‘ideological state apparatus.’ The individual would likely have been prepared for the outing by the teacher as part of a classroom setting. The teacher may have presented a view of Japanese history to the students that a visit to the Yûshûkan would reinforce; alternately, the teacher might have contested this view, alerting his or her students ahead of time to the ways in which the Yûshûkan might attempt to manipulate their view of the past through the presentation of emotionally stirring material. Whatever the case may be, the individual student would arrive at

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<sup>44</sup> See Althusser, p.125.

<sup>45</sup> The subtle contrasts between the Topography of Terror and the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe provide examples of the types of ‘lessons’ that shape contemporary German identity, as we shall explore in subsequent chapters.

<sup>46</sup> A further degree of complexity arises if the student is a *Zainichi*, a degree of complexity I can only gesture toward in this study. *Zainichi* are permanent or long-term resident, usually of Korean descent, but also representing other nationalities, such as Taiwanese, who ended up in Japan as a result of Japan’s colonial policies. Many were brought to Japan as forced labourers during the Asia-Pacific War and remained in Japan for various reasons after.

the Yûshûkan as part of his or her class, and the sociability of this experience of making the journey together, visiting the museum together, and returning together – all of which constitute the ‘material displacements’ of which Althusser speaks when elaborating upon the materially embodied aspects of ideology – would no doubt contribute subtle layers to the ‘museum experience.’

Upon making his or her way into the shrine precinct, he or she is hailed by the ‘presence’ of the *military* dead of Japan’s modern wars.<sup>47</sup> This detail is significant, for it sets the tone regarding the quality of sacrifice demanded by the ‘Absolute Subject’ – the emperor, the modern nation-state. Upon entering the museum space, the individual becomes observer and observed, observing both the installed exhibits themselves, and observing the behaviour of others, all the while subtly registering both the atmospherics of the museum environment and the responses of other individuals to the galleries of the exhibition. But this subtle registering also gestures toward ways in which the individual is ‘subjected’ by a visit to a museum. In this process of subjectivization, the individual might be but dimly conscious or even unaware of the way in which he or she is being ‘acted upon’ both by the spatial atmospherics of the exhibited images and objects, and their accompanying captions. But not only that, for the gaze of other visitors, and also the omnipresent gaze of museum staff and security, affect the ways in which the individual ‘incorporates’ the information on display, perhaps even effecting modifications of his or her own behaviour in conformity with both the other visitors and the suggested itinerary of the exhibition. In moving through the exhibition space, the individual consumes the image of ‘Japan’ that is put on display, encountering “the Subject in which each subject can contemplate its own

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<sup>47</sup> I will leave to the side any discussion of how a shrine dedicated to the heroic sacrifice predominately of male soldiers might interpellate men or women differently.

image.”<sup>48</sup> To the contemporary individual visitor contemplating the spectacle of sublime, heroic sacrifice reiterated from one gallery to the next and amplified at the end of the exhibition with the display of thousands of photo-faces of soldiers who perished in the Asia-Pacific War, the museum declares that this is what it means to be ‘Japanese,’ effectively erecting a boundary between ‘us’ and ‘them.’ The individual interpellated as ‘Japanese’ sees him- or herself reflected both in this sublime spectacle, and in the mirror of other individual museum-goers who remind the individual visitor of his or her collective identity.

Some may object that positing the ‘museum experience’ of the Yūshūkan in such a manner is highly reductionist; that this portrayal does not take into account the gendered aspects both of the representation of the past and the response to this particular representation; that not all age cohorts will respond in the same way; that differences in education and experience have a bearing on the museal experience; that not every visitor is so easily manipulated by museal poetics; and even that, at any rate, not all visitors to the museum are ‘Japanese.’<sup>49</sup> I grant all of these points, but add that in contrast to the Topography of Terror, the museal poetics of the Yūshūkan do not leave much margin for dialogue or room for contestation.<sup>50</sup> No alternative interpretations are presented to the version of ‘Japan as heroic martyr-victim.’ No defamiliarizing interventions punctuate the narrative to remind the viewer that competing interpretations attempt to account for Japanese imperial aggression and colonial persecution, for

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<sup>48</sup> Althusser, p.122.

<sup>49</sup> It is crucial to note in this context that the *Zainichi* experience of a museum like the Yūshūkan cannot simply be bracketed into the category of ‘non-Japanese visitors,’ for tourists or other visitors to Japan are not tightly ensnared in and by this history like the *Zainichi* residents are. Recalling Joan Scott’s admonitions regarding undifferentiated experience, the force of interpellation is entirely different for *Zainichi* residents than it is for other groups.

<sup>50</sup> To be fair, as mentioned above the Topography of Terror presents a case antipodal to the Yūshūkan. In a less explicitly exclusionary and virulently ultra-nationalistic fashion, the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe illustrates how a less ‘binding’ form of interpellation influences contemporary collective identity rooted in a particular version of collective memory. By visiting particular memorial sites and in participating in the ritual of national atonement, especially ones that bear the state’s imprimatur, contemporary Germans are interpellated as Germans of the Federal Republic. By visiting a particular memorial site (say, the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe), Germans express their solidarity with a particular conception of twenty-first century German identity posited by the memorial site.

Japanese atrocities committed in the name of emperor and nation-state. Instead, the visitor moves through a space that leaves no margin for error, incorporating this ideology presented as the self-evident truth as he or she proceeds.

## VISUAL AND SPATIAL 'RHETORICS'

Understanding how ideology functions as materially embodied practice also provides hints to understanding how ideology both 'subjects' individuals who seemingly willingly subject themselves to the Subject – God, nation-state, ruler, dominant class – and names them as subjects, citizens, Germans, Japanese.<sup>51</sup> Crucially, ideology lies concealed in this process; the categories 'German,' 'Japanese,' and the like appear, rather, as self-evident. Visitors internalize the ideological underpinnings of a memorial site in their embodied interactions with these sites at the very moment when they are interpellated by the visual and spatial rhetorics emerging out of the interaction between image, text, and space at a given site. The simultaneity of the process Althusser describes bears resemblance to Roland Barthes' attempt to decode the 'rhetoric of the image,'<sup>52</sup> a rhetoric which conceals cultural myths and presents them as 'natural.' In the Preface to his series of occasional pieces on French culture collected under the title, *Mythologies*, Barthes writes:

The starting point of these reflections was usually a feeling of impatience with the sight of the 'naturalness' with which newspapers, art, and common sense constantly dress up a reality which, even though it is the one we live in, is undoubtedly determined by history. In short, in the account given of our contemporary circumstances, I resented seeing Nature and History confused at

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<sup>51</sup> Ideology 'acts' or 'functions' by 'recruiting' subjects among individuals, and then transforming them into subjects by the operation of interpellation (see Althusser, pp.117-118). The result is that the system 'works': "The subjects 'work,' they 'work by themselves' in the vast majority of cases." Moreover, "the vast majority of (good) subjects [...] 'recognize' the existing state of affairs" in a kind of 'Amen, so be it' (p.123). In a Foucauldian sense, they are complicit in their disciplining.

<sup>52</sup> Roland Barthes, "The Rhetoric of the Image" (1964), in *Image-Music-Text*, trans. Stephen Heath, New York: Hill and Wang, 1977, pp.32-51.

every turn, and I wanted to track down, in the decorative display of *what-goes-without-saying*, the ideological abuse which [...] is hidden there.<sup>53</sup>

As a means of illustrating his critique of ‘what-goes-without-saying,’ Barthes offers the example of how an advertisement – in this case, one for Panani pasta – intertwines culturally coded connotations together with the simultaneously transmitted non-coded denotative images (such as vegetables, tomato sauce, and pasta in a netted shopping bag) that comprise the advertising image. Of note here is that even if the images contained in the advertisement are themselves polysemous, the syntagmatic chain – the ‘grammar’ of the entire image – links together these discrete and discontinuous images, and, with the aid of a caption that anchors the potentially anarchic flow of signifieds, generates a rhetoric that makes certain claims at a paradigmatic level.

Barthes’ semiology is as applicable to the individual images and objects on display in a museum as it is to advertising images. Extrapolating outwards from how text and image relate to one another at this first level allows us to consider, secondly, how text and image function at the level of the individual gallery, and, subsequently, how these discrete statements combine to elucidate the ‘rhetoric’ of the exhibition itself. The museum exhibit or memorial site writ large presents a prime example of the ways in textual explanations and captions ‘anchor’ the significance of the images and objects on display. Providing more than context, the caption of an image or object, or the contextualizing text of an individual gallery, establishes the parameters of interpretation insofar as it attempts to fix the interpretation of a given display by providing a ready-made answer to the question: what is it? It is this kind of relationship between text and image that is most prominent at memorial sites and in museum exhibits.<sup>54</sup> Each gallery is

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<sup>53</sup> Roland Barthes, “Preface,” *Mythologies* (1957), trans. Annette Lavers, New York: Hill and Wang, 1972, p.11.

<sup>54</sup> We could even go so far as to posit that moving images within the confines of the memorial site function as ‘anchoring’ caption-commentaries.

comprised of ostensibly discontinuous elements<sup>55</sup> – two-dimensional photographs and infographics; three-dimensional objects and relics; lighting and soundscapes – grouped together into statements, the cumulative effect of which produces a rhetorical commentary on aspects of the past. Indeed we could go so far as to claim that memorial sites and museum exhibits generate an ‘image’ of the past – one that calls out for and attempts to generate affective assent – out of the discrete images within each gallery.

But Barthes’ semiological analysis of the relationship between image and (anchoring) caption furnishes more than an analysis of the rhetorical effects of the relationship between image and text to the extent that his approach situates the individual within the rhetorical environment produced by image, text, object, relic, gallery, exhibition hall, and memorial site. Reinforcing Althusser’s thoughts on ideology, Barthes writes: “the anchorage may be ideological and indeed this is its principal function; the text *directs* the reader through the signifieds of the image, causing him to avoid some and receive others; [...] it remote-controls him towards a meaning chosen in advance” (40). What is at stake for Barthes is similar to what is at stake for Althusser, for “the viewer receives at one and the same time the perceptual message and the cultural message.”<sup>56</sup> The perceptual message is the nominally ‘non-coded iconic image.’ It is that which presents itself to a person’s senses, that which appears to be transparently denoted by, say, a photograph. The cultural message is the ‘coded iconic image’ that conceals itself in the apparently natural, denoted image.

### **The Critique of Ideological and Cultural Coding**

Since the denoted image dissolves the culturally and ideologically coded message in the ‘naturalness’ of its immediate perceptibility, it is important for analysts of cultural institutions

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<sup>55</sup> I say ‘ostensibly discontinuous’ because, of course, each element has been selected to make a particular statement and achieve a particular effect.

<sup>56</sup> Barthes, “Rhetoric of the Image,” p.36.



such as memorial sites to remain cognizant of the ways in which an ostensibly natural “‘pseudo-truth’ is surreptitiously substituted for the simple validity of openly semantic systems,”<sup>57</sup> especially in light of the affective pull that memorial sites exert on visitors. As noted above, certain didactic exhibition situations provide little space for dialogue between the visitor and the images or objects exhibited. Consequently, the seeming naturalness of the denoted image (or object or relic, as the case may be), in conjunction with an anchoring caption, can all too often display a propensity toward a reductionist mythologizing on a cultural level – a reduction disguised as ‘clarity’ aimed at ease of understanding. When, for example, visitors to a memorial site encounter an image or object and its captioning text, the ensemble often presents itself as transparently and straightforwardly denotative – *this* text explains *that* image, object, or graphic. But in actuality visitors are acted upon by the culturally coded material that arrives bundled up with the denotative message – this image selected for display as opposed to some other image; the ‘grammar’ of the images, texts, objects, and graphics of a particular gallery that combine in a rhetorical way – in the very act of moving through the exhibition space. That is to say, ideology ‘arrives at’ the sensating subject simultaneously, at the same moment that the subject is summoned by the culturally-coded memorial site.

What this simultaneous ‘process’ sheds light on is how image, text, and space operate on a human sensorium encountering a memorial site or museum to call forth and name individuals as subjects to a particular regime of official memory. Embodied practice is, in the first instance, sensation: the sensation of moving, feeling, hearing, seeing. If we grant, following Barthes, that the symbolic message comes bound together simultaneously with the perception of the denoted image and literal message, a potential confusion arises between perceptual image and culturally

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<sup>57</sup> Barthes, “Rhetoric,” p.45.

coded message when ‘reading’ images and visually narrativized spaces.<sup>58</sup> The task of critique is thus to separate out the ideological and cultural coding from the affective-emotional charge that ‘delivers’ this coded message: to be aware of how sensation and perception is shot through at a largely precognitive level with cultural and ideological messages transmitted by the images, objects, and captions that spread their ‘webs of significance’ over the installed space of a museum or memorial site.

Significantly, understanding this dynamic also provides the tools to critique and subvert this dynamic. But an important first step in facilitating the conditions for the emergence of this kind of culturally adept ‘reader-visitor’ of museal exhibitions and memorial sites who can engage critically with his or her surroundings is the understanding of the dynamics that inhibit this emergence by keeping the museum-goer ‘in the dark.’ Recognizing the extent to which ‘ideological state apparatuses’ such as memorial sites announce themselves as ‘natural,’ ‘obvious,’ spontaneous expressions of national sentiment – all the while concealing their constructedness in their simultaneous connoted and denoted presentation of material – is the first step in critiquing museal poetics. Indeed, as we shall explore in the chapters on the Topography of Terror, the activists, scholars, curators, and trustees involved with that particular memorial site sought to involve memorial site visitors as co-participants in the acquisition of historical consciousness and awareness.

For our purposes, though we might still make plenty of allowances for the experiences that a visitor might bring to his or her ‘museum experience,’ Althusser’s thoughts on ideology and interpellation help shed light on how memorial sites exert a strong pull on a visitor, an attraction that, significantly, might not be immediately apparent to the visitor. Of course, the one-way dynamic of interpellation posited by Althusser does not cover all cases of memorial sites,

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<sup>58</sup> Barthes, “Rhetoric of the Image,” pp.36-37.

but rather presents a heuristic for understanding how cultural institutions, images, text, memorial sites affect visitors and viewers at a pre-conscious level. Not all architects, artists, scholars, curators and trustees involved with memorial sites work hard to conceal the ideological origins of their exhibitions. On the contrary. An increasing number of people involved with museums and memorial sites have sought to foreground cultural and ideological coding in their museal poetics. The contrasts between the ‘classical’ exhibitionary complex – authoritarian, didactic, monologic, disciplinary – and the counter-monumental impulse that seeks to open a dialogic space between visitor and exhibition is testament to this.

Those curators, architects, artists, and trustees who subscribe to a critically-reflexive exhibition strategy strive to open up a temporal niche that subverts both the simultaneity of interpellation and the simultaneous reception of the intertwined perceptual-literal and cultural-symbolic message by providing the time and space for a visitor to pose questions both about the exhibition and his or her relationship to the past being represented therein. If we were to think in starkly dichotomous terms for a moment, the Yûshûkan conceals its ideological underpinnings in an exhibitionary strategy that presents ‘the’ truth about Japan’s past, and subsequently what it means to be ‘Japanese’ in the present. On the other end of the spectrum, the trustees and curators at the Topography of Terror resist authoritarian and didactic presentations of the past, preferring instead to provide the space for the visitor in both a material sense (exhibition space, information center, comprehensive library resources), and metaphorical sense (space for contemplation).

## CHAPTER 5

### THE YÛSHÛKAN AND THE YASUKUNI VIEW OF HISTORY

Yasukuni, which means ‘land of peaceful repose,’ is sometimes anything but peaceful. Yasukuni has become a lightning rod for confrontations about the relative significance for Japanese collective memory regarding aspects of Japan’s role in the Asia-Pacific War. In the spring of 2008, Li Ying’s film, *Yasukuni*, opened in Shibuya and Yurakuchô amid heavy police protection and fears of violent neo-nationalist reprisals. The film was scheduled for a 12 April release, but faced intense opposition from conservative members of the Diet. At issue was a 7.5 million yen (approximately \$75,000) grant that the film had received from the Agency for Cultural Affairs. The conservative politicians who led the charge against the film branded the film as ‘Chinese propaganda,’ and forced the distributors of the film into conceding a private screening in March for eighty lawmakers. Led by powerful LDP (Liberal Democratic Party) lawmaker, Inada Tomomi, the campaign against the film contended that it cast aspersions on Japan’s motives during the Asia-Pacific War. According to Inada, the film’s ideological message was that Yasukuni Shrine “was a device to drive people into an aggressive war.”<sup>1</sup> Fearing right-wing reprisals, the theatres in Tokyo and Osaka that had originally signed on to screen the film retreated from their commitments. It was not until the incident was taken up in protest by some thirty media and civil liberties organizations that a handful of theatres came forward to premier the film on 3 May 2008.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See David McNeill and John Junkerman, “Freedom Next Time: Japanese Nationalists Seek to Silence Yasukuni Film,” *Japan Focus*, April-May 2008 (<http://www.japanfocus.org/-David-McNeill/2712> – accessed 11 May 2011).

<sup>2</sup> For an account of this incident, see McNeill and Junkerman, “Freedom Next Time,” as well as Li Ying and Sai Yoichi, “Yasukuni: The Stage for Memory and Oblivion: A Dialogue between Li Ying and Sai Yoichi,” trans. John Junkerman, *Japan Focus*, May 2008 (<http://www.japanfocus.org/-Li-Ying/2750> – accessed 11 May 2011). For a collection of essays running the gamut from conservative to progressive opinion expressed by journalists,

Filmed over the course of nearly a decade, the film follows a dual narrative structure interlacing the raucous annual spectacle that unfolds every 15 August on the precincts of Yasukuni Shrine on the occasion of the anniversary of Japan's surrender in 1945 with contemplative scenes detailing the craftsmanship of Kariya Naoji.<sup>3</sup> Kariya is the last surviving member of a team of smiths who forged approximately 8100 'Yasukuni swords' for use in the field by officers of the Japanese imperial forces during the Asia-Pacific War. Amid carnivalesque shots of ultra-nationalists decked out in period war costume making ostentatious display of their worship, the film also documents the efforts of those bent on contesting the martial and imperial symbolism embraced by Yasukuni. In one scene, a (Japanese) protester is violently assaulted by the crowd and then arrested by the police for his efforts amid eerie shouts of 'go back to China!', while another scene traces the vain efforts on the part of surviving relatives of Taiwanese, Okinawan, Korean, and non-Shinto soldiers forced to fight for Japan to have the names of their fallen relatives stricken from the register of souls venerated at Yasukuni.

Between these scenes of spectacle and violent confrontation, Li Ying's camera catches hold of an elderly but feisty onlooker clad in paramilitary garb, possibly a veteran of the Asia-Pacific War. "Young people of today have no spirit," he proclaims. "They have no Yamato spirit. Do you know what the Yamato spirit is? [...] The expression of gratitude toward the heroic war-dead spirits (*eirei*). A sincere gratitude. Do you know what that is?" Definitely something the contemporary education system has failed to instill in Japanese citizens, is the implied answer. To learn what gratitude to the war dead really is, and before being able to worship properly at Yasukuni, he continues, it is necessary to learn the essence of Japanese

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filmmakers, scholars, activists, and politicians, see Mori Tatsuya, Suzuki Kunio, and Miyadai Shinji (eds.), *Yasukuni: Jôetsu chûshi wo meguru dai-giron*, Tokyo: Tsukuru Shuppansha, 2008.

<sup>3</sup> Li Ying, *Yasukuni*, Dragon Films, 2008.

history. “Don’t bother with schools and history textbooks,” he asserts. “Look no further than what’s on display in the museum behind me.”<sup>4</sup>

That museum is the Yûshûkan. Upon entering the museum hall, the visitor is presented with a panoply of pamphlets, all of which return to the common refrains of consoling the dead spirits, venerating their sacrifice, and conveying the ‘truth’ about the violent events that occasioned their brave sacrifice.<sup>5</sup> One larger format pamphlet, “Yasukuni Jinja Yûshûkan,” notifies visitors that “the precious historical materials, records, and documents [contained within the museum] transmit the truth across generations.” Part of the text that follows this statement finds its way onto the admission ticket itself, thereby setting the tone for the visit:

The oldest military history museum in Japan, the Yûshûkan first opened its doors in the year Meiji 15 [1882]. Though the shape of the museum has changed with time, some aspects have remained constant. One is the consolation and veneration of the heroic spirits (*eirei*) who died as martyrs for Japan. Another is the clear depiction of the realities of Japan’s modern history.<sup>6</sup>

Kuresawa Takemi makes mention of another pamphlet that seems to have been discontinued. This pamphlet refers to the twofold mission of the Yûshûkan (“to venerate the spirits of the heroic war dead” and “to clearly state the truth about Japan’s modern history”), but goes a step further. Using rhetorical moves that have come to typify neo-nationalist self-portrayals of their aims, the authors of the pamphlet that Kuresawa cites continue in language that adopts a defensive tone while simultaneously legitimating Yasukuni’s approach to representing the past: “The consoling of those venerable souls who have sacrificed their lives in

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<sup>4</sup> Li Ying, *Yasukuni*, Dragon Films, 2008. I thank Jeff du Bois for providing me with unpublished translations of portions of the film script, of which I made use in preparing my own translations.

<sup>5</sup> Pamphlets range from small-format fold-outs, through more comprehensive 12-page booklets and large-format fold-out maps, to information about the various voluntary associations affiliated with the shrine and the museum. Most are in Japanese, but a handful appear in English. A smaller number have also been translated into Korean and Mandarin. A sampling of these pamphlets available at the front gates of the museum include: “Yushukan”; “An Introduction to Yasukuni jinja”; “Yasukuni daihyakka: watashi-tachi no Yasukuni Jinja”; “Yûshûkan Tomo no Kai: nyûkai no shiori”; “Yasukuni Jinja Yûshûkan”; and “Yûshûkan: Yasukuni Jinja Yûshûkan haikan no shiori.” All of these pamphlets date from my visits in 2007-2008.

<sup>6</sup> “Yasukuni Jinja Yûshûkan,” pamphlet, ca. 2007-2008.

the service of their country is something that happens in every country. We merely conduct these entirely appropriate services in accordance with traditional Shinto rites. And of course, the Yûshûkan's exhibition is a component of this.”<sup>7</sup>

In what follows, as a means of articulating what I have construed as the Yasukuni view of history, I will take up, firstly, the status of the Yûshûkan as a history museum or as a sacred memorial. Next, I consider the community of mourning that buoys the Yasukuni view of history through a brief discussion of Katô Norihiro's much-debated *Haisengoron* alongside Kobayashi Yoshinori's nationalistic and compensatory manga. Ending on a brief discussion of the affective dimensions of the Yûshûkan's aestheticization of violence, I set the stage for how history in a sublime mode plays itself out at the Yûshûkan.

#### **THE YÛSHÛKAN BETWEEN HISTORY MUSEUM AND SACRED MEMORIAL**

In the decades following the end of the Asia-Pacific War, the Yûshûkan languished, but re-opened in 1986 as a war materiel museum. Completely revamped as a comprehensive military/history museum in 2002, the Yûshûkan traces its history back to the Meiji era; it is thus coeval with the 'origins' of Japanese modernity and its linkages with military might. When it

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<sup>7</sup> Cited in Kuresawa Takemi, “Nashionarizumu to myûjiamu: Yasukuni Jinja Yûshûkan ga tsutaeru kindaishi,” *Bijutsu Techo*, 57:862, March 2005, p.153. All of these themes reappear and are elaborated upon in the Yûshûkan catalogue and the guidebooks for sale at the museum bookshop. See *Yasukuni Jinja Yushukan: Zuroku*, Tokyo: Kindai Shuppansha, 2008, especially the forward by recently-deceased Chief Priest, Nanbu Toshiaki (p.2), and the subsequent introductory pages. See also the guidebook compiled by right-wing scholar Ôhara Yasuo, entitled *Yasukuni Jinja: Yûshûkan no sekai – Kindai nihon no rekishi tanbô*, Tokyo: Fusosha, 2003, especially his editorial introduction on pp.4-5, where he adds that these heroic spirits are the ‘cornerstones’ (*ishizue*) of modern Japanese history. In what has become a dominant note in discussions about Yasukuni Shrine and the Yûshûkan, Ôhara blurs the distinction between mourning the fallen and honouring their sacrifices. He writes: “Recently, the debate about Yasukuni Shrine has become all the more clamorous. In the context of this debate, I want to re-think one of its keywords, ‘mourning.’ Mourning is not simply a matter of feeling pain and sadness at the loss of the fallen. Rather, mourning inseparably joins together two notions. One is the consolation of the souls of those fallen in war through memorial services (*irei*). Another is the paying of homage to the fallen who rendered great service to their ancestral country through recognition (*kenshō*) while transmitting the memory of their deeds to future generations. I would thus like to see these two dominant notes underlying Western memorial services for the dead – mourning linked to honour – inextricably conjoined in Japanese memorial practice” (p.5).

was first built, the shrine honoured the soldiers who fell in combat at the time of the Meiji Restoration that inaugurated the modern Japanese imperial nation-state. It was expanded in 1908 in the wake of the Sino-Japanese War and Russo-Japanese War to make room for the increased size of the museum's collection resulting from these two wars. Destroyed in the 1923 Great Kanto Earthquake, the museum was reopened to much fanfare in 1932 on the heels of Japan's 1931 invasion of Manchuria.

As Takashi Yoshida relates, the Yûshûkan received over 500,000 visitors per year in the first few years of its reincarnation. Popular as a family leisure destination, the Yûshûkan of the 1930s came well-apportioned with dioramas and interactive exhibits such as airplane cockpits and air guns that visitors could fire, along with a room in which visitors could don gas masks and 'experience' a poison gas attack. After commencement of hostilities with China in 1937, the museum became all the more popular, recording more than 1.4 million visitors in 1938, including 225,000 students. By 1940, that number had climbed to nearly 1.9 million visitors.<sup>8</sup> Though the current iteration of the Yûshûkan attracts far fewer visitors annually – under 300,000 per year<sup>9</sup> – what I will endeavour to show over the course of this chapter is that the Yûshûkan's significance for contemporary memory politics in Japan, along with the 'Yasukuni view of history' that it disseminates, cuts much deeper than these numbers suggest.<sup>10</sup> Yoshida sees these

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<sup>8</sup> See Takashi Yoshida, "Revising the Past, Complicating the Future: The Yushukan War Museum in Modern Japanese History," *Japan Focus*, December 2007 (<http://www.japanfocus.org/-Takashi-YOSHIDA/2594> – accessed 4 April 2012).

<sup>9</sup> For statistics on the number of visitors, see Ôhara Yasuo, *Yasukuni Jinja: Yûshûkan no sekai – Kindai nihon no rekishi tanbô*, Tokyo: Fusosha, 2003, p.50, and Takashi Yoshida, *op.cit.* My own conversations with museum staff in 2008 confirm that these numbers have remained relatively constant.

<sup>10</sup> By contrast, the Hiroshima Peace Museum and the Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum welcome roughly 1.5 million and 1 million visitors per year respectively. See Hong Kal, "Commemoration and the Construction of Nationalism: War Memorial Museums in Korea and Japan," *Japan Focus*, September 2008, and Takashi Yoshida, "Revising the Past, Complicating the Future: The Yushukan War Museum in Modern Japanese History," *Japan Focus*, December 2007 (unpaginated online journal), for similar numbers. Although I do not have figures to back up my inference, it is likely that the museums in Hiroshima and Nagasaki see a much higher proportion of international tourist traffic than does the Yûshûkan or, for that matter, the Shôwakan, due to the fact that neither of them figure very prominently, if at all, in recent editions of tourist guidebooks about Tokyo and Japan such as *Insight Guide* and *Lonely Planet*.



lower numbers as grounds for arguing that Japanese society has rejected the view of history proffered by the Yûshûkan. However, in keeping with the line of inquiry of many commentators belonging to the field of museum studies more generally, I argue that the boundaries of the museum (and, indeed, of the shrine precincts) have to be seen as permeable, and therefore intimately related to trends and issues circulating beyond the walls of the museum. In this light, the Yûshûkan and the view of history it advocates – reinforced by the Shôwakan, the Japan Association for War-bereaved Families (*Izokukai*), conservative-nationalist politicians and intellectuals, the JSHTR,<sup>11</sup> and the popularity of Kobayashi Yoshinori’s nationalistic manga – become all the more significant.

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Several commentators remark upon the sheer number of museums in Japan that deal with wars fought between 1868 and 1945 – two hundred and twenty three, as of 2004 – with the bulk of them dedicated to the Asia-Pacific War.<sup>12</sup> The most prominent of these are, of course, the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum and the Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum. In offering up a narrative that depicted Japan as both the absolute victim of the Second World War and subsequent postwar force for peace, the museums unwittingly obscured the militaristic and imperialistic past that culminated in suffering, death, destruction, and defeat. However, both of these museums took steps in the 1990s to address these blind spots in their portrayal of the Asia-Pacific War, and were at the forefront of a larger wave of peace museums that adopted a more critical stance vis-à-vis Japan’s wartime experiences. The impressive and abundant diversity of

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<sup>11</sup> Japan Society for History Textbook Reform, or *Atarashii Kyôkasho wo Tsukuru Kai*.

<sup>12</sup> See Laura Hein and Akiko Takenaka, “Exhibiting World War II in Japan and the United States since 1995,” *Pacific Historical Review*, 76:1, 2007, p.66. See also Takashi Yoshida, “Revising the Past, Complicating the Future.” Scholars draw their numbers from a survey on historical museums funded by the Japanese government. For this survey, see Terabayashi Nobuaki, “Nihon no hakkubutsukan ni okeru Meiji-ki ikô no sensô kankei-shi tenji no genkyô to kokusai kankei ninshiki no kadai ni tsuite,” Tokyo, 2004.

the museums devoted to the Asia-Pacific War underscores how much more difficult and controversial it had become by the 1990s to build a consensus around the history and memory of the war than it was in the immediate postwar period.

That said, the commemorative politics of contemporary Japan has taken on a much more conservative flavour since the mid-1990s.<sup>13</sup> The brand of ethnic nationalism championed by conservative commentators arose as a response to the increase in museums, memorial sites, media representations, and scholarly publications that painted the deeds of the ‘nation’ – colonial violence, imperial aggression, military atrocity, sexual violence – in less than flattering tones. While a strong undercurrent of anti-war sentiment still flows through contemporary Japan, nevertheless revisionist accounts that whitewash wartime atrocities have found fertile ground of late – particularly among Japanese youth.<sup>14</sup> The assertive militaristic tone of the *Yûshûkan* is but one of the most visible answers to the ‘peace culture’ strand of memory that ran through the postwar period and emerged, in the 1980s and 1990s, as a powerful voice against Japanese aggression.

Let us return briefly to Li Ying’s film, where in another scene former Prime Minister Koizumi Junichirô brushes off international criticisms of his plans to worship in an official capacity at Yasukuni on 15 August with the emphatic pronouncement: “It’s an affair of the Japanese heart.” Koizumi cannot fathom why visits to Yasukuni should be a diplomatic problem, stating:

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<sup>13</sup> See Takashi Yoshida, “Revising the Past, Complicating the Future.” Though he observes that “pro-Imperialist revisionists became more visible in Japanese society” during the 1990s, his article makes no attempt to account for this phenomenon beyond acknowledging neo-conservative reactions to an increasingly bold and flourishing culture of critique that had taken root in the 1980s and 1990s.

<sup>14</sup> Although it is impossible to discern the true identities of posters to Amazon or similar sites, thereby rendering such sites risky propositions as hard evidence, nonetheless the responses to Kobayashi Yoshinori’s *Sensôron* (1998) and *Yasukuniron* (2005) on amazon.co.jp reveal interesting anecdotal evidence. Many make reference to recent experiences learning history in high school, while others mention the kind of history they are not learning at university. Still others refer to the disconnect between the frightful experiences of war related to them by grandparents and the more ‘feel-good’ version offered up by Kobayashi.

If a leader of a country, as a politician and a citizen, wants to give thanks and respect to the war dead, with passion and condolence, he goes to Yasukuni. There should never be war again – I can't understand why anyone in Japan would protest [my visit]. And I don't understand foreign politicians who would dictate such an affair of the heart and say that we shouldn't go. This is a question of the freedom of one's emotions, of one's heart.<sup>15</sup>

The implication is that others would not understand; nor do outsiders have the right to scrutinize what they do not understand. But while Li Ying and a host of other progressive commentators and scholars have questioned this brazen attempt to police the meaning of Yasukuni and, by extension, the boundaries of Japanese collective memory,<sup>16</sup> fewer have paused to consider the significant implications of the *museum* that inhabits the Yasukuni shrine precincts.<sup>17</sup> Some might be inclined to dismiss the Yûshûkan as but another example of neo-nationalist propaganda, or as a narrowly Shintoist view of the past that is, at any rate, circumscribed by Article 20 of Japan's constitution legislating the separation of religion and state. But the curators of the exhibits on display do not see it this way. In the process of purveying what they perceive to be *the* truth about Japanese modernity, those involved with producing the Yûshûkan's exhibits also see themselves as ministering to the health of the nation<sup>18</sup> – and in so doing, countering and

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<sup>15</sup> Li Ying, *Yasukuni*, Dragon Films, 2008.

<sup>16</sup> Takahashi Tetsuya is one of the most prolific and prominent critics. For other examples, see the collection of articles in *Gendai Shisô*'s special issue on the Yasukuni issue (*Gendai Shisô*, 33:9, August 2005), and the special issue of *Quadrante: Areas, Cultures and Positions* (9), March 2007, based on an international symposium held at Tokyo University of Foreign Studies.

<sup>17</sup> Notable exceptions include John Breen's "Yasukuni and the Loss of Historical Memory," in John Breen (ed.), *Yasukuni, the War Dead, and the Struggle for Japan's Past*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2008, and various essays within the *Gendai Shisô* special issue on the Yasukuni issue, such as Kawamura Kunimitsu, "Tomurai-ron e mukete," in *Gendai Shisô*, 33:9, August 2005, pp.148-156.

<sup>18</sup> The pamphlets available at the museum emphasize this point, as do the guidebooks and catalogue. See, for example, "Yûshûkan: Yasukuni Jinja Yûshûkan haikan no shiori." See also *Yasukuni Jinja Yushukan: Zuroku*, especially the forward by the Chief Priest, Nanbu Toshiaki, along with Ôhara Yasuo, *Yasukuni Jinja: Yûshûkan no sekai*, especially his editorial introduction on pp.4-5.

correcting what they see as the ill effects of the Tokyo Trial view of history, maligned as masochistic by scholars such as Fujioka Nobukatsu.<sup>19</sup>

The museum presents itself as a balm for the nation in troubled times by returning to the safety and security of the ancestral nation. Explicitly linking together the spiritual and the historical, the museum ties together birthplace, family, locality, and ancestry with the higher abstract entity of the mono-ethnic nation.<sup>20</sup> The result is a potent and exclusionary ethnic nationalism that interpellates national subjects based on the idea of a Japanese nation that traces its origins to ancient times.<sup>21</sup> Following the lead of museum scholars such as Carol Duncan, Hong Kal argues that the dead and living mirror one another to ensure the continuity of the nation; indeed, state, nation, and ethnicity are posited as identical categories.<sup>22</sup> I would add that the blurring of categories spreads to the past as such. Despite the overall effect of the Yûshûkan's narrative exhorting contemporary Japanese to 'return' to the virtues that contributed to the emergence of Japan's modernity, the Yûshûkan emphasizes not so much the difference of the past from the present, but instead flattens historical difference. The opening galleries of the exhibition – a kind of 'overture' – present a story of transhistorical (martial) values of integrity and courage that forges similarities between Japanese across time. Relatedly, not only are differences across time erased, but so, too, are differences at particular times: all Japanese soldiers are honoured, regardless of whether their deeds were glorious, shameful, or utterly banal.

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<sup>19</sup> See Fujioka Nobukatsu, *Bujoku no kingendaishi: ima, kokufuku no toki*, Tokyo: Tokuma Shoten, 1996, especially pp.70-80 for his critique of the 'spell' of masochistic (*jigyakuteki*) history.

<sup>20</sup> See Yasukuni Jinja Yushukan: *Zuroku*, pp.4-5.

<sup>21</sup> Hong Kal is sensitive to this in her analysis of Japanese ethnic nationalism that draws its inspiration from Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities*. See Hong Kal, "Commemoration and the Construction of Nationalism," p.3. (Note: page numbers are approximate, as *Japan Focus* is an online journal).

<sup>22</sup> See Kal, *op.cit.*, pp.1-3 (pagination approximate).

We might still persist in our inclination to ignore the Yûshûkan as a ‘fringe’ representation of historical experience. Despite offering prayers for peace, the museum persists in equating Japanese history with military history. What is more, the ritualistic dimensions of Yasukuni’s commemorative functions – respect and honour accorded to the dead – would seem to preclude any critical evaluation of the deeds committed by those who perished in the war.<sup>23</sup> But given the dramatic resurgence of the neo-nationalist right over the course of the 1990s, it is worth taking a closer look at this fixation on heroic sacrifice in the service of Emperor and Nation-State, a fixation that runs the emotional gamut from melancholia in the face of loss to elation at the sublime dimensions of this martyrdom.<sup>24</sup> This is all the more important in light of the neo-nationalist right’s increasing influence on history education over the past decade, and their persistent drumbeat that drowns out any dissent on matters such as Japan’s aggressive imperialist and colonialist actions before and during the Asia-Pacific War.<sup>25</sup>

Some scholars assert that the abysmal adoption rates of the JSHTR’s revisionist middle-school textbook reflect a broader rejection of this group’s views within the public sphere, and, by

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<sup>23</sup> As John Breen points out, as an extension of Yasukuni’s rituals of propitiation of its enshrined souls, the Yûshûkan participates in the obliteration of contested war memory. (See Breen, *op.cit.* pp.152-153). See also Ôhara Yasuo, *Yasukuni Jinja: Yûshûkan no sekai – Kindai nihon no rekishi tanbô*, Tokyo: Fusosha, 2003, for the uneasy coexistence of ostensibly ‘objective’ knowledge with the presence of spirits to be honoured rather than critiqued: modern history intertwined with the record of heroic spirits (p.96).

<sup>24</sup> The Yûshûkan demonstrates the logic of this exclusion at work. The cumulative weight of the galleries posits a ‘we’ related across generations joined together in a homogeneous ethnic bond against a virtually absent ‘they.’ (Even when making references to ‘the enemy,’ direct portrayals of Chinese, Americans, Koreans, or the like are rare). Following the lead of other scholars such as Oguma Eiji, Kal points to how this logic of exclusion reflects a shift in the discourse of nationalism over time. At the height of Japan’s colonial adventures, Pan-Asianism buttressed the claims for the incorporation of diverse ethnic groups into a multi-ethnic empire. After the war, nationalism came to be associated with the mono-ethnic nation. See Hong Kal, “Commemoration and the Construction of Nationalism,” p.2. For a consideration of Japan’s incorporative and subsumptive imperial nationalism that Kal does not cite, see also Naoki Sakai, “Subject and Substratum: On Japanese Imperial Nationalism,” *Cultural Studies*, 14:3/4, July 2000, pp.462-530.

<sup>25</sup> Yamabe Masahiko, “Yasukuni Jinja Yûshûkan no jôsetsu tenji to tokubetsuten ‘furusato no gokoku jinja’ ni tsuite,” in *Nihon Kenkyû*, 533:1, 2007, p.61, observes that the thrust of the Yûshûkan’s exhibition strategy underwent a radical transformation as part of the growing chorus of neo-nationalist voices denigrating the ‘Tokyo Trial view of history.’ He points out that although the displays and exhibitions accompanying regional and local ‘gokoku jinja’ (shrines for the war dead) are also similar to the pre-2002 iteration of the Yûshûkan, they are being “brought into unison with the new pedagogical line justifying Japan’s role in the war” (p.63).

extension, a rejection of conservative neo-nationalism more generally.<sup>26</sup> A glance at city and prefectural adoption rates would appear to bear this out. In 2006, the *Atarashii rekishi kyôkasho* (*The New History Textbook*) written by members of the JSHTTR accounted for a mere 0.4% of middle school history textbooks in use across Japan.<sup>27</sup> Looking at other statistics, however, opens up a different interpretation of the influence of neo-nationalistic rhetoric. The Women's Active Museum in Tokyo has compiled a revealing set of statistics on the incidence of coverage of 'comfort women' in middle school textbooks over the decade and a half between 1993 and 2006.<sup>28</sup> These statistics can be taken as an indicator of the influence of ultranationalist revisionism on the climate of history textbook publishing. In 1993, none of the seven major history textbook publishers mentioned comfort women.<sup>29</sup> By 1997, coverage of the plight of the comfort women had reached a high water mark, with all seven of the major history textbook publishers taking up the issue in greater or lesser depth. But by 2002, coverage had dropped off sharply, with only three of the eight publishers mentioning 'comfort women.'<sup>30</sup> That number dropped to two in 2006. We might infer that in spite of the low adoption rates of the *Atarashii rekishi kyôkasho*, the very vocal and moralizing public campaign launched by the JSHTTR with the 1997 publication of their pilot project for public consumption forced some textbook writers and ministerial textbook screeners and certifiers to adopt a more conservative stance on issues such as introducing middle-school students to issues of sexual violence.

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<sup>26</sup> Chris Winkler, "Japan's Conservatives and the Quest for Constitutional Reform," presentation delivered at the German Institute for Japanese Studies, Tokyo, 6 February 2008.

<sup>27</sup> For stats on adoptions rates, see Nihon Shuppan Rôdô Kumiai Kai, *2006 nendo yô: chûgakkô/kôtôgakkô kyôkasho no saitaku keika*, Tokyo, 2006.

<sup>28</sup> See Akuteibu Myûjiamu, "Josei kokusai hanzai hôtei no subete: 'Ianfu' higai to kagai sekin," Tokyo: WAM, 2006, p.20.

<sup>29</sup> This might seem surprising at first, since in the early 1990s 'comfort women' had finally begun to break their silence and render testimony of their harrowing experiences. However, this omission can be accounted for insofar as the centralized ministerial process for vetting textbooks takes four years. The textbooks approved for circulation would have been written in 1989 or 1990.

<sup>30</sup> Fusosha, publisher of the JSHTTR-authored textbook, had by now entered the market.

The Yûshûkan and its Yasukuni Shrine environs are thus nodal points that ground debates about history textbooks, historical revisionism, and debates about historical responsibility. For these reasons, the task of analyzing how the Yûshûkan functions at a socio-cultural and political level in generating an image of the past becomes all the more urgent, especially in light of a recent central government circular dating from 2008 permitting school visits to Yasukuni and the Yûshûkan.<sup>31</sup>

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In one of his contributions to his edited work, *Yasukuni, the War Dead, and the Struggle for Japan's Past*, John Breen observes that most accounts of the 'Yasukuni Issue' take one of two tacks: the first considers the constitutionality of prime ministerial visits; the second takes up the issue of Class A war criminals enshrined among the Yasukuni pantheon of heroes. What falls out of these accounts, he argues, is a consideration of the 'mnemonic operations' of Yasukuni.<sup>32</sup> In approaching Yasukuni in such a way that considers the imbrication between the ritual-religious function of the shrine and the ostensibly secular function of its on-site museum, Breen's intervention is a useful contribution that focuses on three mnemonic strategies: a mnemonic strategy of ritual propitiation; a textual mnemonic strategy; and a mnemonic strategy of display.

The daily rituals performed by the Shinto priesthood of the shrine have as their focus the propitiation of the *kami* who fell in war, while the seasonal rituals, such as the Great Rites of Spring and, in particular, the Great Autumn Rite, re-enact a subtle tension between venerated

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<sup>31</sup> See "Saitama schools told they can use Yasukuni for field trips," *Japan Times*, 5 October 2008. According the article, the Cabinet-endorsed central government-issued document voided the 1949 ban on public school visits to Yasukuni. Though prohibiting schools from sending students to the shrine for the purposes of worship, the document states that "it is permissible for schoolchildren to visit Yasukuni Shrine to learn about Japanese history and culture as part of school education." In light of the avowed mission of Yasukuni referenced above, this decision is problematic at best.

<sup>32</sup> John Breen, "Yasukuni and the Loss of Historical Memory," p.144.

war dead and venerating emperor (or his emissary).<sup>33</sup> At the heart of the ritual mnemonic strategy lies an ambiguity: are the dead celebrated as gods (*kami*), or are they celebrated for having embodied the godly virtues of the emperor?<sup>34</sup> Given the preponderance of imperial symbols dotting the shrine grounds and organizing the space of the Yûshûkan, the ambiguity resolves itself in favour of the latter interpretation, for the shrine itself is designated as imperial space. As Breen relates, the Great Autumn Rite “serves to generate, and forever re-generate, a sense of awe before the emperor, his institution, and those essentially imperial values the war dead are said to have embodied in his name.”<sup>35</sup> Of course, the ritualized narrative of redemption through death departs from the realm of history to situate itself firmly in the domain of myth, as Breen points out.

For our purposes, the ‘spirit’ informing the performance and recitation of these imperially-inflected rites of propitiation finds material expression as the embodiment of sublime values in the galleries of the Yûshûkan. The rituals of Yasukuni are disseminated textually in the captions and commentaries contained within the museum itself, and in the pamphlets, guidebooks, and museum catalogues commenting on the Yûshûkan and its place within the Yasukuni world-view. What this illustrates is one of my general points about the permeability of the museum’s walls: text, captions, images and commentary contained within the narrow confines of the Yûshûkan and the slightly broader confines of the Yasukuni shrine precinct migrate beyond the site in the form of pamphlets, catalogues, and websites. Of course, this is not a one-way dynamic, for the writings of neo-nationalist scholars, literary figures, activists, and

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<sup>33</sup> Breen notes that the Great Autumn Rite is of Heian vintage (794-1185 C.E.), and involves the propitiation, with appropriate offerings, of young spirits angry and resentful at their lives being cut inauspiciously short (p.146).

<sup>34</sup> See Breen, pp.144-151. The ambiguity lies in an anxiety at the inversion of the cosmic order: “the war dead are supposed to be worshipping the emperor, not the other way around” (p.147).

<sup>35</sup> Breen, p.148. We will have further occasion below to explore the affective dynamics of imperial space.



politicians find an echo in the conception and layout of the galleries of museums such as the Yûshûkan and the Shôwakan.

The Yûshûkan produces a mnemonic strategy of display in tandem with what Breen identifies as a textual mnemonic strategy that focuses on the glorious sacrifice of fallen heroes as having laid the foundations for postwar prosperity – the ‘cornerstone (*ishizue*) theory,’ as Breen terms it.<sup>36</sup> The absence of representations of the enemy – along with the absence of representations of the horror of warfare – effects both an elision of the trauma of warfare and an amnesia of perpetration. While Breen’s contribution is useful in that he pays close attention to the linkages between the ritual function of Yasukuni as a Shinto shrine and the problematic aspects of the expression and persistence of myth and ritual within the textual and display strategies of the Yûshûkan as these impinge upon memory, his account of the interrelation between textual mnemonic strategies and mnemonic strategies of display fails to consider both the affective dynamics generated by the museum on the level of representation-poetics and the aesthetic experience of these spatialized visual narratives on the level of reception.<sup>37</sup> Though he considers how the shrine and the museum obliterate traumatic memory, he does not entertain how the museal *depiction* of the emotionally moving rush of youthful heroic sacrifice – the romanticism of young men in bloom of youth, intact bodies facing death – might have an effect on the perceptions of contemporary visitors.

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<sup>36</sup> See Breen, pp.155-160.

<sup>37</sup> Breen is not alone in overlooking the affective dimensions of memory produced by experiences with the museum. Though she purports to read and interpret the ‘spatial order’ of the museums she considers, Kal could go further in reflecting upon how space is imbued with national symbolism, and how this space shapes a visitor’s perspective of the nation and his or her place in it. See Hong Kal, “Commemoration and the Construction of Nationalism.”

## COMMUNITIES OF MOURNING AND THE YASUKUNI VIEW OF HISTORY

With no margin for reflection, the Yûshûkan establishes a space of immediate experience that seeks to make the visitor aware of the spectral presence of those who laid down their lives. Rather than reflect upon the complexities and controversies of Japan's engagement in the Asia-Pacific War, the visitor is meant, instead, to bracket critique and interpretation while being moved by the sacrifices of the fallen. Paying his or her respects to the heroes of the Asia-Pacific War, the visitor is encouraged to simultaneously give thanks for the enormous sacrifice of these 'cornerstones' (*ishizue*) of postwar Japanese prosperity while mourning the loss of these great men. Mourning pervades the corridors of the Yûshûkan, eclipsing broader public sphere debates about what it means to confront, mourn, and take leave of the past.<sup>38</sup> Latter day responses to the past promoted, for example, by literary critic Katô Norihiro, the Japan Society for History Textbook Reform, and manga artist Kobayashi Yoshinori – and reflected in the versions of history on display at the Yûshûkan and the Shôwakan – brush up against the discourse of war responsibility (*sensô sekinin*), and are central to a problematization and understanding of the nexus between mourning, commemoration, and the representation of the past.<sup>39</sup>

In a register completely different from the sentiments expressed in Katô Norihiro's mid-1990s *Haisengoron (On Defeat and the Postwar Period)*, Dominick LaCapra argues that what is at stake in this nexus is the extent to which memory and commemoration represent a melancholic

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<sup>38</sup> In this respect, the narrative trajectory of the Shôwakan departs from that of the Yûshûkan. While the Yûshûkan remains in the melancholic mode of mourning right to the end of the exhibition, the Shôwakan switches out of the melancholic mode chronicling the hardships and loss of the war and immediate postwar and into a redemptive mode of hope surrounding Japan's post-Occupation recovery.

<sup>39</sup> Kawamura Kunimitsu takes up the problems posed to historical responsibility by the invocation to mourn. (See Kawamura Kunimitsu, "Tomurai-ron e mukete"). When considering the question of how 'the museum' links up to my broader concerns with ethical commemoration and an ethical responsibility vis-à-vis the past (what in Japan is figured as *sensô sekinin*, or war responsibility, and, more recently, *sengô sekinin*, or responsibility in the postwar period), it is important to remember that the Yûshûkan is situated *within* a space charged with the task of mourning and commemorating the fallen soldiers: the Yasukuni Shrine.

repetition of the past with no possibility of closure. For LaCapra, commemorative practice represents a vehicle for working through the past, not so much to achieve an illusive (and at any rate phantasmic) closure, but rather to come to terms with the complexity of the various enunciative subject-positions that weave past events into a complex tapestry in the present.<sup>40</sup> The narrative trajectory of the Yûshûkan's galleries indulges, instead, in a melancholia that broods over the sacrifices of Japanese men in the service of the Japanese nation, leaving little space – physically and metaphorically – for a consideration of the victims or resisters of militarism in the past, or for a contemporary critique of the structures that give rise to militarist or fascist systems.<sup>41</sup>

Critics of Katô Norihiro's *Haisengoron* have been quick to seize upon the nationalistic dimensions of his work, singling out Katô's desire to gather together a national subject to mourn the losses of the Asia-Pacific War.<sup>42</sup> These critics caution that the process is infinitely deferred, and thereby forecloses on a sincere coming to terms with the broader repercussions of Japan's past colonial incursions and aggressions in Asia and the possibility of mourning the victims of

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<sup>40</sup> LaCapra explores this thoroughly in two works that deal explicitly with the Holocaust: *Representing the Holocaust*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994, and *History and Memory after Auschwitz*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998.

<sup>41</sup> Contrast this to the *Topography of Terror*, which devotes much of its energy to understanding the structures and systems of fascism and Nazism.

<sup>42</sup> In J. Victor Koschmann's appraisal of Katô's work, he ponders what Katô might mean when he says the nation should mourn Japan's own war dead. Koschmann cites Katô's own understanding of the French words *considérer* and *envisager* apropos of the war dead. For Katô, mourning (*tomurau*, *itamu*) is linked up three senses of 'consideration': to think about (*kangaeru*), to respect (*omonjiru*), and to confront (*mukiau*). See J. Victor Koschmann, "National Subjectivity and the Uses of Atonement in the Age of Recession," *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, 99:4, Fall 2000, pp.747-749. See also Takahashi Tetsuya, *Yasukuni mondai*, Tokyo: Chikuma Shinsho, 2005, pp.62-66; Franziska Seraphim, *War Memory and Social Politics in Japan, 1945-2005*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006, pp.311-314; and Tessa Morris-Suzuki, "Unquiet Graves: Katô Norihiro and the Politics of Mourning," *Japanese Studies*, 18:1, 1998, pp.21-30. As for Katô, he continually distinguishes 'our' 3 million Japanese deaths from the 20 million 'Asian' deaths. (See Katô Norihiro, *Haisengoron*, Tokyo: Chikuma Shinsho, 2005, pp.83-86). Katô engages in a bizarre logic indeed when he states: "What I am trying to say here is, in a word, that if we set the mourning of the 3 million Japanese dead as a priority, would it not be possible to console the 20 million Asian dead through the mourning of our own dead, and thereby embark on the path of apology?" (p.84).

Japanese aggression.<sup>43</sup> I do not wish to suggest that the work of memory is a process that is capable of arriving at full closure; however, from the perspective of historical responsibility, the melancholic compulsion to repeat the act of mourning without end is an obstacle to a frank engagement with less palatable aspects of the past.

On a very schematic level, we might begin a discussion of Katô's influence on the contemporary shape of the 'Yasukuni view of history,' which in turn has had a profound impact on museal display at the Yûshûkan, by proposing that those who advocate a continued and continual mourning of the war dead are engaging in a kind of national remembrance that views the fallen alternately as victims and as heroes. In its more benign manifestations, mourning takes the form of personal commemoration of the sacrifices of those who lost their lives in armed conflict. These modes of mourning and grieving are familial, private, sometimes individual. In some of the more shrill public-sphere manifestations, such modes of mourning hold up the war dead as exemplars of selfless, heroic sacrifice in the service of the nation. Both of these loose and sometimes overlapping groupings also maintain different relationships to questions of victimhood and perpetration.

For his part, Katô sees postwar Japanese history as being constituted by a schizophrenic split between progressive 'Jekylls' (those who defend the constitution, those who call for apology and compensation for Japan's wartime deeds) and conservative 'Hydes' (those who want to revamp the constitution, and who glorify Japan's wartime past).<sup>44</sup> Katô traces the roots of this split ego (*jiko*) – a single entity with a dual personality – to the arrival of Commodore Perry's Black Ships in 1853. The split in contemporary Japan mirrors the one between the factions that looked outward and those that looked inward as Japan embarked upon its

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<sup>43</sup> See Koschmann, *op.cit.*, p.756.

<sup>44</sup> See Katô, pp.51-59. Katô seems to assume that there was some sort of primal 'self/nation' that existed intact before the arrival of the Black Ships, an ego that needs only to be recovered.

modernizing project in the years preceding the Meiji Restoration.<sup>45</sup> In proposing ways to overcome the split, such that Japan can apologize to other Asian countries for its actions during the Asia-Pacific War, Katô suggests that Japan has to recover (*kaifuku*) its sense of nationhood, a commonality of belonging predicated, problematically, on the nation as an indissoluble unit (*tan-i*) that stands over and against other countries.<sup>46</sup>

Even though individual loss can ripple throughout a community from the local to the national level, thereby metonymically joining a community together in the mourning of loss and working through of trauma (the victimhood narrative surrounding the atomic bombings is an example here), Katô's own belated desire to mourn 'our own' Japanese dead as a precursor to apology for deeds perpetrated raises an interesting issue. That issue is the horizon between 'memory' and 'history' beyond which the metonymic bond of shared suffering becomes attenuated over time. I would argue that it is precisely this horizon that is the most problematic for history museums and memorial sites tasked with forging or contesting national identity. The problem with Katô's discourse of mourning as it finds expression collapsed into commemoration of heroic sacrifice at the Yûshûkan is that it blurs the distinction between the direct, immediate experience of a past event and its mediated re-presentation in the museum.

If the liberal-center-right Katô was an unwitting interlocutor in what I am calling the 'Yasukuni view of history,' Kobayashi Yoshinori's nationalistic manga have been far more calculated. In keeping with recent neo-nationalistic thought, Kobayashi lambastes the 'Tokyo Trial view of history'<sup>47</sup> as a brainwashing that produced the individualism he decries in the

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<sup>45</sup> See Katô, pp.53-54.

<sup>46</sup> Katô, pp.58-59.

<sup>47</sup> This is the stock neo-nationalist caricature of the leftist acceptance of the Asia-Pacific War as a war of imperial aggression.

opening frames of his 1998 *Sensôron*.<sup>48</sup> What he sees as a selfish individualism has given rise to a situation in which the experiences of his grandfather, marooned in New Guinea at the end of the war, go not only unappreciated, but even worse, pass unnoticed. Here his rhetoric is in line with Katô's call to recover the memory of the fallen, to mourn them and lay their spirits to rest. Affectively, the rhetorical personal appeal to the suffering of his grandfather is effective, for it encourages the reader to identify with the eclipsed, even repressed experiences of loved ones as opposed to discredited perpetrators of atrocity that appear in history textbooks: "Without uttering a single complaint, without any expectations, my grandfather passed away, left in the lurch by a postwar masochistic country of anti-war pacifists."<sup>49</sup> In an earlier frame, Kobayashi writes: "Even if my grandfather went to war, killed people, and may well have welcomed the embrace of a comfort woman, I have inherited my grandfather's genes. While sitting at my desk writing, I sense the weight of his words that ooze forth from the thickness of his experience. I feel the influence of his words, and I am now here because of his experiences."<sup>50</sup> In demanding respect for the sacrifices of Japan's war dead figured as the familial ancestors of Japan's present, the *Yûshûkan* effects a similar exculpation whereby guilt is dissolved in the thick bonds and unquestioning gratitude of familial relations.

Kobayashi's various manga present yet another example of how Katô's rhetoric of communal mourning of the fallen bolsters comforting and uplifting national narratives. Though it is fairly easy for many to write off Kobayashi's overheated rhetoric, what is important to bear in mind is the attraction that his approach, visual style, and content hold for disenfranchised,

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<sup>48</sup> See Kobayashi Yoshinori, *Sensôron*, Tokyo: Gentôsha, 1998, "The Individualism of Those Children Brainwashed by the Tokyo Trials," pgs. 39 and 55 in particular. In a later section, he takes critics of Nanjing Massacre revisionism to task by insinuating that such critics equate the crimes of the Japanese with the crimes of the Nazis (p.125).

<sup>49</sup> Kobayashi Yoshinori, *Sensôron*, p.208.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p.205.

disaffected youth. Given this attraction, it is important to understand the affective charge carried by the shrill tone issuing forth from the works and arguments of the ultranationalist right.<sup>51</sup> The heroic narratives of the *Yûshûkan* and of Kobayashi's manga fill the vacuum of stability that has been left in the wake of darkening future prospects.

What Kobayashi's seductive manga art fosters is none other than the affect of pride in a heroic past, the image of which collapses the distance between past and present at the same time that it functions as an inducement to re-create the future in the image of a mythical past. It would not be a stretch to claim that Kobayashi's manga art and narrative reactivate many of the tropes that characterize organicist, volkish thought; indeed, his manga art evinces the dangerous attraction of the fascistic aestheticization of death and violence as honourable sacrifice. His dubious promotion of courage, bravery, sacrifice, and heroism represents an ersatz masculinity for a disenfranchised, disillusioned post-bubble generation of young men who may feel a vague sense of emasculation and impotence when confronted by a future much more uncertain than it was for the previous generation. With his paradoxical and ambiguous message mingling an elliptical attack on the current generation (guilt, shame), a vague paranoia and fear with respect to Japan's neighbours, and the proffering of a 'sublime future' (that, ironically, harks back to a past mythical grandeur), Kobayashi's affectively-charged contribution to the 'Yasukuni view of history' exploits the uncertainty of the post-bubble era as an alibi for an aestheticization of warfare. Glorious sacrifice brings certain rewards.

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<sup>51</sup> Works exuding tones comparable to Kobayashi's work include, among others, Fujioka Nobukatsu, *op.cit.*, and Tanaka Masaaki, *What Really Happened in Nanjing: The Refutation of a Common Myth* (1987), Tokyo: Sekai Shuppan, Inc., 2000 (English language edition). See also Takamori Akinori (ed.), *Nihonjin nara shitte okitai Yasukuni mondai*, Tokyo: Seirindô, 2007, for a collection of essays by prominent right-wing and conservative scholars, including Kobori Keiichiro, Nisho Kanji, Nakanishi Terumasa, Ôhara Yasuo, and Kobayashi Yoshinori.

## AESTHETICIZED WARFARE AND THE YASUKUNI VIEW OF HISTORY

Although I do not intend to push the notion of ‘hauntologies’ too far, nonetheless the galleries and exhibits of museums such as the Yûshûkan and the Shôwakan are permeated by the ‘spectral presences,’ if you will, both of the living and the dead.<sup>52</sup> Not only is the memory of heroic, sacrificial death conjured up by the poetics of visual narrative in each respective museum. The visitor to these museums also encounters, among other things, the charge of recent debates surrounding war responsibility, historical revisionism and the textbook controversy, and what could be termed the ‘infinite postponement of atonement’ as represented by Katô. Most important, of course, is the ‘absent presence’ of the ghosts of Asian victims whose own suffering at the hands of Japanese colonial and military aggression has been comfortably and conveniently excised from the official account, so as not to unsettle the devout commemoration of Japanese national sacrifice. At the Yûshûkan, all soldiers who fought under the Japanese flag are glorified and sanctified equally as honourable exemplars for how contemporary Japanese citizens should conduct their lives, despite whatever acts and deeds they may have committed over the course of carrying out their duties and orders.

The case of the Yûshûkan presents an added dimension to our consideration of the linkages between affective dynamics and aesthetic experience, insofar as its treatment of warfare intermingles beauty and sublimity in its aestheticization of violence and death. In short, the Yûshûkan is the visual expression of the ‘Yasukuni view of history’ espoused by conservative and nationalist academics and politicians. Consciously or not, the Yûshûkan replicates the fascist aesthetics of pre-war and wartime Japan. In light of contemporary debates about revising Article 9 of the constitution, the cult of death promoted by the galleries of the Yûshûkan points toward

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<sup>52</sup> One could put forward similar claims regarding the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe and, to a much lesser extent, the Topography of Terror.



how a particular historical aesthetic mingling the beautiful and the sublime might be mobilized successfully in the present or future to inspire in the contemporary individual a desire and willingness to once again partake of the intoxicating elation of becoming a hero falling like the cherry blossoms of Yasukuni Shrine.

The scenario I just portrayed is an extreme example of how the mechanism of interpellation operates in an affective register. Though exhibition curators are all faced with similar challenges – how to mark the transition from witnessing (the experience of the event itself) to testimony (its symbolically mediated *representation*) – nevertheless very different responses are available for dealing with the passage from the experience itself to the representation of that experience. As we will consider in a later chapter when the discussion turns to contemporary theorizations about the limits of representing the Nazi atrocities, contemporary responses to the more overtly sublime aspects of the past manifest themselves along a spectrum ranging from intoxicating fascination with the spectacle of National Socialism to the overwhelming, disorienting trauma of the Holocaust perpetrated by Germans under the influence of National Socialism. Considering the Topography of Terror within the context of both theorization about the representability of traumatic pasts and contemporary German responses to its National Socialist and Holocaust past opens up significant avenues for critiquing contemporary responses to uncertainty, figured variously as the apocalyptic imagination, the radically unknowable, or the sublime unrepresentability of the trauma of the post-Holocaust contemporary moment. The Yûshûkan does not use its exhibition spaces to engage with such questions. Instead, the curatorship and directorship of the museum look past these debates, participating in a celebration of history in a sublime mode.

The literature of the Yûshûkan makes much of the Yasukuni shrine grounds as a contemplative space. Despite this, the museal poetics of the Yûshûkan are geared toward presenting affectively charged and moving displays that engender a constant agitation of the body and mind, the exhilarating rush of contemplating oneself in the mirror of national-martial glory. Along with the Japanese Society for History Textbook Reform and other proponents of the ‘Yasukuni view of history,’ the Yûshûkan participates in the contemporary affective struggle for the proverbial ‘hearts and minds’ of the younger generations with its incessant call to mourn the fallen and revere the spirits of the departed for the sacrifices they have made. We might even go so far as to concede that, as the visual expression of the ‘Yasukuni view of history,’ the Yûshûkan has been ‘affectively successful’: on certain levels, the museum galleries simultaneously generate and then fulfill the desire for heroes in a perpetually reinforcing cycle that spins compensatory narratives in a contemporary age of uncertainty. Kobayashi’s best-seller status is testament to this. In this poesis of shared experience, the Yûshûkan creates a shared sense of worth, a *sensus communis* redeemed by the sacrifice of the war dead in which contemporary youth can invest their emotional energy.<sup>53</sup> But the wages expended for these heroes are high, and are paid for largely at the expense of ignoring the voices that disrupt this narrative of heroism.

As we turn to the question of how the aesthetic experience of the museum has the potential to move its visitors, how embodied memory represented in the museum has the affective power to shape one’s experience of the past and perspective on the present by way of

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<sup>53</sup> In a completely different register, James Young describes how “memorials provide the sites where groups of people gather to create a common past for themselves.” He notes that “by creating the *sense* of a shared past [...], such institutions [...] foster the sense of a common present and future, even a sense of shared national destiny.” (See James Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1993, p.6, my emphasis). The emphasis on sense underscores both the aesthetic (figured as aesthesis) and the affective dimensions of memory and memorial sites.

this ‘immediate’ museal experience of the past, however manufactured it may be, it is clear that we need a rearticulated conception of aesthetics that remains rooted in the body. In the following chapters on the Yûshûkan and the Shôwakan, I offer a method of reading cultural forms that pays attention to the affective dynamics – the aesthetic effects on the level of reception – engendered by an exhibition’s poetics. In the process, I will explore how text, image, and space come together in the museum in such a way as to position the visitor with respect to a particular affective investment vis-à-vis national history.

## CHAPTER 6

### MUSEAL ALCHEMY AT THE YÛSHÛKAN<sup>1</sup>

#### PRELUDE: REINCORPORATING AFFECT AND BODILY SENSATION INTO KANTIAN AESTHETICS

It would not be an exaggeration to call the ‘Yasukuni view of history’ on display at the Yûshûkan ‘history in a sublime key.’ The Yûshûkan presents an embodiment of this in the form of narrativized images in space, which exert a strong impact on visitors as they interact with and traverse this space. Before entering into the galleries of the Yûshûkan itself, I would like to develop a notion of how Kantian aesthetics contributes to an understanding of how the Yûshûkan affects its visitors. On a general level, I intend to furnish an account of the museum experience by supplementing Kantian aesthetics with a notion of experience that accounts for the intensity of feeling, affect, and emotion.<sup>2</sup> Though Immanuel Kant proceeds from sensation, he does not dwell long in the realm of the senses. Sensation all too quickly becomes intellectualized as a reflective judgment, one which affirms humanity’s moral nature. It is very telling indeed that in the Kantian sublime it is the warrior *beheld*, and *not* the experience of the warrior himself in battle as seen through his eyes, and as he experiences carnage and *beholds* the possibility of his own destruction.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The title borrows from Takahashi Tetsuya’s notion of an alchemy that converts those who died violent deaths into heroic spirits – or misfortune into glorious sacrifice. See Takahashi Tetsuya, *Yasukuni mondai*, Tokyo: Chikuma Shinsho, 2005, pp.43-47.

<sup>2</sup> At this juncture it would be useful to reiterate what I stated in the chapter on affect and aesthetics: that affect itself is not to be valued ‘good’ or ‘bad’, ‘positive’ or ‘negative.’ Recalling Spinoza’s sentiments, affect is constitutive of the human condition. Our ability to form ‘adequate ideas’ as opposed to mere ‘opinions’ hinges on our ability, in the first instance, to know and recognize the affects, and secondly, to either control or channel them into an ethical existence (i.e., control of passions).

<sup>3</sup> See Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Judgment* (1790), translated by J.H. Bernard, New York: Prometheus Books, 2000, p.127.

When dealing with the protean nature of aesthetics, especially as it relates to the question of the aestheticization of violence and death, or the ‘aestheticization of politics,’ it is important to resist common assumptions that equate aesthetics with beauty.<sup>4</sup> An aesthetic experience is not always an experience of beauty, nor does aestheticization mean simply ‘beautification.’<sup>5</sup> Complementing Kantian aesthetics with an exploration of the limits of experience – which is subsequently translated into representations by someone who may not have undergone such disintegrating, fragmenting, traumatic experiences of warfare – illuminates the extent to which the beautiful and the sublime are in a tense interaction that is difficult to overcome, often marking museal poetics with the remnants and traces of the stirring and intense affective dynamics of the past experience. This, in itself, is sometimes desirable as a pedagogical strategy; however, we might be inclined to subject this strategy to critique when its intent is to selectively reproduce certain emotional dimensions of these intense feelings that invite uncritical acceptance of and identification with the image of the past represented in the exhibition.

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<sup>4</sup> See Martin Jay, *Force Fields: Between Intellectual History and Cultural Critique*, New York: Routledge, 1993, Ch.6, “‘The Aesthetic Ideology’ as Ideology: Or What Does It Mean to Aestheticize Politics?”, especially pp.72-76. In a revealing example of the pejorative connotations often linked with ‘the aesthetic,’ Yumiko Iida, in an otherwise thought-provoking work entitled *Rethinking Identity in Modern Japan: Nationalism as Aesthetics*, London and New York: Routledge, 2002, latches on to an early characterization of the aesthetic from Terry Eagleton’s highly nuanced treatment of aesthetics in *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* as marked by ‘a certain indeterminacy of definition which allows it to figure in a varied span of preoccupations’ and to function as a flexible signifier absorbing ‘things excessive’ and ‘unrepresentable.’ Taking up this line of inquiry from among many productively critical formulations in Eagleton’s work, Iida fashions her own aesthetic, a near-equivalent of the Romantic, of the anti-modern, of the irrational. (See Iida, pp.2-3, 10, and 60). It is also worth noting the irony of these objections to ‘the aesthetic,’ especially given that Kant attempted to ground aesthetic judgments in rationality via the mechanism of subjective universality.

<sup>5</sup> The discourse on aesthetics involves, by turns, aesthetics as poesis (Aristotle: making, production) and aesthesis (Baumgarten: response, reception, empathy, identification, revulsion, rejection; effect on the human sensorium). Walter Benjamin’s discussion of the aestheticization of politics under fascism links up with technologies of ‘subject-formation’ and the ‘poesis of a national subject’ discussed by Miki Kiyoshi and various thinkers affiliated with the Kyoto School. See Benjamin, “Theories of German Fascism: On the Collection of Essays *War and Warrior*, edited by Ernst Jünger” (1930), in *New German Critique* (17), Spring 1979, as well as the essay by Iwasaki Minoru entitled “Desire for a Poietic Metasubject: Miki Kiyoshi’s Technology Theory,” in Yamanouchi Yasushi, J. Victor Koschmann, and Ryûichi Narita (eds.), *Total War and ‘Modernization.’* Ithaca, NY: East Asia Program Cornell University, 1998.

What I would like to consider is the possibility that, at the limits of what constitutes both the sublime and the beautiful – that is, if we consider them as a spectrum of sensations and intensities, rather than as distinct experiences – an aporia opens up. *Representations* of war experience – be they novels, memoirs, paintings, film, photographs, or museal displays – unfold a tense dialectic between both the beautiful and the sublime, a dialectic which resists the division of the feeling into *either* contented responses to harmonious form *or* reactions of awe or respect towards unsettling excess. I would further argue that the aesthetic *effect* of such representations in terms of reception is also undecidable: both ‘beautiful’ and ‘sublime,’ which is precisely why ultranationalist ideologues then and now have as much success as they do in activating ‘the aesthetic’ in the service of interpellating individuals to render patriotic sacrifice in the service of the nation. As former prime minister Koizumi declares in Li Ying’s film, it’s an affair of the heart, moving and emotional.

Before proceeding further with an exploration of museal representations of the experience of warfare, it is useful to trace how the mind came to eclipse the body in Kantian aesthetics. What is at stake for Kant in this taking leave of the senses is the search for the grounds of pure, disinterested judgments of taste into which no sensuous elements intrude. Only in moving beyond the senses can one pronounce pure judgments of subjective universality. The crucial question arises for Kant as to “whether therefore Taste is an original and natural faculty, or only the Idea of an artificial one yet to be acquired[...]; whether the ought, *i.e.*, the objective necessity of the confluence of the feeling of any one man with that of every other, only signifies the possibility of arriving at this accord.”<sup>6</sup> In order to buttress the possibility of this accord, Kant

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<sup>6</sup> Kant, p.95.

posits the existence of a *sensus communis*, or ‘common sense,’ grounded not on experience or on concepts, but rather on our feeling.<sup>7</sup>

But in so doing, Kant short-changes the senses: “Every interest spoils the judgment of taste and takes from its impartiality.”<sup>8</sup> We might be inclined to agree with Kant here, but as Pierre Bourdieu wryly points out, “In Kant’s text, disgust discovers with horror the common animality on which and against which moral distinction is constructed.”<sup>9</sup> This is one of the major shortcomings of aesthetics as generated and influenced by Kant: it is a ‘subjective but non-sensuous aesthetics,’ to borrow a phrase from Terry Eagleton, an aesthetics that tends to evacuate the body itself from the realm of judgments of taste once the sensation has been perceived.<sup>10</sup> Kant’s ‘subjective but non-sensuous aesthetics’ is one which, in privileging vision and the subsequent distancing implied between subject and object, largely excludes the haptic aspects of aesthetic judgments. Recall that for Spinoza, affect brings together sensation and cognition in a simultaneous feedback loop. Kant, however, immediately forecloses on the Spinozan refusal to draw a sharp distinction between body and mind, sensation and cognition. For Kant, the affective-sensual component of aesthetics is but a fleeting instance en route to an intellectualization of the experience. In the case of the *Analytic of the Sublime*, the

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<sup>7</sup> Kant, Section 22, *The necessity of the universal agreement that is thought in a judgment of taste is a subjective necessity, which is represented as objective under the presupposition of a common sense*: “In all judgments by which we describe anything as beautiful, we allow no one to be of another opinion; without however grounding our judgment on concepts but only on our feeling, which we therefore place at its basis not as a private, but as a common, feeling. Now this common sense cannot be grounded on experience; for it aims at justifying judgments which contain an *ought*. It does not say that every one *will* agree with my judgment, but that he *ought*” (p.94).

<sup>8</sup> Kant, p.72

<sup>9</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* (1979), translated by Richard Nice, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984, p.489.

<sup>10</sup> See Terry Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1990, p.21.

contemplation of threatening spectacles takes place from a safe distance, with the eye and ear outstripping the more ‘tactile’ senses, and abstraction outpacing feeling.<sup>11</sup>

The Kantian sublime is a sensation aroused in the perceiving subject when confronted by formlessness or boundlessness in nature.<sup>12</sup> Yet Kant does not dwell for very long on this sensation as *sense* or *feeling*, as something which *takes hold* of the perceiving subject, possibly even pre-empting the ability to render judgment on the sensation – or, in Spinozan terms, to develop ‘adequate ideas’ in the process of mastering the affects. Indeed, for Kant, “the feeling of the Sublime brings with it as its characteristic feature a *movement* of the mind bound up with the judging of the object, while in the case of the Beautiful taste presupposes and maintains the mind in *restful* contemplation.”<sup>13</sup> Though Kant emphasizes the distinction between *movement* and *restfulness*, it is only the *mind* that is moved, and then only in judgment. What is not made allowances for are experiences that move and agitate the *body*, to the point where judgment, at the very least, becomes impaired, if not impossible.<sup>14</sup>

The Yûshûkan is a museal space suffused with a sublime aesthetics, one that projects its forceful affective dynamics at a frequency geared to move the visitor before he or she has time to reflect on the experience of traversing the Yûshûkan’s galleries. To understand how a museal space such as the Yûshûkan affects its visitors, it behooves us to tarry with the very body that makes its way through museal space. Memorial sites and museums make use of visual

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<sup>11</sup> Cf. Kant’s well-known Section 28, entitled “Of Nature regarded as Might,” which constitutes part of the discussion on the dynamically sublime (pp.123-129). Where, for Kant, the visual sense leads almost directly to contemplation and reflection, the way in which I have been discussing the visual sees it as something instrumental in provoking and stimulating the sensating body in both conscious and pre-conscious ways.

<sup>12</sup> Kant, pp.102-103.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., pp.105-106 (emphasis in the original).

<sup>14</sup> For an interesting discussion of the themes of movement, motion, and transport and their relationship to emotion, see Jean-Luc Nancy, “The Sublime Offering,” in *Of the Sublime: Presence in Question* (1988), translated with an Afterword by Jeffrey S. Librett, Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1993, especially pp.36, 38-39, and 42-44. In Nancy’s formulation, the sublime ‘takes place’ not in its presentation (as is the case with the beautiful). Rather, its presentation is in its movement. “What gets removed or carried away [in this movement] is all form as such” (p.38).



vocabularies in combination with text and captions to create a narrative that unfolds in space, one that the visitor has to traverse physically as an essential component of his or her experience of the past. The act of moving through space is also the act of incorporating the spatialized narrative embodiment of ideas that either reinforce or contest a particular view of the past, or of national identity. One of the guiding questions when approaching any memorial site or museum is to what extent it conceals its agenda within the affective contours of its spatialized narrative, as opposed to the extent to which the curatorial staff of the museum or memorial site in question foregrounds how the selection of an exhibition's various elements represents a curatorial agenda or perspective.<sup>15</sup> This is why an attentiveness to space – and to the affected body traversing the space – is so important in understanding the ideological underpinnings of a given museum.

#### **HISTORIOGRAPHY AT THE YŪSHŪKAN: THE CLEAR TRUTH AND THE COOKED**

The Yūshūkan announces itself as a history museum whose mission it is to convey the truth about the past. But right from the entrance hall containing a restored locomotive from the Thai-Burma railway and a restored Mitsubishi 'Zero' aircraft, it is clear that the truth claims the museum puts forward rest on an interpretation of Japanese history as *martial* history that excludes other varieties of history. And an ambitious martial history it is, reaching back to the mythical origins of the Japanese nation, extolling the courage and bravery of the early emperors in forging the nation and recounting the exploits of the samurai in defending the nation, before moving on to the emergence of Japan as a modern, militarized nation-state. Conspicuously

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<sup>15</sup> Ironically, though, even if the Yūshūkan participates in a kind of thrill and elation in the face of Japan's military and technological triumphs, in a move that bears resemblance to Kant's intellectualization of the sublime the Yūshūkan effects an elision of the trauma of warfare by focusing its sanitized narrative on intact bodies (in the form of legions of photographs of young, smiling faces), and on polished and restored war materiel. This oscillation between the affective force of the Yūshūkan's spatialized narrative and its holding of trauma in abeyance is an unresolved tension that lies at the core of the exhibition.

absent in this recounting of the truth about Japan's past is a discussion of Japan's initial experiences with democracy in the Taishō period, and with postwar democratic constitutionalism in general.<sup>16</sup> In a witty evaluation of the Yūshūkan, Kamata Satoshi quips that the Yūshūkan presents not the 'clear truth' of Japan's modernity but rather the 'cooked truth' (*kaizan sareta*). As an example of a 'truth' that conveniently slips by the curatorial staff is the Nomonhan Incident of 1939, a skirmish on the border of Manchuria and Mongolia that resulted in the total defeat of the Japanese Sixth Army at the hands of Soviet armoured divisions. Illustrating what Kamata sharply observes as the Yūshūkan's predilection for a "never-lose sense of history" (*zettai makenai shikan*), the only mention of the incident is a misleading photograph of "Japanese soldiers shouting triumphant 'banzais!'" with no mention that the Japanese army had been roundly defeated.<sup>17</sup>

Suffice it to say that the claim to tell the truth about the past invokes all the trappings of a secular historical narrative laid out in chronological sequence, but with significant differences from what many, including the most jaded post-modernists, would see to be standard historical practice.<sup>18</sup> First and foremost is the problem of an ostensibly historical museum located on a religious site. Unsurprisingly, the historical perspective proffered by the Yūshūkan's exhibition space reflects the religious worldview of a Shinto shrine.<sup>19</sup> I mention this briefly now, but will return to the interruptions of secular time by sacred spaces that punctuate the itinerary of the

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<sup>16</sup> This latter point is not surprising, since those aligned with the 'Yasukuni view of history' typically oppose Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution as a check on Japanese sovereignty.

<sup>17</sup> See Kamata Satoshi, "Subete no sensō ga kokunan, kagai wo chokushi shinai 'Gyokusai Kinenkan,'" in *Shūkan Kinyōbi* (583), 25 November 2005, p.37.

<sup>18</sup> For a sense of the images and captions contained in each gallery, see the museum catalogue, *Yasukuni Jinja Yushukan: Zuroku*, Tokyo: Kindai Shuppansha, 2008, which assembles selected details of the galleries along with the text of the main interpretive panels introducing each gallery. Incidentally, the annexation of Korea is not even subject to justification within this narrative, appearing simply as a bloodless event which was the product of a meeting between representatives of Japan and Korea, the resulting agreement of which was beneficial to both parties. The narrative does not probe any deeper to consider reasons for Japan's presence in Korea. (See the museum catalogue, *Yasukuni Jinja Yushukan: Zuroku*, pp.50-51).

<sup>19</sup> See, among others, Yamada Akira, "Yasukuni Jinja Yūshūkan no tenji to sono rekishi ishiki," in *Nihonshi Kenkyū*, 533:1, 2007, p.65, and Kamata Satoshi, *op.cit.*, for a critique of this aspect of the Yūshūkan.

museum visit. Some might object that the Yûshûkan is not unique in this sense, for traces of the sacred creep into many a national monument or museum, or into any ritualized act of commemoration.<sup>20</sup> But flowing from this uneasy coexistence of an ostensibly secular mission to ‘tell the truth about the past’ with the presence of spirits to be venerated and placated<sup>21</sup> is what Yamada Akira rightly points out as “an indiscriminate mingling of myth and historical fact in the [Yûshûkan’s] exhibition space.”<sup>22</sup> What is more, the Yûshûkan presents without comment or alternative interpretations an exhibition of what many see to be a discredited view of history.

Hong Kal observes that right before the narrative proceeds to a description of Japan’s modern wars, a replica of the rooftop of the Ise Shrine reminds visitors of the significance of Shinto in the unbroken tradition of Japanese military prowess underwritten by sacrifice. Writes Kal:

[T]his link between the ancient Shintô shrine and the modern nation-state prepares visitors to understand that war is not a mere human tragedy but a sacred mission for the renewal of Japan and further to assure ‘the peace of Asia.’ The museum presents Japan’s unavoidable yet heroic actions to achieve pan-Asian peace in the face of the encroachment of Western powers.<sup>23</sup>

This linkage between (ancient) Shinto and the liberation and peace of Asia echoes and buttresses the ‘Yasukuni view’ of the Asia-Pacific war as a *holy* and defensive mission to protect Asia from Western imperialism. Paradoxically, this narrative arc revives pan-Asianism at the same time that it inscribes an ethnic nationalism into the fabric of the narrative flow. Other Asians are invoked only when it is convenient for the narrative of Asian liberation effected under Japanese

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<sup>20</sup> Ôhara Yasuo, for one, finds this unproblematic. See his guidebook to the Yûshûkan, *Yasukuni Jinja: Yûshûkan no sekai – Kindai nihon no rekishi tanbô*, Tokyo: Fusosha, 2003, p.96.

<sup>21</sup> In his essay, “Yasukuni and the Loss of Historical Memory,” John Breen remarks that the spirits of Yasukuni need to be placated, lending an additional layer of complexity to an ostensibly secular institution. The essay is contained in John Breen (ed.), *Yasukuni, the War Dead, and the Struggle for Japan’s Past*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2008.

<sup>22</sup> Yamada Akira, *op.cit.*, p.66. He cites the example of Emperor Jinmu’s existence introduced as historical fact in Gallery 2 (p.65).

<sup>23</sup> Hong Kal, “Commemoration and the Construction of Nationalism: War Memorial Museums in Korea and Japan,” *Japan Focus*, September 2008, p.20 (online journal: pagination approximate).

leadership. At almost all other times, this is a Japanese family history that attempts to forge a homogeneous national entity across millennia.

### **THE MECHANISMS OF MUSEAL ALCHEMY**

The stakes going forward are the ways in which museal space and representation ‘translate’ linguistic tropes and pictorial elements into affective dynamics.<sup>24</sup> This translation is part of a museal alchemy that transforms otherwise inert objects into objects imbued with meaning, and sometimes transforms a secular narrative into sacred space. The historiographical approach of the Yûshûkan outlined above rests on a particular rhetoric: the poesis of the ‘nation’ and the presentation of historical events as if the entire nation were behind the emperor, military, and fallen heroes.<sup>25</sup> Because the Yûshûkan’s narrative is told with objects installed in space – and, significantly, within the auratic setting of the museum – the manner in which objects and narratives are displayed and conveyed in museums adds to the rhetorical poesis of the nation. For example, the subdued lighting, cool colours, and the concentrated boutique lighting of certain features highlighted in Gallery 1, and the intoning voice synchronized with the modulated lighting fading from dim to dark in Gallery 9, transform inert objects such as the sword (Gallery 1) and the palanquin (Gallery 9) into auratic proximities and presences. Museum-goers, accustomed (or socialized) to comport themselves in a certain way within the walls of the

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<sup>24</sup> See Naoki Sakai’s “Introduction: Writing for Multiple Audiences and the Heterolingual Address,” in his *Translation and Subjectivity: On ‘Japan’ and Cultural Nationalism*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997, pp.1-17, for a thorough discussion of translation’s possibilities and limits.

<sup>25</sup> No mention is made of anti-war movements and the burdens borne by citizens during the Russo-Japanese War (Gallery 5), to say nothing of the destruction and hardships visited upon Japanese cities and citizens as a result of Japan’s actions in the Asia-Pacific War. See Yamabe Masahiko, “Yasukuni Jinja Yûshûkan no jôsetsu tenji to tokubetsuten ‘furusato no gokoku jinja’ ni tsuite,” *Nihonshi Kenkyû*, 533:1, 2007, pp.62-63, for this critique.

museum, may well adopt a critical, analytical, or skeptical stance vis-à-vis a particular exhibit,<sup>26</sup> yet they are nonetheless subject to unconscious, pre-conscious, or barely conscious impressions issuing forth from the objects, images, text, exhibits, and – crucially, for the sake of my argument – the contours of the space itself.

At this juncture, Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht's thoughts on the production of presence are apt. For him, the objective of our desire to cross the threshold between present and past is something that underlies all historical cultures, and is characterized by "the *presentification* of the past, that is, the possibility of 'speaking' to the dead or 'touching' the objects of their worlds."<sup>27</sup> Briefly touching on the current popularity of museums, Gumbrecht takes into account the spatial element of this presentification: "[T]he techniques of presentifying the past quite obviously tend to emphasize the dimensions of space – for it is in their spatial display that we are able to have the illusion of touching objects that we associate with the past."<sup>28</sup> An intensified version of this logic informs the decisions of the Yûshûkan's curatorial staff to install objects in a particular way and under particular conditions of (shifting) lighting, colour, and sound.<sup>29</sup>

Throughout his book on presence, Gumbrecht makes a generally convincing case for considering what lies beyond language and other signifying practices. Insofar as Gumbrecht remains attentive to a Heideggerian-inflected being-in-the-world, his ideas on presence are helpful in underlining the extent to which affective dynamics that have an impact on the human

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<sup>26</sup> See, among others, Annie Coombes, "Museums and the Formation of National and Cultural Identities," *Oxford Art Journal*, 11:2, 1988, and Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, theory, politics*, London and New York: Routledge, 1995.

<sup>27</sup> Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, *The Production of Presence: What Meaning Cannot Convey*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004, p.123 (emphasis in the original).

<sup>28</sup> Gumbrecht, p.123.

<sup>29</sup> In this connection, Jacques Rancière discusses how in the 'sentence-image' of the filmic montage the text represents the conceptual linking of actions. The image itself is the supplement of presence that imparts flesh and substance to the representational schema of the sentence-image. (See Jacques Rancière, *The Future of the Image*, trans. Gregory Elliot, London and New York: Verso, 2007, pp.43-55). For our purposes, Rancière's conceptualization maps onto the 'montage' that is the museum: the montage of image, object, and caption that constitutes the grammar of individual galleries in a museum, which in turn form semantic elements of the spatialized narrative.

sensorium circulate sometimes beyond, sometimes in parallel to, signifying systems. But at times Gumbrecht travels a bit far down the path of indulging in the past as ‘presence.’ At one point he writes that “one benefit of the capacity to let ourselves, quite literally, be attracted by the past under these conditions may lie in the circumstance that, by crossing the life world threshold of our birth, we are turning away from the ever-threatening and ever-present future of our own deaths.”<sup>30</sup> In this formulation, the past (figured as womb) becomes a refuge.

Gumbrecht is attracted by the past’s seeming ability to hold death in abeyance. But another reading is possible. Perhaps museums like the Yûshûkan are captivated by their version of the past due to an unexamined anxiety that Japanese citizens of the present and future might reject the version of history that the Yûshûkan offers up as *the* truth. Or maybe it has something to do with the possibility that contemporary Japanese might prefer the attraction of a culture and system not overlaid with the trappings of militarism and fascism dressed up in sublime sentiments. Gumbrecht continues: “A good reason [...] for letting the conjuring up of the past just happen is that any possible answer to the question of practical benefits will limit the range of modalities through which we can indulge in the past – and simply enjoy our contact with it.”<sup>31</sup> If this is a case for basking in the nostalgic company of personal memories, then the proposition is relatively harmless. But museums like the Yûshûkan, which also seek to conjure up aspects of the past as if that particular representation of the past were present and absolutely identical to Japanese history, can be adduced as arguments against too hasty of a desire to give oneself over to the pleasure (or elation, or disorientation) of contemplating a past made viscerally present.

As I have been suggesting, the particular manner of museal presentation exerts an enormous influence on how ‘sublime’ an object appears, and what kind of affective charge a

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<sup>30</sup> Gumbrecht, p.125.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p.125.

particular display might deliver. In presenting an institutional history that also explores the role of the Yûshûkan at different points in the early twentieth century, Kinoshita Naoyuki traces shifts over time both in what kind of content was displayed in the Yûshûkan, and also in the way in which these objects and articles were exhibited. The late nineteenth century marked a shift from the display of inert objects and war materiel captured during foreign campaigns against Taiwan and China to a narrativized display ordered along a suggested route that moved the viewer through space, and also moved the viewer to empathize or identify with a particular model or display. During a time of rising casualties due to increasingly frequent foreign campaigns, the Yûshûkan became a means of extolling the virtues of Japan's modern martial accomplishments to the 'kokumin' (the nation) while at the same time demonstrating to them that their sacrifices were not in vain.<sup>32</sup> The Meiji State thereby assumed the role of 'educating' the populace via the institution of the Yûshûkan, instilling a sense of pride through the visual experience of this newly born historical image of Japanese greatness in the Yûshûkan.<sup>33</sup>

Since the postwar reopening of the Yûshûkan in 1986, Kinoshita points out that there has been a gradual shift, culminating in the 2002 renovations and updating of the exhibition space, away from a focus on substantial articles (*busshitsu-teki na mono*) such as war materiel and soldiers' artifacts, and to photographs and testimonies of the soldiers themselves. Given the generational shift underway, Kinoshita argues that things and objects no longer exert much of a hold over the sentiments of those born well after the events of the mid-twentieth century.<sup>34</sup> Kinoshita raises the point that 'non-substantial things' (*hibusshitsu-teki na mono*) like photographs and written testimonies are more easily 'mediatized' and thus capable of being put into circulation beyond the reach of the physical site of the museum. Though inclined to express

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<sup>32</sup> Kinoshita Naoyuki, "Yûshûkan: 'Yasukuni' no myûjiamu," in *Gendai Shisô*, 33:9, August 2005, pp.234-235.

<sup>33</sup> Kinoshita, p.236.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p.239. In passing, it might be argued that the Shôwakan belies this assertion.

qualified agreement with these sentiments, I am less convinced regarding how Kinoshita frames the distinction between substantial and non-substantial objects. Also open to question is his notion that the overall trend in museum exhibition practices (witnessed not only at the Yûshûkan, but in the newly opened national memorial halls in Hiroshima and Nagasaki) toward a focus on photographic portraits of victims along with their testimonies is a more successful means of generating affect among museum visitors than other museal strategies of display. For my purposes, though I find no objection to Kinoshita's observation that photos and testimonies are more easily mediatized, and thus are able to circulate more freely beyond the confines of museal space, I still view both the photograph and the (written or recorded) testimony as a substantial materiality that generates a response in a viewer or visitor. In what follows, I will explore the immaterial dynamics produced by materiality, whether that materiality be image, object-relic, or space.

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Stepping back a bit, to the beginning of the Yûshûkan's narrative and, as it were, to the 'origin' of the samurai spirit, we get an immediate sense of how the ground has been prepared for the final apotheosis of the warrior spirit at the end of the suggested route. The visitor ascends a staircase, leaves the mundane bustle of the lobby, and enters into antiquity, the 'age of gods,' and the domain of the dead (Gallery 1). Upon entering this dimly lit gallery at the entrance to the Yûshûkan exhibits, the visitor is confronted by a sword bathed in a concentrated light that makes it appear to be hanging suspended by some unknown force. The force is the warrior spirit, the timeless essence of heroism, loyalty, and self-sacrifice that have shaped the nation. The lighting focuses attention on both the symbolism and materiality of the polished sword. Bearing witness to this primal scene symbolizing the 'forging' of the nation are scrolls mounted behind gossamer



metal screens in each of the four corners of the gallery, bearing the following evocative sentiments:

(Left of entrance, near corner): For the sovereign and the world, would I spare my life, when sacrificing it for them is so worthwhile? – Prince Munenaga

(Right of entrance, near corner): We shall die in the sea, we shall die in the mountains / In whatever way, we shall die beside the Emperor, / Never turning back. – Otomo no Yakamochi

(Right of entrance, far corner): The painful lives of those who cared for their country – piled up and up, protecting the land of Yamato – Mitsui Koushi

(Left of entrance, far corner): If one asks about the Yamato spirit of these islands, it is like the cherry blossoms that bloom in the morning sun. – Moto-ori Norinaga<sup>35</sup>

What we have here is an instance of how text has the potential to transform the object or image. In discussing inscription and its relationship to the transformation and translation of painting into words and the visible into the tactile, Jacques Rancière observes that “linguistic tropes change the status of the pictorial elements.”<sup>36</sup> If we substitute ‘objects and installations’ exhibited in museums for ‘pictorial elements,’ we get a sense of how the captioning regime of particular galleries and exhibits – the linguistic tropes – effect a transformative relationship on inert objects such as the sword or the palanquin in the Yûshûkan, or relics plucked from pre-war, wartime, and postwar everyday life and exhibited in the museal narrative of the Shôwakan.

Captioning follows a similar logic on the meta-level of the museum as well. As Yûshûkan and Yasukuni literature explicitly state, Yasukuni Shrine exists to console the spirits of those who became the cornerstone (*ishizue*) of early-modern Japan by staking their lives on the defense of country, locality, and family.<sup>37</sup> Within the confines of the Yûshûkan museum, visitors come to know of the ‘honourable sacrifice of the war dead,’ ‘feel’ their presence, be

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<sup>35</sup> These lines of poetry are translated into English at the Yûshûkan. Much of the wall text introducing the various galleries, and most of the captions accompanying the individual displays, are not.

<sup>36</sup> Rancière, *op.cit.*, p.81.

<sup>37</sup> See the interpretive panels in Gallery 1, and the “Introduction” in the Yûshûkan catalogue, *Yasukuni Jinja Yushukan: Zuroku*, Tokyo: Kindai Shuppansha, 2008, pp.4-5.

moved by their selfless heroism, and learn from their exemplary martyrdom.<sup>38</sup> Not only is the Yûshûkan a ‘presencing mechanism’ whereby the dead are projected back into the land of the living via consolation and mourning figured as remembrance; the Yûshûkan is active in producing the affective bond joining the living and the dead.

According to Kawamura Kunimitsu, the etymology of *tomurau* (to mourn, to offer condolences) conjoins mourning and the offering of condolences with visiting and communion. The act of mourning and offering condolences is thus an act of communing with spirits made virtually present.<sup>39</sup> It is on this basis that the Yûshûkan located within the precincts of the Yasukuni Shrine is able to produce a contiguity between the living and the dead, between the past and the present by way of its offering of condolences to the fallen heroes. Kawamura points out that the Yûshûkan attempts to link the contemporary visitor to the past via a dual bond. The homophone *chi-en* collapses together blood ties and spatial-geographic ties in the soldier who gave his life for family, locality, and nation. It is this *chi-en* that binds the contemporary Japanese visitor with the nation’s past via the blood sacrifice of his or her ancestor.<sup>40</sup> Together, Gallery 1 (Spirit of the Samurai), which introduces the martial virtues of bravery and courage, integrity and probity, and Gallery 2 (History of Japanese Military Traditions), which reinforces the linkages between ancestors, ancestral country, and the present ‘family’ of Japanese, set the tone for, and dictate the ideal comportment with respect to, the entire exhibition.

After being treated to a history of the samurai spirit from the time of Emperor Jinmu up until the Edo period, the visitor steps into the third gallery and is immediately confronted by a

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<sup>38</sup> *Yasukuni Jinja Yushukan: Zuroku*, Tokyo: Kindai Shuppansha, 2008, pp.4-5. See also Ôhara Yasuo, *Yasukuni Jinja: Yûshûkan no sekai – Kindai nihon no rekishi tanbô*, Tokyo: Fusosha, 2003.

<sup>39</sup> See Kawamura Kunimitsu, “Tomurai-ron e mukete,” in *Gendai Shisô*, 33:9, August 2005, pp.154-156 for a discussion of the etymology of *tomurau* (which means both to mourn and to offer condolences) from the archaic form of *tazuneru* (to visit – the archaic form is *taburau*).

<sup>40</sup> Kawamura, pp.148-149.

map of Asia in the late eighteenth century that traces the incursions of European colonial powers into the region. The enemy and the threat are clearly defined, and it will be up to the industriousness of the Meiji reformers to confront this threat. As a matter of fact, this seemingly innocuous visual element is one of the most important graphic elements of the visual narrative of the Yûshûkan, for it performs two tasks simultaneously. First, it confirms the linkage between the military and the modern nation-state while reinforcing the importance of the soldier as the ‘cornerstone’ (*ishizue*) of Japanese modernity. Second, the map conjures up the vague feeling of fear of Western dominance, sowing the seeds of an affect that will retroactively legitimate subsequent Japanese colonial incursions and aggressive warfare in Asia in the name of liberating Asia from Western imperialism.

Upon exiting the galleries charting the rise of modern Japan before and during the Meiji Era, the visitor comes upon a central space, a resting point *and* balance point in the itinerary that separates the rise of Meiji Japan as a modern nation-state from the wars of the late-nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries that would thrust Japan into the premier ranks of the imperialistic world powers. Though hovering outside of the temporal narrative of Japan’s rise as a modern nation-state, this imperial space is absolutely central to the narrative, so much so that I will bracket it for now and take it up in more detail below. Up until the imperial chamber, the mood is contemplative. The only sound one hears is the sound of other visitors talking and moving about. As the visitor leaves the sanctity of the imperial realm and returns to the temporal narrative, serious, somber music resonates in the distance with a stentorian voice-over recounting Japan’s exploits during the Russo-Japanese War. Crossing under the triumphal arch of Gallery 7, the visitor is swept up into the mood of restrained celebration amidst the flapping of the old imperial flag. Such a bold display of the old imperial Japanese flag can only be read as a

calculated move on the part of the curatorship to inspire the various generational cohorts that make up contemporary Japan with the intoxicating rush and elation of Japan's increasing military might and political power.<sup>41</sup>

The narrative that follows is an extremely tendentious rendition of events.<sup>42</sup> One would be tempted to write this off as the incoherent ramblings of a museum that purports to be a museum of history while at the same time being an integral part of a religious institution dedicated to the promotion of a particular version of history. However, this gallery presents an instance of 'hauntings,' not of the spirits of the war dead, but the 'spectral presence,' if you will, of the likes of Kobayashi Yoshinori, and other figures on the right affiliated with the Japan Society for History Textbook Reform and the Association of War-Bereaved Families (*Izokukai*). The gallery dedicated to the so-called 'China Incident' (that is, those events comprising the invasion of China and the Nanjing Massacre),<sup>43</sup> along with other galleries depicting the events of the Manchurian Incident as well as the road to Pearl Harbour, is a potent example of how viewpoints represented within the walls of the museum can migrate back and forth between the space of the museum and the broader public sphere through middle-school history textbooks such as the *Atarashii Rekishi Kyokasho* produced by the JSHTTR since 2001, and media such as Kobayashi's *Shin-gomanizumu* manga series, of which the 1998 *Sensōron* and 2005 *Yasukuniron* are a part.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> As we shall see in a later chapter on the Topography of Terror, the curatorship of this memorial site rejected out of hand the display of divisive symbols – such as the Nazi flag – even if properly historicized, for fear of the affective potential the flag might hold for latent or overt neo-Nazis.

<sup>42</sup> One example: throughout Galleries 11-15, the curatorship unapologetically makes use of the discredited term for the Asia-Pacific War, calling it the Dai-Tō-A Sensō, or Greater East Asian War (referencing, of course, the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere).

<sup>43</sup> In addition to the word, *Shina Jihen* (China Incident), to refer to Japan's invasion of China, the word used throughout the exhibition to refer to China and the Chinese is the derogatory term 'shina-jin.' (See *Yasukuni Jinja Yushukan: Zuroku*, pp.64-71).

<sup>44</sup> In the 2006 edition of the JSHTTR's textbook, the Nanjing Massacre – dubbed an 'incident' (*jiken*) – warrants but a footnote. The use of the word *jiken* not so subtly denies that a massacre took place. The footnote reads: "At that time

## THE RITUALS OF NATIONAL BELONGING: SPACE, AFFECT, INTERPELLATION

Just beyond the galleries charting the rise of modern Japan before and during the Meiji Era, the visitor comes upon a sacred space in the honoured position at the rear center of the museum, a gallery space which, conspicuously enough, is not numbered, an apotheosis of the Imperial Line that stands beyond measurable time. What, and more importantly *how*, this gallery dedicated to the imperial line signifies is rather curious, given that, for the most part, the Yûshûkan adheres to a narration of Japan's history according to the codes of a secular temporality. This gallery, occupying the center of the building which houses the museum, interrupts the temporal flow of the narrative in an uncanny fashion. Suspended in a timeless, mythical 'time-of-the-now' (*Jetztzeit*) of the imperial line, this nick *in* time is the opening through which the 'emperor-redeemer' makes his triumphal entry and floods the continuum of empty chronological time in the rest of the Yûshûkan.<sup>45</sup> This temporal suspension of the sequence of events appears to be meant to instill in the visitor a reverential awe in the presence of the redemptive force of the imperial line.

In this sacred space in which the sun's rays spill through the stained-glass ceiling and "fill the gallery with a brilliant radiance," a statue of the Meiji Emperor, saviour of Japan and father of the modern nation-state, flanked on either side by images of his progeny, the Taishô Emperor and the Shôwa Emperor, faces the eternal father, Emperor Jinmu, flanked by the 1882 Imperial Rescript to Soldiers and Sailors on one side, and the 1890 Imperial Rescript on Education on the other. Near the exit of the gallery, a plaque bears the following inscription:

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[when Chiang Kai-shek quit Nanjing for Chongqing], the Chinese suffered a large number of military and civilian casualties at the hands of the Japanese military. This has been called the 'Nanjing Incident.' However, questions and debatable points about the numbers of victims and the actual conditions surrounding their deaths have emerged from a scrutiny of the sources. To this day, several opinions and interpretations mark the ongoing dispute over the nature of this incident." (Cited in Fujioka Nobukatsu et.al., *Atarashii rekishi kyôkasho*, Tokyo: Fusosha, 2006, p.199).

<sup>45</sup> The inspiration for this reading is, of course, Walter Benjamin's essay, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," in *Illuminations*, ed. with an Introduction by Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn, New York: Schocken Books, 1968.

The war dead are mourned and honored with the greatest solemnity at Yasukuni Jinja, into which flow the reverence and gratitude of the Emperor *and all the citizens of Japan*.<sup>46</sup>

The panel continues by describing how, after the Asia-Pacific War, princesses came to serve as calligraphers, entering the names of the war dead into the Imperial Register of Souls (*reijibojôsho*). This service “demonstrated the strong unity between the imperial family and the people in their reverence for Japan’s war heroes.”<sup>47</sup> From this central space, the spectral presence of the Emperor radiates outwards and pervades the galleries of the Yûshûkan and beyond. This totalizing view of national identity interpellates *all* citizens of Japan without appeal or exception; it also parallels the issue of the enshrinement in Yasukuni of all who fought for Japan, whether they were forced to, as was the case with colonized Koreans and Taiwanese, or whether or not they agreed with the war effort.

The organizing of the historical narrative around this central, sacred realm nestled in the exalted space at the rear and center of the architectural structure is not inconsequential. Already replicating the visitor’s passage from the profane space of the city outside the *torii* gate and into the realm of ritualized compartment of Yasukuni, the crossing of the threshold into this special imperial space recessed in the center-rear of the Yûshûkan building and outside of historical time constitutes a dual ritual.<sup>48</sup> Poised between the temporal signposts of the Meiji Restoration of 1868 and the imperial Sino-Japanese War of 1895, it is the threshold through which national history passes en route to its ritualistic rebirth as a full-fledged modern nation capable of challenging the western powers. This ritual (re)birth is recapitulated by the visitor who, by

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<sup>46</sup> See *Yasukuni Jinja Yushukan: Zuroku*, p.34 for the Japanese text upon which this English translation is based. (This interpretive panel is one of the panels that is translated into English for the benefit of ‘foreign’ visitors). The emphasis is mine, and refers to the phrase: *kokumin subete no sonsô to magokoro ga ...*

<sup>47</sup> *Yasukuni Jinja Yushukan: Zuroku*, Tokyo: Kindai Shuppansha, 2008, p.34. The word which ‘unity’ translates – *ittai* – has strong connotations of ‘one body,’ ‘as a whole.’

<sup>48</sup> For the heterogeneity of sacred and secular space, see Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (1915), trans. Joseph Ward Swain, London: The Free Press, 1965, p.54.

traversing the spatialized narrative of Japanese history from its origins, temporarily leaves the profane world of historical narrative and participates in the an awe-inspiring initiation into the *mysterium tremendum* of imperial power and the ‘beautiful’ (*usuwashii*) rush of national belonging.<sup>49</sup> This ritual of citizenship is a process that joins the nation, emperor, and citizen as one body (*ittai*) in mourning and commemorating the deaths of the soldier-spirits who have given their lives for the nation, with the visitor emerging on the other side of this sublime experience of the ‘emperor-redeemer’ of Japan ready to participate in the remaining narrative of war and commemoration of beautiful-sublime sacrifice as a full-fledged member of the nation.

Thus primed by this rite of passage, the visitor is prepared for his or her next ritualized encounter with dead forebears. Located in between galleries depicting the Russo-Japanese War and the Manchurian Incident and those depicting the so-called ‘China Incident’ of 1937 and the subsequent outbreak of the ‘Dai-tô-a Sensô’ is another space that exists outside of the temporal narrative. Here, the lighting becomes more subdued, almost dark, and a voice explains the significance of honouring the war dead at Yasukuni Shrine. In front of the Sacred Palanquin is one of the Imperial Registers bearing the names of soldiers enshrined at Yasukuni Shrine. In this space, the visitor summons the spirits and feels their presence before continuing his or her journey through galleries depicting Japan’s most recent armed hostilities.<sup>50</sup>

## MARGINAL SPACE IN DIFFERENT PLACES

As a means of probing the affective dynamics of space, it is worth briefly comparing the Yûshûkan with a space like the Jewish Museum in Berlin, where the qualities of the narrative

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<sup>49</sup> Recall the passage above in which the calligraphic work of the princesses “demonstrated the strong unity between the imperial family and the people in their reverence for Japan’s war heroes.” *Yasukuni Jinja Yushukan: Zuroku*, p.34. Left out of the English translation of the gallery’s wall text is the reference to this being a beautiful, elegant (*usuwashii*) state of affairs.

<sup>50</sup> *Yasukuni Jinja Yushukan: Zuroku*, pp.62-63.

interruptions contrast sharply with those of the Yûshûkan. Before proceeding, it would be useful to recall Tony Bennett's formulation of the assimilatory aspects of museal display. Insofar as the museum visitor's experience is embodied by way of their physical movement through an exhibitionary space, the interspersing of sacred space within a temporal narrative heightens the affective charge of a historical museum that uneasily inhabits the sacred space of Yasukuni shrine.<sup>51</sup> The traversing of space is thus linked to an aesthetics of reception. Recalling Brian Massumi's characterization of affect together with Bennett's formulation, the visitor to a museum or memorial site 'infolds' its context in the act of passing through the exhibition space.<sup>52</sup> Though the narrative interruptions effected by sacred space at the Yûshûkan do not necessarily cancel or negate the historical narrative, the sacred spaces nonetheless hold the historical narrative in abeyance. In this ritualized space, historical distance collapses, and it is *as if* the spirits of the fallen heroes are present.

In contrast to this collapsing of historical distance, Daniel Libeskind's narrative interruptions inserted into the architectonic substratum of the Jewish Museum eschew the affective dynamics of proximity. Libeskind prefers, instead, to produce a kind of empty space that invites both a perception of the weight of the Holocaust's interruption of Jewish-German history, and critical reflection on the events represented in the museum. The architecture of the museum refuses a nostalgic narrativization of several centuries of Jewish history in Germany by

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<sup>51</sup> Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum*, p.6. Yi-Fu Tuan also concerns himself with how we experience our environment. In a chapter entitled "Architectural Space and Awareness" in his *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977, Tuan notes that "architectural space [...] can define [...] sensations and render them vivid. [...] [T]he built environment also clarifies social roles and relations. People know better who they are and how they ought to behave when the arena is humanly designed rather than nature's raw stage" (p.102). Tuan adds that "[a]rchitecture 'teaches.' [...] In the absence of books and formal instruction, architecture is a key to comprehending reality" (p.102).

<sup>52</sup> Brian Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002, p.30. For a wonderfully eclectic phenomenological discussion about the qualities of different kinds of space, see Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space* (1958), forward by John R. Stolgoe, trans. Maria Jolas, Boston: Beacon Press, 1994. As an auxiliary of psychoanalysis, Bachelard puts forward 'topoanalysis' as a means of describing how we experience different places, from the enclosed space of cellars and the cluttered spaces of garrets, to chests, wardrobes, nooks, and corners.



interrupting the linear narrative with Libeskind's much-commented-upon axes and voids.<sup>53</sup> For Libeskind, the affective dynamics of his architectonics present a bold statement, a challenge to the curators charged with designing a temporally-unfolding exhibition to fit within Libeskind's jagged spaces, non-square planes, and obstacles to the flow of the narrative presented by the void-towers set in the path of visitors.<sup>54</sup>

Built into the main axis that traverses the length of the museum are empty shafts sealed off from, yet physically disrupting, both the temporal flow of the exhibition and the visitor's movement through the galleries. The existence of the voids is an impediment, one that forces the visitor to stop and reflect, rather than continue headlong through the itinerary. The voids are empty, devoid of any textual or visual cues that would guide interpretation or serve to 'make present' the spirits of the dead.<sup>55</sup> Rather than filling both present moment and space with the immediate presence of fallen heroes from the past, as is the case at the Yūshūkan, the voids of the Jewish Museum are defamiliarizing, establishing an affective contact zone with the suffering of the Holocaust that yet respects and maintains the historical distance between the immediate experience of suffering in the past, and the represented, mediated experience in the present moment of the museum visit. In this way, the voids invite reflection upon the horrors of the Holocaust while at the same time resisting a dubious identification with the victims who perished under horrible circumstances at a time removed from that of the museum experience. The

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<sup>53</sup> Among the many publications commenting on Libeskind's Jewish Museum in Berlin, see Sabine Bertram and Kolja Kohlhoff (eds.), *Leerzeit: Wege durch das Jüdische Museum Berlin*, Berlin: Museumspädagogischer Dienst Berlin, 2000, and Bernhard Schneider, *Daniel Libeskind: Jewish Museum Berlin: Between the Lines*, Munich and New York: Prestel, 1999.

<sup>54</sup> *Baukunst (3)*, Arte documentary on Daniel Libeskind, 2002-2003. (DVD available at the Jewish Museum archive).

<sup>55</sup> That said, a whole range of publications starting from the museum's guidebooks and pamphlets, through critical commentaries on the museum's architecture, to the many writings by and interviews with Daniel Libeskind, shed light on possible interpretations of the voids. Importantly in the case of these publications (and in contrast to the publications of the Yūshūkan), no single authoritative interpretation is imposed on the reader. The main point, however, is that although the informed visitor may approach a visit to the Jewish Museum having read any number of these publications or pamphlets, the voids themselves offer no immediate suggestions on how to interpret one's own experience of these voids, thus leaving a space open for reflection.

disorienting spatial layout of the Jewish Museum along with the voids built into its architectonic axes constitute an acknowledgment of the difficulties inherent in representing the Holocaust. Similarly, the darkness of the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe's subterranean information center and precariously uneven roof line mirroring the undulating layout of the field of heavy stele above 'represents' this difficulty of representation. The effect is defamiliarizing in a critically reflexive way.<sup>56</sup>

Returning to the ritualistic dimensions of the museum experience, Jennifer Hansen-Glucklich describes how visits to Holocaust museums are ritual re-enactments of a narrative in time – reenactments whose aim is remembrance itself. Combining the writings of Emile Durkheim and Mircea Eliade on the sacred with Victor Turner's writings on ritual and liminality in a discussion of Holocaust museums, Hansen-Glucklich describes how the ritual subject-participant (the 'passenger,' in Turner's parlance) enters "an in-between space ritually. Space [...] is created anew through ritual, and creates a new social identity – a *communitas* – among its participants."<sup>57</sup> At the Yūshūkan, the ritual of temporarily inhabiting and traversing sacred space also results in the production of a *communitas* – but to different political effect.

To explore this political effect, I would like, firstly, to suggest that the sacred interruptions of the Yūshūkan's narrative-historical flow are synecdoches of Yasukuni's sacred function within and set apart from the profane space of Tokyo surrounding it. In the same way that crossing the threshold of the *torii* separating the Yasukuni shrine precinct from the city

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<sup>56</sup> The spatial layout of the Topography of Terror's permanent exhibition contrasts with the disorienting space and deep, fathomless voids of the Jewish Museum, with the oppressive darkness and claustrophobia of the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe's information center, and with the sublimely sacred spaces interrupting the temporal narrative at the Yūshūkan. One could go so far as to argue that the Topography of Terror's open and flowing spatial layout in an opaque glass cube affording a view (albeit obscured) out on to the terrain and city beyond mirrors a faith in the document as a window onto the past.

<sup>57</sup> Jennifer Hansen-Glucklich, "Evoking the Sacred: Visual Holocaust Narratives in National Museums," in *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies*, 9:2, July 2010, p.223. Here, Hansen-Glucklich advances an argument similar to Carol Duncan's thoughts on how the museum frames the rituals of citizenship, with space cordoned off and reserved for contemplation and reflection.

interrupts the flow of everyday life and prepares the visitor to comport him or herself appropriately in this rarified space dedicated to commemorating those who sacrificed their lives for the nation, the sacred spaces punctuating the already-sanctified national historical narrative of the Yûshûkan demand a similar receptive comportment in and of these spaces. But unlike this affective contact zone that respects the distinction between the ‘here-then’ and the ‘here-now,’ the Yûshûkan produces a thick space of proximity and immediacy, one that does not allow the metaphorical margin of space (and time) necessary for self-reflexive contemplation. The effect is a community predicated on *feeling* the presence of the guardian-spirits of the nation, on the *feeling* of an affective and ineluctable communal bond beyond the bounds of narrative discursivity.

As this last statement suggests, a metaphoric dimension rounds out this already admittedly metaphoric description of the material aspects of sacred and secular space in the museum. Historicity is predicated on the need of distance for interpretation. Yet the Yûshûkan effects a collapse of historical distance, and erases any temporal margin or space for reflection and contemplation. The experience-effect is an immediate *Erlebnis* of gods and heroes, moving and ecstatic. But even in those spaces given over explicitly to contemplation in the Yûshûkan, such as Gallery 9, the margin for any dialogic reflection upon the significance of the gallery within the space of the narrative, or the narrative within the context of postwar Japanese history, is constrained by the combined force of the captions, lighting, sound, and materiality of the palanquin – all of which work, explicitly, to call forth the presence of the dead spirits.<sup>58</sup> On a more general level, the suggested time for visiting the galleries of the museum leave enough of a margin to be moved and affected by the exhibits, but not enough ‘breathing room’ for

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<sup>58</sup> As I have noted above, this is not peculiar to the Yûshûkan alone. The Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe also sets a particular contemplative tone for its visitors.

reflection.<sup>59</sup> Time to feel, but not enough time to think. The result is a questionable ‘Erlebnis-effect’ founded on a direct appeal to the emotions.<sup>60</sup>

## HISTORY IN A SUBLIME KEY

Whether it be the sword displayed at the outset of the narrative, highlighted by boutique lighting to give it the effect of a mysterious power emanating from within the object, whether it be the displays of Japan’s meteoric military rise to confront the West or the display of firepower in the Grand Hall, or whether it be the sacred spaces that punctuate the narrative flowing forth from warrior origins, the atmospherics (sound, lighting, space) of the Yûshûkan’s galleries evoke wonder by attempting to convey the sublime virtues undergirding warfare – virtues unseen but felt.<sup>61</sup> The preceding discussion of the atmospherics of the galleries brings us back to our earlier discussion of the aestheticization of violence and death in warfare. The Yûshûkan presents us with examples of a mathematical sublime and a technological sublime, both of which converge in a warrior sublime that serves to interpellate Japanese citizen-subjects.

After exiting Gallery 15 decriing the Tokyo Trial and detailing the plight of the soldiers detained in Siberia, the visitor enters upon three successive galleries of photographs of soldiers along with displays of their personal effects interspersed with testimony before exiting into the Grand Hall displaying military armaments. For Kinoshita Naoyuki, such an exhibition of

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<sup>59</sup> Pamphlets at the entrance gate of the museum suggest a visiting time of 90 minutes.

<sup>60</sup> Stefanie Endlich’s critique of the ‘questionable *Erlebnis*-effects’ of some of the submissions to the 1983-1984 Topography of Terror design competition is applicable here as well. See Stefanie Endlich, “Über die Schwierigkeit, sich den NS-Geschichte durch Kunst zu nähern,” in Jörg Huber, Martin Heller, and Hans Ulrich Beck (eds.), *Imitationen – Nachahmung und Modell: Von der Lust am Falschen*, Basel: Stroemfeld/Roter Stern, 1989.

<sup>61</sup> In his essay, “Resonance and Wonder,” (in Ivan Karp and Stephen D. Lavine (eds.), *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museal Display*, Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991), Stephen Greenblatt terms resonance “the power of the displayed object to reach out beyond its formal boundaries to a larger world, to evoke in the viewer the complex, dynamic cultural forces from which it has emerged and for which it may be taken by a viewer to stand” (p.42). By contrast, wonder represents “the power of the displayed object to stop the viewer in his or her tracks, to convey an arresting sense of uniqueness, to evoke an exalted attention” (p.42).

photographs of the deceased and displays of their articles serves no discernible purpose.<sup>62</sup>

Although Kinoshita recognizes that photographs of individual soldiers confront the spectator with questions that subvert the Yûshûkan's predominant narrative of heroic sacrifice, he regrets that poignant questions such as what a soldier might have been thinking at the moment of his death are stifled by all those other photographs mounted above and below and to the right and to the left of him. I would agree with Kinoshita's sentiments up to a point, but I would like to suggest something different.

The Yûshûkan photo portrait gallery does, in fact, represent an attempt to combat the impersonality of death in warfare with the images and testimonies of those who fought, but the photo gallery is simultaneously humanizing and de-personalizing. Paradoxically, the mounting of the photographs in eighty-six groups of one hundred-and-twenty soldiers achieves the 're-territorialization' of the primacy of the nation-state. What I mean is this: the individual is simultaneously represented and made present, but is immediately subsumed visually into a totalized mass, a veritable army division of photos, mounted en masse with a singular identity. No longer individual, the body is returned to his unit or platoon, taking up his position anew alongside other bodies constituting *one* body fighting in the name of the emperor.

We are not far here from a fascist aesthetic of decomposition of the individual and recomposition en masse.<sup>63</sup> The effect upon the viewer is that of a visually unrelenting numerical

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<sup>62</sup> See Kinoshita Naoyuki, "Yûshûkan: 'Yasukuni' no myûjiamu," p.239.

<sup>63</sup> Probably the most well-known analysis of this "transformation of classes into masses and concomitant elimination of all group solidarity" (p.xxxii) issues from the pen of Hannah Arendt. In the introductory chapter to Part III of *Origins of Totalitarianism* (1948), New York and London, Harcourt, 1985, Arendt defines totalitarian movements as a "mass organizations of atomized, isolated individuals" (p.323), and details the process whereby Stalin transformed classes into a classless mass society. Confronting the condition of atomization that gave rise to 'the standards of the mass man,' she writes that these standards were "determined not only and not even primarily by the specific class to which he had once belonged, but rather by all-pervasive influences and convictions which were tacitly and inarticulately shared by all classes of society alike" (p.314). Once reduced to the condition of atomization, the "mass of generally dissatisfied men" (p.315), "cynical and bored in the face of death" (p.316) easily succumbed to the

sublime, reinforced by the displays of martial grandeur in the nearby Armaments Hall. The individual visitor is folded into this mass as well, insofar as the mass of photographs addresses the contemporary visitor en masse, as a mass of Japanese, seemingly saying “remember my/our sacrifice, for I/we died for (all of) you.” As the words of Ôhara Yasuo’s guidebook entry on the photo galleries state: “Our era was built on the deaths of those who came before us. No matter how much times change, this one fact remains permanent.”<sup>64</sup> The interpellatory force is clear.

Another reading is also possible. This atomized and subsequently mass-reproduced face of Japan is a young, healthy and intact face. The contemplation of this sublime force/face displaces the violence and elides the trauma at the origin of postwar Japan’s prosperity. In conveying sublime virtues unseen but felt, the Yûshûkan banishes images of visceral violence and suffering. In place of the obliterated memory of the trauma of war experience, defeat, and occupation, the Yûshûkan offers up a narrative that fetishizes combatants as heroes, and fetishizes patriotism and self-sacrifice: war as a noble undertaking. One set of affects is substituted for the other. Rather than the revulsion produced by images of pain and suffering, the Yûshûkan substitutes sublimated affects of pride and heroism, affects of transport (*ek-stasis*) calculated to move the visitor in favour of the Yûshûkan’s elevated and noble narrative of martial history purged of pain and suffering.<sup>65</sup> Representing yet another example of museal alchemy, any residual trauma is dissolved in the narrative of heroism, fortitude, and self-sacrifice.

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fascination with demagoguery and the comfort of the movement and become willing to sacrifice themselves for a cause (pp.305-309).

<sup>64</sup> Ôhara Yasuo, *Yasukuni Jinja: Yûshûkan no sekai – Kindai nihon no rekishi tanbô*, Tokyo: Fusosha, 2003, p.44.

<sup>65</sup> On *ek-stasis*, see Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, “Sublime Truth,” in *Of the Sublime: Presence in Question* (1988), trans. with an Afterword by Jeffrey S. Librett. Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1993, pp.94-96.

As Seki Hitomi expresses the irony, loss of life and suicidal death are remembered not for their tragic and visceral violence, but rather as heroic sacrifice.<sup>66</sup> Seki takes particular umbrage at the equation of loyalty with dying for the modern nation-state, and with the ritualization of this celebration of loyalty in a museum that is part of a shrine. In dubious fashion, this ritualization mingles the ‘sacrifice’ of the soldiers with the ‘sacrifice’ of Okinawans forced to commit suicide by Japanese troops during the Battle of Okinawa, flattening the meanings of these deaths into a uniform death in the name of the Japanese nation. Also of note is the fact that those who fought against the modern nation-state – such as Saigô Takamori and the others who fell during the Boshin Civil War of 1868-1869 – are not enshrined at Yasukuni or remembered in the Yûshûkan. In keeping with Seki’s identification of loyalty being at the heart of the Yûshûkan, it emerges to what extent the Yûshûkan is less about the commemoration of a timeless heroism than it is about the enshrinement and perpetuation of a modern nation-state-centered ideology – in short, an ‘invented tradition.’

In calling forth the relationship between technology and Japan’s modernity, the glistening metal and clean lines of the restored military hardware in the entrance foyer and in the Grand Hall also participate in this displacement of the visceral in which violence is only ever hinted at. Ôhara’s Yûshûkan guidebook makes explicit the linkages between technological prowess and aesthetics. The material *display* of prowess is a kind of intermingling of the beautiful (form at the basis of technology and design) and sublime (courage symbolized by the display) that produces the affect of awe and wonder in the spectator. As Ôhara’s guidebook reads:

At the base of technology lies beauty. Technology also produces aesthetic forms. From the old times of the Nara and Heian eras, the Japanese have been a people that excel at the industrial arts. The meticulous attention paid to both manufacturing craftsmanship (*monozukuri*) and an aesthetic consciousness has

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<sup>66</sup> See Seki Hitomi, “Heiwa no jidai ni tsutaeru tatakai no rekishi jinja no ‘sensôkan’ ni uzumaki sanpi,” *Yomiuri Weekly*, August 21-28 2005, pp.100-102.

given birth to several masterpieces that have inspired people with courage and lent the ages their particular colorings. It is this inheritance – highly efficient Japanese technological prowess – that is on display at the Yûshûkan.<sup>67</sup>

Machinery such as the Mitsubishi ‘Zero-52’ dominating the entrance foyer of the museum gives expression to this ‘beautiful form’ of Japanese technology. With the guns, cannons, torpedoes, and various special attack-force crafts on display nearby in the Great Hall, this beautiful form of manufacturing craftsmanship gives way to sublime fire power. This comingling of a past ‘military-technological sublime’ projected out onto an open future at the end of the museum’s historical narrative serves to reinforce the injunction to venerate the war dead and look to them as exemplars of how to conduct oneself in the face of an increasingly uncertain future. Indeed, in the open space of the Grand Hall, the spirit of these courageous soldiers embodied by the war machinery on display dwarfs the contemporary visitor. In the absence of textual commentary, the sublime display of power channeling the martial valour of the fallen soldiers along with the power of the emperor exerts its attraction at the same time that it leaves the visitor in an affective state of being overwhelmed. As Yamada Akira asserts, the lack of commentary in the Great Hall contributes to an affirmation of war transmitted via a manufactured chauvinistic ideology.<sup>68</sup> This sublime display of technological prowess contained within this ideology aestheticizes death, and carries the audience along with the force of its interpellation, affirming all that Japan did in its modern wars, even in the face of failure and defeat.

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<sup>67</sup> Ôhara Yasuo, *Yasukuni Jinja: Yûshûkan no sekai – Kindai nihon no rekishi tanbô*, p.8. In the guidebook, this particular section is entitled “Meet the Yûshûkan,” with the introductory text printed against the backdrop of the Mitsubishi ‘Zero’ aircraft on display in the entrance foyer of the museum.

<sup>68</sup> See Yamada, *op.cit.*, p.67. Interestingly, Yamada castigates the Yûshûkan for failing even as a purely military museum, for the exhibits express no notion of the genealogy of military weaponry or of the development of military technology.



## REPRESENTATION AND INTERPELLATION: RITUALS OF CITIZENSHIP, MECHANISMS OF EXCLUSION

Buried in the depths of Ôhara's guidebook introducing the Yûshûkan is a curious yet telling little advertisement for membership in the 'Friends of the Yûshûkan.' The association targets students under twenty-five years of age with the motto, "learn the true meaning of mourning (*tsuitô*) and of modern Japanese history."<sup>69</sup> Under the auspices of the Shrine Worship Society formed in 1998, the advertisement conveys the importance of reverence, worship, and mourning to contemporary Japanese society.<sup>70</sup> Lamenting the forecast decrease in the number of worshippers at the shrine, the advertisement calls upon the youth to engage in the transmission of a 'correct' version of the past as war survivors and their bereaved pass on in increasing number. In stark contrast to memorial sites as different as the Topography of Terror and the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum, in terms of what constitutes a 'correct' version of history the curatorship of the Yûshûkan seems to aim not at stimulating dialogue, but rather at directing thinking about the past.

The programmed sequences and ceremonial spaces of the Yûshûkan are installed in such a way as to impart a 'correct' version of Japanese history, one torn from the clutches of liberal-progressive 'masochistic' history. In traversing the space of the Yûshûkan, the visitor ritually experiences the unfolding of Japanese history. Echoing Durkheim, Carol Duncan notes that "ritual is often regarded as transformative: it confers identity or purifies or restores order to the world through sacrifice, ordeal, or enlightenment."<sup>71</sup> In a community rent by defeat, the

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<sup>69</sup> Ôhara, *op.cit.*, p.126.

<sup>70</sup> The Japanese name of the Shrine Worship Society is 'Sûkei Hôsan Kai,' which translates very awkwardly into 'the society for helping out with the shrine duties of showing honour and reverence.'

<sup>71</sup> Carol Duncan, "Art Museums and the Ritual of Citizenship," in Ivan Karp and Stephen D. Lavine (eds.), *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museal Display*, Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991, p.92.

Yûshûkan restores order. Answering Katô Norihiro's call to draw together a national subjectivity of mourning, the Yûshûkan forges a nation on the foundation of mythic sacrifice. By traversing the combination of temporal narrative and sacred space, the visitor, too, vicariously undergoes the ordeals of Japanese history, and is redeemed by the sacrifice of his or her forebearers.

In short, in so doing the museum visitor experiences the past as if it were present, immediately, and feels it (before reflecting upon it) as a near-mystical experience of a bond with the nation via the pathos of suffering heroes who had given themselves for the benefit of the contemporary spectators. In the process, the visitor is transformed – into a Japanese citizen in the Yasukuni mould. Underscoring the linkages between affect and interpellation, this ritual *process* is embodied through participation, lending support to Duncan's assertion that "the public museum [...] makes visible the public it claims to serve."<sup>72</sup> Traversing the itinerary of the museum together with other members of the public traversing the same space "produces the public as a visible entity by literally providing it with a defining frame and giving it something to do."<sup>73</sup> The museum visitor sees him or herself mirrored both in the museal displays, and in the group of visitors visiting the museum. In addition, the individual museum visitor is dually interpellated – by the exhibition itself, and by the 'visible public entity' that is both moulded by and models the museum's claims regarding what it means to be a member of a particular group, ethnicity, or nation.

In positing the Yûshûkan as a strong example of this mechanism of interpellation, I do not intend to deny that museums such as the German Historical Museum in Berlin or the *Haus der Geschichte* in Bonn do not also consciously 'put the nation on display' to be admired by visitors who are in turn shaped by this display. If there is a difference, it lies in the extent to

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<sup>72</sup> Duncan, "Art Museums and the Ritual of Citizenship," p.93.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.93-94. We will explore how this process is operative at the Shôwakan, as well as at the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, which puts forward the virtue of atonement in its display.

which certain aspects of a nation's past – such as heroic sacrifice – structure the process of interpellation. In addition, though those responsible for the current iteration of the Topography of Terror resist the kinds of interpellative mechanisms that aim to produce a particular kind of patriotic national subject, the Topography of Terror is invested in the formation of a new kind of German 'post-national' subjectivity. If this sounds curiously paradoxical, it is because a productive tension lies at the heart of the Topography of Terror's simultaneous rejection of nationalism and acceptance of responsibility as contemporary Germans for crimes perpetrated by Germans.

Of import when considering the relative interpellatory force a museum exerts on its visitors is the question of intended audience. Some museums aim at a restricted audience (almost exclusively Japanese, in the case of the Yûshûkan and Shôwakan, or predominantly German, in the case of the *Haus der Geschichte* in Bonn) as opposed to a more generalized audience (Germans, Jews of varying nationalities, international tourists in the case of memorial sites such as the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe or the Topography of Terror). The degree to which a museum aims at a restricted or generalized audience has an effect on how the mechanisms of interpellation activate certain affective dynamics of experience. The Yûshûkan evokes a strong bond with the nation by strengthening the metonymic links between the nation's past and the contemporary Japanese visitor via the presencing mechanisms I have discussed, such as the imperial sanctum and the gallery displaying the palanquin. Solidarity is claimed on the basis of a timeless essence that is assumed to be prediscursively and naturally given – capable of being experienced and felt by all of Japanese nationality. Of course, part of the museum's interpellative task is to point this out to the visitor by holding up the mirror of the nation in the form of the exhibition. The spatialized visual narrative 'produces' subjectivity, and

in turn this subject becomes receptive to the affective cues embedded in the space of the exhibition.

What motivates this all – the Yûshûkan, the JSHTTR, Kobayashi, and other exponents of the Yasukuni view of history – is a kind of ‘national honour conservatism’ that relies on unchecked affect as a driving force. Based on the positing of a shared ancestry reaching back into the mists of time, and through a highly selective remembering and representation of the Asia-Pacific War, the Yûshûkan creates the illusion of a seamless history of the nation’s ostensible military patriotism from Jinmu down to the present. Demonstrating the linkages between the material culture of museal display and national identity formation, the ‘exhibitionary complex’ (*pace* Tony Bennett) of the Yûshûkan creates an authoritative museum-effect in the strong sense.<sup>74</sup> Its literature proclaims that ‘this is a history museum,’ and what you, the visitor, will see and experience within these walls *is* Japan’s past. And you will come to recognize yourself in and through these exhibits as a member of the Japanese nation. The slick production values of the displays along with the museal strategy of presenting ‘unadulterated facts’ is, on the affective level, geared toward an ease of understanding.<sup>75</sup> What is not contained in the exhibition is valued as marginal at best. No multi-vocal installations challenge the partial view of history, the aim of which is to forge a homogeneous entity: partial with respect to what is left out of the narrative; partial insofar as the Yûshûkan proclaims that Japanese history is its military history. As Hosaka Masayasu points out, this glorification of Japan’s military tradition cancels out any

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<sup>74</sup> See Tony Bennett’s Introduction to his *The Birth of the Museum*, pp.1-13, where he lays out his argument, namely that ordered perceptions organize experience. Bennett attempts to account for how the museum *framed* and *organized* the experience of the visitor by concerning himself with how museums, fairs, and exhibitions were “envisaged in the plans and projections of their advocates, designers, directors and managers” (p.11). This new rational and scientific space of representation served both a classificatory function (imposing order on unruly information and specimens) and a disciplinary function (imposing order and ‘manners’ on unruly masses).

<sup>75</sup> Hosaka Masayasu, “Yûshûkan no tenjibutsu ga shimesu rekishikan,” in *Sandei-mainichi*, July 23, 2006, p.57.

possible celebration of postwar democracy.<sup>76</sup> By missing (or studiously ignoring) the opportunity to engage with postwar democracy, the Yûshûkan presents a veritable ratification of 1930s militarist-fascist policies.<sup>77</sup> Not only that; as Kamata relates, the exhibits of the Yûshûkan constitute an atavistic replication of wartime ideology by forcing upon contemporary Japanese visitors exactly what the total war system of the 1940s forced upon its own citizens: the glorification of warfare.<sup>78</sup>

Intermingling the beautiful and the sublime in its alchemic conversion of death into noble sacrifice, the Yûshûkan offers up the image of the heroic Japanese soldier who has selflessly given the gift of death for his nation. Understanding the effect (at the level of reception) of this intermingling of beauty and sublimity as an *experience* in its own right also aids in understanding of how various images, text, and spatial configurations on display at a museum might rouse visitors to desire the ‘ideal’ of sacrifice – a case whereby an ‘aesthetic experience’ of visiting a museum and assimilating its message engenders a will to identify with or desire a ‘lofty,’ ‘beautiful’ ideal such as ‘purity of race’ or ‘the nation.’ Kamata zeroes in on this representational sleight-of-hand at the Yûshûkan, which he satirically dubs the ‘Shattered Jewel Memorial Hall’ (*Gyokusai Kinenkan*) in reference to the euphemistic term for Japanese soldiers who died in suicidal attacks near the end of the Asia-Pacific War. He charges that the outmoded, aestheticized language of ‘heroic spirits’ (*eirei*) not only neglected the ‘truth’ of Japan’s defeat at the hands of Soviet armoured divisions at Nomonhan, not only distorted the view of Okinawan

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid., p.56.

<sup>77</sup> While I have suggested that some parallels exist on a formal level between the interpellative mechanisms of national identity formation at the Yûshûkan and museums such as the *Haus der Geschichte*, the contrast between the content of their portrayals and valuations of the postwar period (and the interwar period, for that matter) could not be more pronounced, for the *Haus der Geschichte* is nothing if not a celebration of the Federal Republic’s postwar democracy – and triumph over the communist system of the German Democratic Republic, whose historical experience is metaphorically presented as marginal, and marginalized in the physical sense, confined to the edges and darker spaces of the museum.

<sup>78</sup> Kamata, *op.cit.*, p.36.

suffering at the hands of Japanese troops, but through its false sentiments both cheapened the torment of the bereaved families and repressed the reality of human suffering in the past.<sup>79</sup> I would add that there is a certain irony here: in placing an aestheticized, sanitized, and anaesthetized martial valour at the center of the exhibition, the Yûshûkan actually functions to repress certain ‘truths’ about warfare.

But alas, *despite* its fervent attempt to interpellate national subjects and to forge a national unity and mono-identity, in the end, the Yûshûkan unleashes emotions and memories it cannot contain. This is, I think, what accounts for the ambivalent or antithetical reactions that some visitors may feel to museums like the Yûshûkan.<sup>80</sup> For one thing, each individual brings his or her own previous experiences to bear on the ‘museum experience.’ The process of subject-formation and national identity formation is thus continual, contingent, even potentially resistant to strong forms of interpellation that posit the authenticity of a quintessentially Japanese experience. The work of memory is an ongoing process of working through stories, images, narratives, experiences, and representations of the past. In short, it is a dialogic process, one that the curators of the Topography of Terror have grasped – even if their museal strategies fall short of creating an entirely dialogic space. Conversely, the museal strategies of the Yûshûkan look past the dense and complex layering of individual and collective experiences over time with its aestheticization of violence and warfare, all the while eliding the multiplicity of experiences of warfare as soldier or civilian, the multiplicity of positions for or against the war, the multiple modalities of mourning (individual or collective, personal or formal, familial or public), and the

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<sup>79</sup> See Kamata, pp.36-37.

<sup>80</sup> See, for example, Seki Hitomi (*op.cit.*, p.101), who felt oppressed by the Rising Sun flag signed by Tôjô and twenty-four other Class A war criminals displayed in close proximity to the testimony of Okinawan high school student brigades. In his brilliantly merciless satire, Kamata goes so far as to critique the mass enshrinement of Christians along with those colonized by the Japanese and forced to serve in the Imperial Armed Forces as spirits ‘kidnapped’ by a military nation and herded together in a ‘concentration camp of spirits’ (*reikon no kyôsei shûyô*). (Kamata, *op.cit.*, p.37).

multiple modalities of remembrance in the postwar period. Indeed, many individual experiences of the war (or those passed on from one generation to the next within families) may well be at odds with a putative or retroactively attributed ‘collective memory’ of the war promoted by the Yûshûkan.

By contrast, and notwithstanding the efforts of proponents of the Yasukuni view of history to police the boundaries of national identity, collective memory in Japan circa 2012 is a tapestry of individual experiences (*Erlebnis*) and experience (*Erfahrung*) mingled together with the mediated memories transmitted, *inter alia*, by textbooks, schools, public sphere debate, the media, and the museum. The rich plurality of collective experiences of militarism, fascism, the emperor system, colonialism in Manchuria, war with China and then the Allies, opposition to the war effort, *tenkô* (ideological conversion) the varied ‘front experiences’ of the soldiers, the home front experience of aerial bombardment, the atomic bombings – all of these experiences do not add up to the homogeneous ‘collective experience of warfare’ upon which the Yûshûkan bases its conception of Japanese national identity in the present. What is more, not all deaths were heroic; many more were squalid deaths at the hands of disease and starvation.

Yet the Yûshûkan persists in its aestheticization of death. The alchemic process outlined by Takahashi Tetsuya whereby ‘glorious death’ is produced out of misery, sadness, and horror is a crucial component in the “completion of a community of mourning”<sup>81</sup> out of Japanese citizens.

As he relates:

The Yasukuni belief system thoroughly conceals the misery and horror of death in the battlefield. At the same time that this belief system sublimates death into the sacred realm, it presumes upon the bereaved’s sadness and feelings of emptiness and discontent in order to put forward the powerfully valued notion, ‘glorious death in war.’ In so doing, [the Yasukuni belief system] exploits the emotions of the bereaved.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Takahashi Tetsuya, *Yasukuni mondai*, p.63.

<sup>82</sup> Takahashi, *Yasukuni mondai*, p.62.

What is more, since all has been sublimated into the sacred realm, the character of the war that brought about this death is no longer subject to questioning. The veneration of sacred death, the mourning of those who gave their lives in the service of the nation – all of which results in the beautification of death<sup>83</sup> – forecloses on the need to consider responsibility for suffering inflicted on the Other.<sup>84</sup> It enables us to return to a question raised above, namely the extent to which the sanitized presentation of violence and warfare at the Yûshûkan (and, to a lesser extent, the Shôwakan) constitutes a repression of trauma. Though part of my aim in this study is to call into question the discourse of authenticity, interestingly, the Yûshûkan's elision of the visceral aspects of death in warfare – the corpse as alterity – reveals what I would term 'the anxiety of the authentic trace.' For a discourse on death figured as pure sacrifice and symbolized as so many falling cherry blossoms, the gruesomeness of warfare would surely destabilize the heroic narrative of young, pristine lives given for the nation. Images of this kind of *death* would rob the heroic sacrifice of its *life*. This, too, is a kind of alchemy.

By way of contrast, as former Topography of Terror Reinhard Rürup points out, the Topography of Terror exhibition leaves no room for misunderstanding: murder is called murder, and crimes are described for what they are.<sup>85</sup> In contrast, the Yûshûkan falls back upon the sublime sentiments of national belonging, seemingly urging its visitors forward to build the Japanese community of the future. In this sense, the Yûshûkan's suppression of visual evidence of squalid, painful, horrible, unheroic death is also an evasion of historical responsibility – to the Japanese servicemen who died tragic deaths, to those who perished in 'conventional' firebombing raids and the atomic bombings, to the victims of Japanese atrocities. In a similar

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<sup>83</sup> See Takahashi, pp.54-55.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., pp.63-64.

<sup>85</sup> Reinhard Rürup, "Die Topographie des Terrors in der deutschen NS-Gedenkstättenlandschaft," *vorgänge* (1), 2005, p.84.



fashion, Katô's proposal to call forth a national community to engage in a vague, abstract mourning as an act of belated healing and conciliation serves, as well, to write off historical responsibility by displacing a reflection on the traumatic aspects of suffering, defeat, and death onto the fetishized figure of fortitude and patriotic self-sacrifice – the heroic fallen soldier. But in so doing, it forgets the 'sublime' elements of the past it represents: the negative sublime of disaster, the 'awesomeness' of destruction, the trauma of loss.

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The aestheticization of violence and death in warfare presented in the galleries of the Yûshûkan – what I have called history in a sublime key – bears little resemblance to the pacifist strand of commemoration that predominated over much of the postwar period. This effervescence reached a high watermark in the 1980s and 1990s, culminating in the critically self-reflexive reappraisals of Japan's aggressive actions in the Asia-Pacific War by a host of museums ranging from the atomic bomb memorial sites in Hiroshima and Nagasaki to the numerous prefectural peace halls that opened in the 1990s. This pacifist strand appears to have been eclipsed for the moment by the resurgence of a robust neo-conservative ethnic nationalism. But the ongoing act of critique offers some hope. Tracing the differences in museal poetics across sites as diverse as the ones I take up in this study – from a hortatory style (for example, the Yûshûkan) to an ironizing, critical style (for example, the Topography of Terror) – opens the way to a tentative critique of the affective attraction of intoxicating sublime virtues figured as beautiful sacrifice. What is more, the critique opens up the possibility of undermining the exclusionary rhetoric that, in the case of the Yûshûkan and the 'Yasukuni view of history,' posits the purity of the sacrifice as something authentically Japanese, a lost past that the present moment must strive to recover.

## CHAPTER 7

### REALITY-EFFECTS AND VICTIMHOOD NARRATIVES: THE PRODUCTION OF AUTHENTICITY AT THE SHÔWAKAN

Since its inception as a project in 1979, the Shôwakan, or Showa Hall, has undergone five name changes, two abandoned designs, three re-orientations of exhibition content, and continual wrangling over its siting before welcoming its first visitors in 1999.<sup>1</sup> In contrast to the heroic, masculine narrative we encountered at the Yûshûkan, the Shôwakan is dedicated to the hardships of warfare endured by the mothers, wives, and children who stayed behind to tend the home fires, to the orphans who eked out an existence under the Occupation, and to the eventual phoenix-like emergence of a prosperous consumer paradise in the 1950s. Under the slogan, “We convey the life of Japanese during and after the World War II (*sic*),”<sup>2</sup> the exhibition galleries of the Shôwakan furnish “an opportunity for future generations to know about these hardships,”<sup>3</sup> presumably so as to generate a sense of gratitude for those pillars of contemporary Japan who had sacrificed so much.

But what is there to know about this past, and how is this knowledge produced? How does the Shôwakan – or any other museum that attempts to represent the past – go about conveying a sense of ‘what life was like’? To wit, how does an exhibition space represent past experience so as to generate an ‘experience of the past’ among contemporary visitors? The

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<sup>1</sup> For a comprehensive look at the vicissitudes of the project, see Kerry Smith, “The Shôwa Hall: Memorializing Japan’s War at Home,” *The Public Historian*, 24:4, Fall 2002, pp.35-64; Ellen H. Hammond, “Commemoration Controversies: The War, the Peace, and Democracy in Japan,” in Laura Hein and Mark Selden, *Living with the Bomb: American and Japanese Cultural Conflicts in the Nuclear Age*, Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1997; and Ichihashi Tomoyuki, “Sensô no kioku to basho: ‘Heiwa Hakubutsukan’ kensetsu wo megutte,” in *Mouseion* (50), December 2004, especially pp.9-10 on backroom dealings that got the project around existing zoning laws in the Kudanzaka area of Tokyo’s Chiyoda Ward. See also Tanaka Nobumasa, “Kokuritsu ‘Senbotsusha Tsuitô Heiwa Kinenkan’ koso wo tou,” in *Gijutsu to Ningen*, December 1993, pp.22-42, along with his “Keishô sarenai rekishi: ‘Senbotsu Tsuitô Heiwa Kinenkan’ (kashô) kôsô wo ou,” in *Kikan Sensô Sekinin Kenkyû* (1), January 1994. Tanaka has written extensively from a critical perspective in both the media and scholarly publications about the Shôwakan.

<sup>2</sup> From the English-language pamphlet, “Shôwakan,” published by the museum.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

production of different experiences works toward different political ends and generates different degrees of historical consciousness. Arising as it does out of differential deployments of the discourse of authenticity, the highly-mediated ‘museum experience’ can serve to validate or valorize the status quo or the nation as much as it can serve to contest official renditions. In the case of the Shôwakan, despite insistent calls during the planning stages for a comprehensive approach that confronted Japanese colonialism and imperial aggression, the current iteration of the museum presents a slice of ‘reality’ in line with the ‘Yasukuni view of history.’ Against the backdrop of these issues, the name of the Shôwakan is, itself, significant, for it reflects the ambiguities and multiple valances both of the legacy of the Shôwa Emperor, and the era named after him. Hirohito’s long reign was eventful, to say the least, encompassing the tumultuous pre-war period of militarism-fascism and imperial aggression in Asia, the spectacular defeat in the Asia-Pacific War culminating in the atomic bombings, the pain and dislocation of the Occupation years, and the ‘miraculous’ recovery of the postwar period.

To shed light on these questions and issues, I will focus on the relationship between memory, mediation, and authenticity. In terms of memory and mediation, the Shôwakan represented the first postwar attempt by the national government to construct a facility dealing with the politically and affectively charged issues of the Shôwa era. Debates about the Shôwakan’s institutional structure, the content of its exhibitions, and, most importantly, its purpose reveal much about the meaning of the Asia-Pacific War and the trajectory of postwar collective memory in the decades since the inception of the project. When details emerged in 1992 of what had until then been a closed-door planning process, a chorus of criticism erupted over the government’s plan to commemorate only Japan’s war dead without due consideration to the victims of Japanese aggression. With its mission firmly established by the time the museum

opened in 1999, the inconvenient history of Japanese colonialism and imperialism was passed over in silence. What the permanent exhibition leaves out says as much, if not more, about the broader contours and fissures of collective memory and memory politics in Japan in the 1990s and beyond than does the past that has been narrativized in the Shôwakan's galleries.

Up until now I have made repeated reference to the role of museums and memorial sites in the highly mediated dynamic of collective memory. But the 'reality-effect' of the Shôwakan's diorama-like galleries collapses this mediating distance between past and present. I take up reality-effects here as a means of thinking through how artifacts at a memorial site or in an exhibition site 'index' the past as trace.<sup>4</sup> In the case of the Shôwakan, the curatorial strategy is fixated on the authentic artifact – be it the thousand-stitch belt made and presented by the women of the town to the young hero setting off for the front, or the *mompe* worn during air raids, or the coveted electrical appliances heralding the coming of postwar consumerism. These tangible relics on display bear 'authentic witness' to the past while simultaneously bringing the 'experience' of the past closer to the contemporary museum visitor. The tangibility of the everyday object mediates in the generation of a positive affective relationship with the kind of past represented at the Shôwakan, where the narrative turns on three main points: the suffering mother/wife/sister/child left behind to defend the homeland; the sacrifice of enduring loss and hardship while rebuilding; and, finally the redemption of the nation – the national family made 'whole' again – through peace, prosperity, and consumerism.

The mediation effected by the material object functions by way of the discourse of authenticity. How the discourse of authenticity is consciously or unwittingly activated and deployed by the curatorial staff involved with the production and installation of the exhibition

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<sup>4</sup> This is a variation of Roland Barthes' notion of indexicality as it applies to photography that he develops in his *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (1980), trans. Richard Howard, New York: Hill and Wang, 1981.

space sheds light on the ideological armature undergirding museums and memorial sites that purport to represent the past. Authenticity ‘means’ differently in different contexts. Generally speaking, different varieties of ‘authenticity’ (for example, site, trace, relic, re-creation) evoke qualitatively different affective dynamics that shade into aesthetic experiences ranging from resonance to empathic unsettling, even disorientation. At the Shôwakan, the ‘authenticity of the relic’ produces a reality-effect that brings the past closer – makes it tangibly present – to the spectator. Authenticity also authorizes. The exhibition derives its authority from the aura of the authentic relic, which in turn rests on the relic’s auratic quality *qua* tangible object emanating from the past.

What is more, these relics ‘embody’ the past, and engender an affective response on the part of the visitor. But in the case of the Shôwakan, the curatorial strategy of installing tangible, ‘real’ material objects in the gallery spaces with a minimum of textual commentary effects a dubious ‘production of presence’ that influences the visitor’s reception of the exhibition’s message. In the production of presence, text recedes in importance, giving ground to sensorily stimulating ‘authentic re-creations’ that drive the narrative forward. At the Shôwakan, the story of the war is presented *as* heroic sacrifice and the endurance of hardship. Average visitors to the museum, many of whom probably have not reflected very deeply on what the representation of history entails, experience these ‘facts’ presented by an authority (the museum), and in an authoritative way (without leaving space for dialogue), as *the embodiment* of History. What is more, underscoring the central role of the Japan Association of War-Bereaved Families (*Izokukai*) in the planning and administration of the Shôwakan, Tanaka Nobumasa observes that the narrative of warfare is presented *as* bereaved hardship, simultaneously glorifying sacrifice (what I would call a kind of ‘heroism of the everyday’) and obscuring issues of historical

responsibility.<sup>5</sup> The curatorial focus on artifacts thus has the effect of aligning with common perceptions of what history ‘is.’<sup>6</sup> But the effect of this installation of ‘authentic’ relics devoid of contextualizing commentary represents, rather, the illusion of history in the guise of affective resonance.

## POINTS OF SIMILARITY AND CONTRAST IN THE MNEMONIC UNIVERSES OF THE SHÔWAKAN AND THE YÛSHÛKAN

Before revisiting this argument regarding the production of authenticity, I would like to lay out a case for why it is important to consider the Shôwakan together with Yûshûkan. In a critique of Yasukuni Shrine, Mark Selden writes the following: “While the *military* dead were enshrined as *kami* at Yasukuni shrine and their families received state pensions, the hundreds of thousands of civilian dead and many more injured were forgotten: neither shrine nor state commemorated their sacrifice or attended to the needs of their families.”<sup>7</sup> This assertion is, in the main, indeed the case. However, broadening our focus to include the Shôwakan reveals to what extent the sacrifices of civilians, in particular mothers and wives – especially those of soldiers – do not go unnoticed, even if belatedly. Commenting on the rituals of Yasukuni Shrine, John Breen levels a criticism similar to Selden’s: “the omission [of civilians] undermines the shrine’s

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<sup>5</sup> Tanaka Nobumasa, “Ima towareru mono, kokuritsu ‘Shôwakan’ to shimin ga tsukuru heiwa myûjiamu,” in *Hakubutsukan Mondai Kenkyû* (26), 1999, pp.29-31. In a brief article in the Japan Times, Reiji Yoshida comments on the problematic involvement of the *Izokukai*, “which openly argues that Japan fought wars in self-defense, not in aggression, and claims apologies to other countries are not necessary.” See Reiji Yoshida, “Hall paints Japan as war victim,” in *The Japan Times*, March 27, 1999, p.3.

<sup>6</sup> Nishikawa Shigenori pushes this notion of a monolithic historical perspective to the breaking point, noting that the exhibition splendidly performs a display of wares that conceals the actors in the war – the soldiers, military commanders, and politicians – in its presentation of surface spectacle of ‘bowls and pots.’ The result? A static period piece with no historical consciousness. See Nishikawa Shigenori, “‘Shôwakan’ to watashi-tachi no kadai: Ima, naze, ‘Shôwakan’ ka,” in *Sensô Sekinin Kenkyû* (25), Fall 1999, p.61.

<sup>7</sup> Mark Selden, “Japan, the United States, and Yasukuni Nationalism: War, Historical Memory and the Future of the Asia Pacific,” in *The Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus*, September 10, 2008, p.5 (online journal: pagination approximate). Franziska Seraphim echoes this sentiment in her chapter on the *Izokukai*. See Franziska Seraphim, *War Memory and Social Politics in Japan, 1945-2005*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006, pp.60-85.

claim to be a national site of mourning,” for the rites and narrations banish non-soldiers from memory.<sup>8</sup> It is interesting to take up the Shôwakan in light of this critique, for it is in these galleries that those banished from the mnemonic rituals of one site find their ‘mnemonic redemption’ in the halls of the other. The Shôwakan emerges as an interesting counterpoint to the Yûshûkan on the terrain of Tokyo’s mnemonic geography.<sup>9</sup>

In the spirit of these critiques, I want to shift the focus slightly and suggest that we read the Shôwakan as taking up the rarified, sublime ‘Yasukuni view of history’ on the level of the everyday, in effect extending the temporal and affective ambit of the Yûshûkan into the postwar period. The Shôwakan is thus in dialogue with the Yûshûkan, complementing aspects of the Yûshûkan’s exhibition. Yet it departs from the narrative and representational agenda of the Yûshûkan in significant ways. (On one level, the Shôwakan might even be read as a welcome inclusion of the women who are almost always excluded from the masculine narratives of martial valour). The ‘Yasukuni view of history’ is not immediately visible at the Shôwakan, but rather is discernible in negative. Like the Yûshûkan, the Shôwakan side-steps traumatic memory. The dominant trope of ‘transmitting the hardships and sacrifices of our ancestors’ and the fervent desire for peace are buttressed by a blandly universalizing assumption that ‘violence makes victims of us all.’ But where the Yûshûkan effects the substitution of sublime patriotism for the trauma of violence and death, the Shôwakan does something slightly different. It evokes the terror of the home-front experience of aerial bombardment, but it is a terror that is mitigated by indomitable courage. Significantly, though, the effect is similar to that produced by the

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<sup>8</sup> See John Breen, “Yasukuni and the Loss of Historical Memory,” in John Breen (ed.), *Yasukuni, the War Dead, and the Struggle for Japan’s Past*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2008, pp.146-147.

<sup>9</sup> The Shôwakan also extends the temporal reach of the Yûshûkan’s narrative of heroism, revealing to visitors the postwar material rewards for glorious sacrifice. The representation of postwar consumerism and material culture both confirms the *eirei* (spirits of the departed) of the Yûshûkan in their position as ‘pillars’ of Japanese society, and redeems their sacrifice in the process.

Yûshûkan: trauma dissolved in narratives of heroism and fortitude. The result is the repression of the traumatic violence at the origin of peaceful, prosperous postwar Japan. The eclipse of traumatic memory also entails other elisions, foremost among them the memory of colonial violence that embroiled Japan in the Asia-Pacific War. Sebastian Conrad calls this an absence of ‘transnational embeddedness.’<sup>10</sup> Elided is everything but the *Japanese* home front experience of the Asia-Pacific War. Concealed in the presentation of authentic Japanese sacrifice and suffering is the denial of colonialism and racism.

Beyond the similarities between the two museums in terms of the expression of the ‘Yasukuni view of history,’ considering both museums together yields benefits by way of contrast as well. Exemplary of the tensions at the core of Tokyo’s mnemonic enterprise is the contrast between the Shôwakan’s embrace of consumerist values and the Yûshûkan’s rejection of materialism. As Umemori Naoyuki observes, how to make sense of Japan’s rapid urbanization and vast expansion of its capital industries led many intellectuals to ponder ways to ‘overcome’ the materialism and consumerism associated with the West.<sup>11</sup> Conservative intellectuals such as Etô Jun and Katô Norihiro, along with other scholars associated with the discourse of *nihonjinron*, sought to ‘overcome’ the tendentious dichotomization of a modernization theory that established the United States as the benchmark of ‘normal’ development.<sup>12</sup> Once Japan had emerged as an economic and technological superpower in the wake of then-prime minister Ikeda’s rapid-growth economic policies of the 1960s, the ‘postmodern Japan’ of the 1970s and

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<sup>10</sup> Sebastian Conrad, “Entangled Memories: Versions of the Past in Germany and Japan, 1945-2001,” *Journal of Contemporary History*, 38:1, January 2003, p.98.

<sup>11</sup> See Umemori Naoyuki, “An Origin of Japan’s Post-War Neo-Nationalisms: Rethinking Etô Jun’s *Amerika to Watashi* (1965), unpublished paper delivered to the Asia History Colloquium Series, Cornell University, 19 April 2011, p.7. Umemori draws heavily on Harry Harootunian’s *Overcome by Modernity* in this section.

<sup>12</sup> Umemori, p.7 and *passim*. On *nihonjinron*, see Befu Harumi, “Nationalism and *Nihonjinron*,” in Befu (ed.), *Cultural Nationalism in East Asia: Representation and Identity*, Berkeley, CA: Institute of East Asian Studies, 1993.



1980s began to resemble the technologically advanced West.<sup>13</sup> As an antidote, conservative intellectuals nostalgically attempted to reinscribe a difference between the West and Japan. To do so, they actively produced an *internal* difference that demarcated the materialism and consumerism of contemporary Japan from a mythically imagined Japan characterized by a love of nature in contradistinction to urban alienation, a Japan founded on solid, ‘eternal’ values in contradistinction to the shallow fleetingness of consumer trends and a pre-occupation with ‘style.’ The cultivated desire for a ‘return’ to the *furusato* (‘home’) was a desire for a return to a ‘timeless’ Japan untainted by urban modernity.<sup>14</sup> Such a re-imagined Japanese essentialism was meant to contrast sharply with the ‘Western’ values of materialism. Recent cultural expressions such as Kobayashi Yoshinori’s manga or the exhibitions of the Yûshûkan participate in this subsequent chastisement of contemporary Japanese culture and establishment of a more ‘desirable’ Japan.

On the surface, then, the contrast between the Shôwakan and the Yûshûkan could not be more apparent. The Shôwakan spins a victimhood narrative of suffering and deprivation during the war and in the immediate postwar period. These sacrifices are redeemed in the postwar period by the very demons that the Yûshûkan seeks to exorcise: materialism and consumerism. This is a striking difference, given the close affinity in the historical perspective espoused by the *Izokukai* responsible for the Shôwakan exhibition and the Yasukuni shrine administration

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<sup>13</sup> See, in particular, Tetsuo Najita’s essay, “On Culture and Technology in Postmodern Japan,” and Marilyn Ivy’s essay, “Critical Texts, Mass Artifacts: The Consumption of Knowledge in Postmodern Japan,” both contained in Masao Miyoshi and H.D. Harootunian (eds.), *Postmodernism and Japan*, Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1989.

<sup>14</sup> In her essay, “*Furusato* Japan: The Culture and Politics of Nostalgia,” in *Culture, Politics, and Society*, 1:4, Summer 1988, Jennifer Robertson traces the ubiquity of the term ‘*furusato*’ in media and ad campaigns in 1980s Japan. Due to the postwar urbanization of villages, there was, increasingly, no longer any particular place ‘to go home to.’ As Robertson notes, “consequently, there is no particular place to feel nostalgic toward. Homelessness today is a postmodern condition of existential disaffection: nostalgia for the *experience* of nostalgia” (p.497, emphasis mine). Argues Robertson, it is this condition that has motivated the “symbolic reclamation of the landscape of nostalgia” (p.497). The Shôwakan’s dioramic reconstructions participate in this kind of reclamation of the landscape of nostalgia.

responsible for the Yûshûkan exhibition. Moreover, the tension between a museal display that embraces the redemptive power of consumerism and one that offers a not-so-subtle critique of these values by way of a celebration of a virile martial masculinity is not one that is easily dissipated. But even here, the values driving the very different narratives presented by the two museums are more closely aligned than is immediately apparent, I would argue. Insofar as the Shôwakan looks upon the reconstruction of Japan and re-emergence of domestic ‘normality’ in the 1950s with a fond nostalgia, the exercise also serves a pedagogical function.<sup>15</sup> By presenting a visual display of the trappings of an emergent consumer prosperity, the Shôwakan is able to highlight the values that gave rise to this prosperity. The ranks of those who qualify as ‘cornerstones’ (*ishizue*) of Japanese postwar peace and prosperity celebrated at the Yûshûkan are merely expanded at the Shôwakan. To the sacrifice of the men-at-arms is added the sacrifice of those who endured loss and deprivation while holding down the home front. The values of perseverance and self-sacrifice that carried Japan through the war are the same ones that underpinned Japan’s emergence as a techno-consumerist utopia by the 1980s.

The similarities and contrasts that I have delineated between the two museums have resulted in a tense constellation of mnemonic space in the center of Tokyo, one that revolves around the matrix of heroism and victimhood. This matrix expresses itself in gendered terms

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<sup>15</sup> In this sense, it could be argued that the nostalgia driving the curatorial selections in the latter half of the Shôwakan exhibition is consistent with a more pervasive nostalgia evidenced by films like *Always: San-chôme no Yûhi* (2005), directed by Yamazaki Takashi, and exhibitions such as The Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of Photography’s four-part retrospective, *Shôwa: Shashin no 1945-1989*, 12 May through 9 December 2008, which, conspicuously, reinscribed the notion of 1945 as an epistemic rupture by bracketing the years of warfare and colonialism that marked the first decades of the Shôwa era. Tanaka Nobumasa views this kind of nostalgia as a troubling link between peace time and the ‘heroic spirits view of history’ (*eirei shikan*). (See Tanaka Nobumasa, “Kokuritsu ‘Shôwakan’ no sôdai na muda: Arai-nagasareta ‘sensô to heiwa,’” in *Shûkan Kinyôbi* [266], 14 May 1999). As he does in other articles, he holds the ‘thousand-stitch belts’ (*senninbari*) up for particular scrutiny. The ‘thousand-stitch belts’ were cloth belts in which women of the town would each insert one stitch into the belt, which was given to Japanese soldiers as a ‘prayer’ for their safe return. He asks rhetorically: “Might we not see in this placement [...] of the thousand-stitch belts displayed at the prologue to the Shôwakan’s exhibition a symbol of the citizens’ and survivors’ (*izoku*) ‘hardships’ (*kurô*)? ‘Oh, *natsukashii!* Doesn’t that bring back memories?’ murmurs a woman in her seventies to her partner” (p.22).

through the ways in which the respective museums are coded ‘masculine’ or ‘feminine.’ As I have suggested in previous chapters, for contemporary males in their late teens through early thirties, whose prospects of financial stability and well-being is significantly diminished vis-à-vis that of their parents’ generation, cultural productions such as Kobayashi Yoshinori’s manga and cultural institutions such as the Yûshûkan fill the ‘pride void’ that has been hollowed out by years of economic stagnation. The Shôwakan exists as a foil for the masculinist thrust of the Yûshûkan. Though the Shôwakan also activates a similar compensatory mechanism that turns the visitor’s attention away from the economic realities of contemporary Japan – that is, pride in the suffering of those who lived life under fire on the home front and in the subsequent sacrifices they made to rebuild Japan – the museum presents the picture of courageous and self-sacrificing motherhood as the counterpoint that sustained the virile, martial manhood at the front. This gendered coding gives rise to a geography of mourning in which the departed spirits enshrined at Yasukuni and extolled at the Yûshûkan metaphorically keep vigil from the top of the Kudan Slope over the mothers (whose suffering and sacrifice is recounted at the Shôwakan below) who stayed at home to protect the children and care for the elderly.

The gendered couplet of ‘masculine-heroic’ and ‘feminine-protective’ that creates the particular geography of memory and mourning on the northern edges of the Imperial Palace calls to mind Lisa Yoneyama’s discussion of the feminization of *hibakusha* (atomic bomb victim) memory. Yoneyama recalls feeling troubled by the late Moritaki Ichirô’s blueprint for a monument he hoped would become Hiroshima’s new shrine. In a symbolic language that maps onto the mnemonic geography of the Kudan Slope in Tokyo, Moritaki, a longtime spiritual leader of *hibakusha* movements, envisioned a monument in which the militaristic past would be expressed by a male image resembling the Deva king at Tôdaiji Temple in Nara. Standing at his

side, Kannon, the goddess of mercy, would cradle an infant bearing a resemblance to a Shakyamuni (Buddha). “In its remarkable banality,” writes Yoneyama, “this symbolism perfectly condenses the clichés about the masculine nature of war and militarism, and the inviolability of maternal nurturing and the procreative task.”<sup>16</sup> In the case of the Shôwakan, the suffering of women on the home front is converted into pure, innocent, untainted sacrificial victimhood. Just as Kannon’s gift of mercy redeems the excesses of the militaristic Deva king, the pure sacrifice of mothers, wives, and daughters extolled by the Shôwakan can be read as an absolution of the sins of the fathers, husbands, and sons. In addition, the narrative trajectory of the Shôwakan seems to suggest that the victims of the aerial bombardment and firebombing of the home front cancel out a need to confront perpetration.

#### **THE PRODUCTION OF REALITY-EFFECTS**

Now that I have delineated some of the contrasts and reinforcing similarities that link the Shôwakan and the Yûshûkan together as a tense mnemonic couplet in the geographic center of Tokyo, I will devote most of the rest of the chapter to a consideration of how, through the production of reality-effects, the Shôwakan unfolds a narrative that moves from an elegy to motherhood to a reinscription of the hierarchical family unit as a metaphor for the nation-state. The discourse of motherhood announces itself early in a visit to the Shôwakan, setting the tone for the rest of the exhibition. At the entry to the permanent exhibition, three slideshows run in parallel: the social conditions of wartime and postwar; children during the war and after; and mothers in war and postwar. Here as elsewhere in the museum, the captioning is minimal. Rather, the images of the slideshow, the realistic recreations of the dioramas, and the

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<sup>16</sup> Lisa Yoneyama, *Hiroshima Traces: Time, Space, and the Dialectics of Memory*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: The University of California Press, 1999, p.189.

soundscapes function to create a particular affective dynamic. Around the walls of the permanent exhibition, visitors can reach for interpretive sheets that elaborate upon the contents exhibited in the display cases or in the ‘booths’ (galleries).<sup>17</sup> Interpretive sheets are available in two forms: one for adults, one for children. Unlike many other museums, the Shôwakan does not sell a catalogue.<sup>18</sup> The interpretive sheets – nine in all – do the work of catalogue and wall texts, provided that the visitor reaches for them.<sup>19</sup>

That the Shôwakan makes interpretive sheets available for children is significant for several reasons. On a very basic level, the gesture is inclusive, and acknowledges the museum’s civic role in furnishing leisure opportunities for the family. But the children’s series of interpretive sheets also discharges an important function in the Shôwakan’s mission to educate (Japanese) citizens about their (national) past. The series of interpretive sheets replicate the family on multiple levels, suggesting ways in which children of the current generation belong to a larger community. Through moral lessons, the interpretive sheets reinforce the visual content of the exhibition by teaching the values of sacrifice. They also present an allegory for the present generation of children, visually reinforcing the rewards of sacrifice. Moreover, the interpretive sheets reinforce the visual message that the nuclear family (and, by extension, the national family headed by the benevolent father figure who lends his name to the era and the museum) lies at the core of Japan’s recovery and material prosperity. Recalling the visual message of the slide show at the entrance and the display cases of diaries and other artifacts that line the corridor leading to the first booth, the first interpretive sheet notes how, once the war had commenced and the draft

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<sup>17</sup> The interpretive sheets refer to the galleries as booths; I will use the terms interchangeably. The adult series is entitled “Shôwakan: Ippanyô setsumei shiito (dai-5-gô),” and the children’s series is entitled “Shôwakan jôsetsu tenjishitsu – shôgakusei no tame no te-ma setsumei: Kodomo-yô setsumei shiito (dai-3-gô).”

<sup>18</sup> Nor does it have a gift shop/book shop, which is quite rare among contemporary museums and memorial sites.

<sup>19</sup> Significantly, the interpretive sheets are exclusively unilingual, and the minimal exhibit captioning almost exclusively so, confirming that the intended audience of the museum is narrowly ‘Japanese.’

notices had arrived, scenes of mothers and daughters sewing ‘thousand-stitch belts’ as a token of hope for the safe return of their husbands and sons became increasingly common.<sup>20</sup> From this introductory prelude until the final few booths of the permanent exhibition, the focus is on women and children, and on orphans, all awaiting the triumphal return of the ‘father’ to make the family whole again.

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The visual narrative of the exhibition charts a course through a modernization effort truncated by a war that appears to have literally descended from out of the blue yonder of nowhere upon the Japanese home front. Hovering in the space between the wartime exhibits of the seventh floor of the museum and the postwar exhibits of the sixth floor of the museum is a panel dedicated to the moment when time briefly stood still on 15 August 1945. After the epistemic rupture of 15 August signaling a massive shift of values and perceptions of the enemy, the remaining galleries are dedicated to depicting how the widowed wives and orphaned children ‘endured the unendurable.’ But hope is on the horizon. The visitor is swept along as the narrative reaches its denouement with the return of pride in the miracle of Japanese economic achievement. The compensatory mechanisms for all this sacrifice and hardship are quite different in the Shôwakan than they are in the Yûshûkan. Whereas the valiant soldier is rewarded by being venerated as a heroic *kami*, those who survived the home-front cataclysm receive a compensation borne of the production and consumption nexus. A sense of normality has returned with prosperity and, interestingly enough, with the return of museal representations of men as once again constituting the main productive force driving society. Evoking nostalgia for 1950s consumer commodities such as the so-called ‘three sacred treasures’ – refrigerator, washing

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<sup>20</sup> Unless otherwise noted, my descriptions of the exhibition and the galleries that comprise it draw upon the minimal exhibit captioning and, more often, the interpretive sheets available along the walls of the exhibition that I collected during visits to the museum over the course of 2007 and 2008.

machine, and television set – the narrative ends by drawing parallels between the truncated consumerist modernity on display in the galleries prior to the visitation of warfare. The overall effect of the narrative is the suggestion that through it all, the indomitable Japanese spirit of self-sacrifice has prevailed – and will continue to prevail if museum visitors heed the lessons of the experiences of those who lived between the years of 1935 and 1955.

The first booth, “The Household of the Shōwa Era Teens,” reinforces this connection. In the children’s series of interpretive sheets, the description starts off at a time “when your grandparents were young.” The gallery creates an identity with this generation by establishing a connection between the appliances on display (such as a wood-burning stove and oven, an ice-block fridge, and an outdoor water pump and washboard) and the consumer commodities familiar to any contemporary visitor (fridge, stove, and washing machine). But the display also sets up a juxtaposition between ‘then’ and the ‘later’ of the 1950s consumer culture depicted further along in the exhibition so as to drive home how profound Japan’s postwar material recovery and subsequent prosperity was. Significantly, the contrast between ‘then’ and ‘later’ underscores how much harder life was for contemporary Japan’s ancestors – (women) washing laundry by hand – and, in a more subtle way than the *Yūshūkan* or Kobayashi’s manga, shines a light on an ostensibly more effete present.

The next three galleries chart the trouble brewing on the narrative horizon (“Living under the System of Regulation and Requisition”), the lives of children and adolescents during a war effort that was becoming increasingly totalized (“Wartime School Children and Students”), and the exceptional nature of everyday life during the air war (“Aerial Bombardment and Home-Front Preparations”). In the first of these three galleries, the requisitioning of household goods made from metals, leather, and rubber generates a sense of empathy with the loss of family

possessions – an empathy which is all the more enhanced in the contemporary Heisei moment of prolonged post-Shōwa economic stagnation. While censorship is acknowledged, there is no mention of the incarceration of dissenters. The next gallery details militarization of child life, adolescent work in factories, and the evacuation (*sokai*) of children from the city to the countryside. I find this component of the exhibition (and the later one on orphans) to be a welcome supplement to the steeled masculinity on offer at the Yûshûkan; however, here, too, the museum curatorship misses an opportunity to encourage children (and adults) visiting the exhibition to ponder what life might have been like for those living under the domination of the absent fathers, sons, and brothers. The mechanism of affective identity in this gallery is no different than in the ones that precede it: the representation of daily life under the enforced evacuations compels a very narrow identification with the hardships of the Japanese. In a muted version of the ‘heroic exemplar’ invoked explicitly at the Yûshûkan, contemporary Japanese children and adolescents are invited, first, to admire and be moved by, and then to identify with, the exploits of their ancestral brothers and sisters.

The remaining four postwar booths – “Departing from the Ruins,” “Families Left Behind,” “The Children’s Postwar,” and “Facing the Revival” – instill a similar affective affinity (pride and admiration) on the part of contemporary museum goers for the courage and fortitude of their ancestors. Despite the enormity of this exceptional everyday, despite the outdoor classrooms because all the school buildings had been destroyed, despite the fact that some 120,000 children found themselves orphaned in the aftermath of the war, “the kids still played spiritedly.”<sup>21</sup> The textual intervention softens the harshness of the visual cues, suggesting to a

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<sup>21</sup> The children’s series of interpretive sheets for Booth 7 concludes with the following: “Without food, living in shabby dwellings, wearing dirty clothes, and welcoming peace, the children of the time played spiritedly. Boys made crudely-fashioned bats to play baseball. Girls kept active doing such things as jumping rope, playing hide and seek, and playing dodge ball.”



contemporary audience that these were kids, just like us. Effecting a normalization of the abnormal, the display serves to domesticate the hardship for contemporary consumption.

But some aspects of the narrative refuse to be domesticated for easy consumption. In an interesting (and, I am sure, unintended) parallel with the Yûshûkan, the physical and metaphorical median point of the exhibition pivots on the emperor, who up until that point in the Shôwakan's narrative had been a conspicuously absent presence. In the case of the Imperial Gallery at the Yûshûkan, the emperor exists outside of time. His sacred space and presence interrupts the secular temporal chronology of history recounted at the Yûshûkan. At the Shôwakan, too, the emperor interrupts the narrative flow of the exhibition. In this physically liminal space dividing the pre-war and wartime narrative recounted on the seventh floor from the postwar recovery recounted on the sixth, the emperor seems to stop time on 15 August 1945 and hold it in the balance between war and peace.<sup>22</sup> Significantly, the adult series of interpretive sheets makes no mention of this event – presumably because this date marking the end both of Japanese imperial ambitions and, eventually, of the emperor's tenure as divinity is indelibly etched in collective memory.<sup>23</sup> Here is what the children's interpretive sheet states:

At midday on August 15 in the year Shôwa 20 [1945], the Emperor addressed the citizens of the nation on the radio [the 'gyokuonhôsô'] and proclaimed an end to the wretched and disastrous war that had claimed the sacrifice of so many. Haunted by both surprise and sadness, the citizens of Japan were buffeted by mounting anxiety toward the future. When the war ended, the Allied powers headed by the United States stationed troops in Japan. From that point, Japan lived under occupation for the next six years. GHQ (the Headquarters of the Supreme Command for the Allied Powers) promoted a number of reforms that launched Japan on the path of becoming a democratic and peaceful nation. On November 3 of the year Shôwa 21 [1946], the government promulgated a constitution crafted in consultation with the GHQ. It

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<sup>22</sup> A large-format photograph of the reaction to the emperor's radio address of 15 August 1945 is displayed on the stairwell landing dividing the seventh and sixth floors of the building.

<sup>23</sup> An audio station allows visitors to hear a recording of the radio address.

came into effect on May 3 of the following year, and the new nation that emerged on that date continues up to today.<sup>24</sup>

Even in this short text, the ambivalence is plain. Japan had suffered and sacrificed, but was now to be occupied by a foreign power. In those uncertain times, the occupying power had a hand in crafting the constitution for a new Japan. The reference to the constitution is highly ambivalent. This is unsurprising, given the *Izokukai*'s view of history and Japanese sovereignty tied to the military. No mention is made to the article in the constitution renouncing war in perpetuity (Article 9). And lest the remaining four galleries uneasily suggest to visitors that the postwar alliance with the United States – and the economic windfall from the Korean War – contributed to Japan's eventual peaceful postwar prosperity, the curatorship hastily buries the thought in its focus on Japanese industriousness and the now-healed affective and productive (national) family unit.

After the years of sacrifice and privation, the permanent exhibition ends on a dominant consumerist note of rising production and rising incomes that generates nostalgia for the heady early days of high-growth economics driving Japan's revival. As the visitor passes through the corridor that joins the previous booths to the final apotheosis of a peaceful, prosperous postwar Japan, the lighting becomes brighter, eventually resembling the fluorescent lighting common to many homes and offices in Japan. The consumer gadgets and household appliances on display are lit as if in a department store showroom. But rather than the martial values of heroism animating the mechanics of 'sacrifice and reward' at a place like the *Yûshûkan*, the economy of the *Shôwakan*'s distribution of sacrifice and reward confirms the production/consumption nexus that has brought cameras, stylish clothing, entertainment in the form of movies and plays, amusement parks, cars, sophisticated transportation, and the Tokyo Olympics of 1964. The more

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<sup>24</sup> "Shôwa 20-nen 8-gatsu 15-nichi," in the children's series of interpretive sheets.

familiar settings create a link between the displayed consumerism of the 1950s and a past put on display for consumption in the present.<sup>25</sup> That is to say, the contemporary visitors consume the genealogy of their current Japanese identity put on display for them.<sup>26</sup> The museum – itself a consumer product of the leisure industry – is the mirror.

## REALITY-EFFECT AND THE EXPERIENCE OF HISTORY

As the panel greeting visitors at the street-level entrance to the museum hall frames things for the contemporary museum visitor, “the aim of the museum is to provide opportunities for future generations to understand such *hardships and experiences* [...]. Visitors can *touch* and study the materials provided by the museum, and listen to the audio recordings of personal accounts by people who *experienced* the war.”<sup>27</sup> The Shôwakan’s mission statement promises to re-connect visitors with a past they can lay hands upon. Implied in this ability to touch authentic relics and listen to authentic recordings from the past is the assurance that visitors touching the past in the present can ‘grasp’ the essence of the past expressed in the aura of the relic. In this production of the reality-effect, the metonymic connection is taken to literal proportions: in grasping or laying eyes upon the relic, you possess the past.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> In this respect, the museal strategy of this particular gallery (and the emergence from the ‘dark years’ represented by the preceding galleries) is not dissimilar to the representation of the Adenauer era at Bonn’s *Haus der Geschichte*.

<sup>26</sup> This observation owes much to Tony Bennett’s *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Practice*, London: Routledge, 1995.

<sup>27</sup> My emphasis.

<sup>28</sup> It is here, in my opinion, that a museum like the Shôwakan departs from a museum such as the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, both of which relied upon a substantial donation or accession of relics to craft their museal displays. This is a vexatious and complicated point, for some involved with the planning of the USHMM placed faith in the power of the authentic material connection with the Holocaust to awaken a sense of historical responsibility. One key difference between the Shôwakan and the USHMM, however, is that the debate about authentic relics was public and prolonged, with the profundity of the debate finding explicit expression in the layout and installations of the museum itself. For the intricacies of the debate, see Edward T. Linenthal, *Preserving Memory: The Struggle to Create America’s Holocaust Museum*, Penguin: New York, 1995, especially pp.142-165.

Once upstairs and in the midst of the permanent exhibition, the story of the war is presented as none other than heroic sacrifice and the endurance of hardship. As I have suggested, this narrative perspective obscures questions of historical responsibility for Japanese imperial and colonial aggression at the same time that the Shôwakan cashes in on its legitimacy as a national museum to present an *Izokukai*-authorized view of the past as History. The hyper-realist style – newsreel footage and photographs amplified by the materiality of the relic – guarantees the authenticity of the representation. For example, Booth 4 (“Aerial Bombardment and Home-Front Preparations”) makes a concerted effort to show ‘what life was like back then’ with four detailed relief drawings of air raid shelter floor plans, and continues right on down to displays of the kinds of blackened light bulbs that were used during air raids. But the cumulative effect of this fetishization of the real that substitutes tangible object for interpretation excludes other realities, such as censorship and domestic police violence. Where even a chronology of the events of the Asia-Pacific War could function as a revealing interpretive device, the lack of a chronology anywhere in the Shôwakan’s exhibition spaces seems, in this light, to be a calculated omission.

Tanaka asks why the curators would exhibit thirty-four ‘thousand-stitch belts’ when one would suffice. He reasons that what he calls the ‘wow’ effect of this ‘low curatorial style’ betrays the trusteeship’s sentimental celebration of heroism.<sup>29</sup> In parallel with an argument I made in the previous chapter, I would go further and suggest that thirty-four belts where one would suffice generates a mathematical sublime of sorts that affectively overwhelms viewers into identifying with the sentiments of those sending loved ones off to the front. So much work! So much love! In the interstices of emotion and sentiment, the ‘authenticity’ of the reality-effect

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<sup>29</sup> Tanaka Nobumasa, “Ima towareru mono, kokuritsu ‘Shôwakan’ to shimin ga tsukuru heiwa myujiamu,” p.26. Tanaka uses the onomatopoeic ‘do-n!’ to convey his point that the exhibits strike the museum visitor with a questionable affective force rather than with reasoned interpretation.

works to produce a particular kind of affective investment in a particular view of the past: interpellation operating on the level of sentiment. As is the case with other galleries of the permanent exhibit, the thick layering of detail upon detail contributes to the illusion of history.<sup>30</sup> Fact is presented as such, without any attempt to understand the system that produced the suffering and hardship commemorated at the Shôwakan.<sup>31</sup> In the Shôwakan's permanent exhibition, the relics are presented as having intrinsic historical meaning, even if the history presented by the Shôwakan is detached from the broader history of the Asia-Pacific War.

While the Yûshûkan elevates the heroic lifestyle to the level of 'supremely desirable' and offers this virulent masculinity up as exemplary, the Shôwakan focuses on the not-so-normal everyday of the home front during and after the war. Though also a paean to Japanese sacrifice in extraordinary times, the Shôwakan seeks to depict a kind of domestic everyday (via commodities, fashion, food) with which contemporary museum visitors can readily identify. The tendency at the Shôwakan is less the glorification of 'the state of exception' of warfare, and more the 'normalization' of the extraordinary. And though the contemporary museum visitor is urged

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<sup>30</sup> Although the interpretive sheets identify the objects on display and place them within the context of the gallery (and sometimes within the immediate context of a wartime Japan under siege), the interpretive sheets never venture a broader interpretation of the war. The assumption – whether erroneous or intentional is not clear – is that the relics, like the conventional wisdom regarding photographs, open a transparent window onto the past, with no further interpretation necessary. It is not clear, however, whether this assumption vis-à-vis the power of the relic is the result of under-theorization on the part of the curatorship, or an example of a selection of artifacts guided by a clear-eyed policy. Since Japanese museum curators have, as a rule, less professional museum training than staffs in places like the United States and Germany and is also comprised of *Izokukai*-affiliated personnel, I think it is safe to assume that the reliance on the power of relic and image to convey 'the past' is a result of both under-theorization and deliberate policy. For more on Japanese curatorial staffs, see Yamada Akira, "Yasukuni Jinja Yûshûkan no tenji to sono rekishi ishiki," in *Nihonshi Kenkyû*, 533:1, 2007, p.64, where he references the lack of professional training in history or museum studies on the part of the staff at both the Yûshûkan and the Shôwakan. See, also, Tanaka Nobumasa's pointed critique of the *Izokukai* trusteeship of the Shôwakan and its refusal both to make public the names of those involved in planning the displays, and to release details about planned exhibitions. Incidentally, this practice presents a stark contrast to the foundations that run the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe and the Topography of Terror. See Tanaka Nobumasa, "Ima towareru mono, kokuritsu 'Shôwakan' to shimin ga tsukuru heiwa myujiamu," p.26. See also Laura Hein and Akiko Takenaka, "Exhibiting World War II in Japan and the United States since 1995," *Pacific Historical Review*, 76:1, 2007, p.66 and pp.82-83 for an account of some of the reasons for the differences in professionalization between North American curatorial staffs and Japanese curatorial staffs.

<sup>31</sup> This avoidance of interpretation could not be further from the curatorial policy of the Topography of Terror. Both museums evince an abiding interest in the authentic trace and relic, but to entirely different effect.

to remember the sacrifice of those who suffered the hardships of the home front, the mothers and children evoked by the displays are figures that are much easier to relate to than the military heroes of the Yûshûkan. Who is not moved by the touching figure of the woman who, during the period of postwar starvation and inflation, sells her blood to purchase some small trinket that will make her child happy?<sup>32</sup>

### THE BLIND-SPOTS OF THE REALITY-EFFECT

Though many of the galleries and displays raise poignant issues regarding the pain of personal loss of loved ones and of the dislocations and the grinding physical hardships wrought upon civilian women and children by the vagaries of war, numerous commentators have pointed out that the displays never force the visitor to ponder the question of what it was like for those suffering under the aggression of the absent fathers, husbands, and sons.<sup>33</sup> Though the curators of the Shôwakan's permanent exhibition produced detailed scenes and tableaus from everyday life in a time of total war, there is plenty that the Shôwakan does not do. In calling attention to itself *as* History, the exhibition nonetheless occludes large swaths of the past. A serious omission is the history of Japanese colonialism, imperial nationalism, and aggression.

To get at this issue, let us step back to consider the shifting logics of inclusion and exclusion that have shaped a postwar notion of Japanese identity at odds with a wartime Japanese imperial nationalism that contributed to the formation of an expansive Japanese

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<sup>32</sup> See the interpretive sheet for Booth 6, which contains excerpts from memoirs and interviews with those who had experienced the period first-hand. Morita Tae relates that as a war widow at a time when men were returning from the front, it was difficult to find work in her farm village even during the busy harvest time. "I was not even able to give my child 5 yen's worth of pocket money," she recalls. "So because I had no money for train fare, I walked all the way to Kumamoto. I knew that there was a blood bank in the Minami Sendanbatamachi part of town. I went there and sold my blood, received my payment, and then also found something in the same part of town that would make my child happy." (Morita Tae, "Chi wo utte," collected in *Ishizue: Senbotsusha izoku no taiken kiroku*, Zaidanhôjin Nihon Izokukai Jimukyoku, 1963).

<sup>33</sup> See the works already cited by, among others, Tanaka, Nishikawa, Ichihashi, Smith, and Hammond.

‘national subjectivity.’<sup>34</sup> In his essay, “Subject and Substratum: On Japanese Imperial Nationalism,” Naoki Sakai examines the Kyoto School philosopher Tanabe Hajime’s *Logic of the Species* to demonstrate how a universalistic, Hegelian conception of Japanese identity arose whereby “a member of the Japanese Empire could identify with Japan precisely because he or she [could] participate in the Japanese State which represents the whole, inclusive of all ethnic groups.”<sup>35</sup> In terms that would ring peculiarly to postwar nationalists wedded to a narrower conception of what constitutes Japanese identity, Tanabe put forward an ‘integrationist rhetoric’ according to which minorities who had suffered discrimination could be welcomed as active members of the nation.<sup>36</sup> Sakai also demonstrates how Tanabe criticized ethnic nationalism (*minzokushugi*) for its fixation upon ahistorical essence. (Strikingly, in a similar fashion the Yasukuni Shrine enshrines all who had fought for the Japanese Imperial Army, regardless of whether the fallen were from colonized lands or not). Mediated by the ‘universality of the State,’ in Hegelian fashion “the individual’s past and particular origin is *negated and preserved* [...]. By believing and participating in the universality of the state, the individual realizes itself by identifying with the genus of the Japanese State as well as with the species of his or her specific origin.”<sup>37</sup>

What this points toward is the way in which the Japanese militarist-fascist state, aided and abetted by perhaps otherwise well-intentioned elements of the intelligentsia, actively formed

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<sup>34</sup> Naoki Sakai, “Subject and Substratum: On Japanese Imperial Nationalism,” in *Cultural Studies*, 14:3/4, 2000, has done much to develop the concept of Japanese imperial nationalism.

<sup>35</sup> Sakai, “Subject and Substratum: On Japanese Imperial Nationalism,” p.462.

<sup>36</sup> Sakai, p.471. This ‘integrationist rhetoric’ finds its parallel in the United States during the Asia-Pacific War. As T. Fujitani insists in a compelling essay on the plight of Japanese-American soldiers entitled “*Go for Broke*, the Movie: Japanese American Soldiers in U.S. National, Military, and Racial Discourses” (in T.Fujitani, Geoffrey M. White, and Lisa Yoneyama (eds.), *Perilous Memories: The Asia-Pacific War(s)*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001), “the promise of acceptance or assimilation has coexisted with discourses and practices of separation and unassimilability” (p.243). The willingness (and in some cases desire) to shed blood in the service of the United States became the ticket that kept some Japanese-American males out of the internment camps while the rest of their family was separated from the general population along the West Coast *on racial grounds* and forced to wait out the war in isolation.

<sup>37</sup> Sakai, p.504, paraphrasing Tanabe.

a Japanese ‘metasubject’ from among the colonized by instilling in them a sense of Japanese identity.<sup>38</sup> The nationalism of the Asia-Pacific War was an ostensibly inclusive nationalism, but, as Sakai has pointed out, one with a Hegelian logic that subsumed the cultural difference of other Asian nationalities into a Japanese imperial identity as Japan colonized Taiwan, Korea, Manchuria, and then attempted to make gains at the expense of China and other countries during the Asia-Pacific War. This subsumptive nationalism allowed anyone to become ‘Japanese,’ but a discriminatory logic was still at work underneath this supposedly inclusive nationalism.

In certain cases, this logic was so successful that some individuals from among the colonized groups came to identify with the Japanese imperial mission. This ‘con-fused’ aspect of colonial identity contributed to numerous difficulties in the postwar period, as many of the colonized sought to renegotiate their identities and work through feelings of guilt, responsibility, and abandonment. Chen Yingzhen relates the trials and tribulations of Taiwanese who had enlisted in the Japanese Imperial Army, and enumerates various reasons how and why some Taiwanese ended up fighting the Chinese. Some were simply coerced, while others enlisted for economic reasons.<sup>39</sup> As Chen poignantly observes, at war’s end “they did not share the glory of China’s victory, nor were they in a position to mourn the defeat of the great empire of Japan.”<sup>40</sup> Even more tragic was Japan’s disavowal of its historical responsibility in terms of accountability: the pleas of the Taiwanese ex-Japanese soldiers for pensions and reparations equal to those of Japanese ex-servicemen fell on deaf ears. The plight of the Taiwanese ex-Japanese servicemen highlights the aporia that opens up at the interstices of ethnicity and nationality as these relate to

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<sup>38</sup> See Iwasaki Minoru, “Desire for a Poietic Metasubject: Miki Kiyoshi’s Technology Theory,” in Yamanouchi Yasushi, J. Victor Koschmann, and Ryūichi Narita (eds), *Total War and ‘Modernization,’* Ithaca, NY: East Asia Program Cornell University, 1998.

<sup>39</sup> Cited in Chen Yingzhen, “Imperial Army Betrayed,” in Fujitani, White, and Yoneyama (eds.), *Perilous Memories*, p.184.

<sup>40</sup> Chen, p.189.



the complexities of historical responsibility. Here, identity markers such as ‘Japanese’ or ‘Taiwanese’ or ‘Chinese’ refuse to fall into tidy categories of ethnicity or nationality.

None of this is addressed by the Shôwakan, which subscribes to a restricted conception of Japanese identity that makes no room for the pasts of groups previously under Japanese colonial domination – even those, such as the Korean *Zainichi*, many of whom were brought over as forced labourers during the war and remained in Japan after. Subtly, through its representation of the past of the nation that does not include those groups formerly under Japan’s imperial reach, the Shôwakan erases these groups from the wartime ‘national’ narrative. Whereas other Asian nationalities were forcibly incorporated into the Japanese empire under the benevolent guise of paternal inclusivism, in the postwar period other Asian nationalities were excluded from the conception of Japanese nationality.

#### **CONCLUSION: REALITY-EFFECTS AND THE PRODUCTION OF IDENTITY**

Complicit with the exclusion of certain groups from full representation in the picture of postwar Japanese society painted in its galleries, the Shôwakan emerges as an active participant in the ongoing contemporary (re)production of a narrow conception of Japanese identity that resonates with the nationalistic concerns of groups such as the *Izokukai* and the Japan Society for History Textbook Reform. Despite its avowed preference for hyper-realistic display, however, the curators seem to be in the grip of an anxiety vis-à-vis the authentic trace.<sup>41</sup> That is to say, the

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<sup>41</sup> Arguably, a similar anxiety in the face of the authentic trace torpedoed what was initially planned as a comprehensive exhibition of the legacy of the atomic bombings at the Smithsonian in 1995. After initial plans to display artifacts and images from Ground Zero, a storm of controversy involving veterans’ groups and elected officials forced the curatorship to abandon its plans. The end result was a pared-down exhibition of the restored fuselage of the Enola Gay. As it were, visual evidence of the horrible suffering wrought upon Japanese civilians at ground zero threatened to erode the moral high ground that Americans had claimed as victors over tyranny. It was also an uneasy reminder of the human costs of avoiding a major invasion of the Japanese home islands. In the end, Ground Zero imagery proved too volatile a challenge to cherished American myths about the atomic bombings

visual representation of the horrors of warfare or of victims of Japanese military aggression risks destabilizing nationalist myths of heroism or of Japan's role as 'liberator' of Asia from Western imperialism. The reality-effect generated by the individual displays and galleries combine with the overall message of the museum in the production of identity that functions according to the logic of what might be termed 'the affect of recognition.' Visitors see authentic artifacts from the past – ovens, ice boxes, pots for cooking rice – artifacts that are different from the household items currently in use, but generate a sense of connection with the past by collapsing the distance between past and present. The narrative flow of the permanent exhibition ensures that lifestyles and relics from the pre-war and wartime period are made similar enough to present realities such that the contemporary visitor feels part of an imagined community of sacrifice in the overcoming of hardship.

As part of the contemporary leisure industry, the Shôwakan provides entertainment for families looking for a way to spend a Sunday afternoon. But to the extent that museums are leisure spaces, they are also spaces of instruction and interpellation. The Shôwakan educates the nation, and provides lessons in the rewards and duties of citizenship. The consumer goods on display in the latter segments of the permanent exhibition work on a dual register. First, they evoke nostalgia both for the past (via metonymic linkages with 'pre-consumerist' household items), and for the era of high growth economics in a time of no-growth. In this context, the Shôwakan might be read as offering compensation for Japan's 'lost generation' of the 1990s. Second, the consumer goods and other artifacts provide a means for contemporary Japanese citizens to recognize themselves as middle class. A subtext is barely discernible here. In

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when images and traces of 'their' past, contained safely in museums 'over there,' threatened to come home and remind American citizens of their historical responsibility for the death and destruction wrought by the atomic bomb. For a spirited discussion of the Smithsonian debacle, see the collection of essays in Michael J. Hogan (ed.), *Hiroshima in History and Memory*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

conjunction with the omission of other realities (such as colonial violence), mass consumption on display in tangible form produces a homogeneous middle-class Japan out of the ruins of pre-war regional identities. In this sense, the Shôwakan fulfills the role of many a public museum. As Carol Duncan relates, “The public museum [...] makes visible the public it claims to serve. It produces the public as a visible entity by literally providing it with a defining frame and giving it something to do.”<sup>42</sup> The Shôwakan is a morality play, and the visitors are characters in the performance.

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<sup>42</sup> Carol Duncan, “Art Museums and the Ritual of Citizenship,” in Ivan Karp and Steven D. Lavine (eds.), *Exhibiting Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*, Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991, pp.93-94.

## CHAPTER 8

### BELATED MEMORY: THE RE-DISCOVERY OF THE GESTAPO-GELÄNDE

To a 1970s inhabitant of Berlin passing near the vicinity of the wasteland bordering Wilhelmstrasse and Anhalterstrasse in the shadow of the Berlin Wall, the suggestion that a ‘Topography of Terror’ detailing the history of Nazi Germany’s perpetration of atrocities during the Second World War would emerge on this forbidding site and take up a position as a central institution in Berlin’s contemporary urban mnemonic fabric would have occasioned serious doubt. A patchwork of modernist urban design experiments jostling with overgrown, vacant fields, derelict buildings in various states of disrepair, and bombed out city centers pierced through by a wall built to keep people in or out depending on who you asked, 1970s Berlin still bore the scars of the Second World War. While some material reminders of the past, such as Hitler’s Chancellery and the Berliner Stadtschloss, were cast aside with much fanfare, others were quietly neglected. The immediate postwar fate and subsequent ‘rediscovery’ of the Prinz-Albrecht-Gelände – erstwhile domicile of the dreaded Gestapo and other institutions of the Nazi terror apparatus – provides a lens through which to view the shifting fortunes of urban sites freighted with traumatic experiences. Over the course of this chapter, I trace how the selective remembering of the decades immediately following the cessation of hostilities yielded, eventually, to a widespread desire to confront what had transpired on the grounds of the Prinz-Albrecht-Gelände.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The various names attached to the site – Prinz-Albrecht-Palais, Prinz-Albrecht-Gelände, Gestapo-Gelände, Topography of Terror – conjure up different images and affects, depending on which constituency uses which name. For a brief selection of recent works that take up the Topography of Terror in some detail, see, among others: Karen Till, *The New Berlin: Memory, Politics, Place*, Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2005; Matthias Hass, *Gestaltetes Gedenken. Yad Vashem, Das U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, und die Stiftung Topographie des Terrors*, Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 2002; Jennifer A. Jordan, *Structures of Memory:*

The Gestapo-Gelände's belated recognition as a site of the historical significance provides a prism through which to view memory-work in Germany since the 1970s and 1980s. The rounds of petitions for monuments or memorials to be built, the selection of prize-winning designs and their reception in the public sphere, and the ensuing public hearings, conferences, and official commissions in conjunction with the political responses to these proposals at the local (and eventually federal) level – all these attest to the effervescence of initiative that had percolated up to rend the veil of silence concealing painful and shameful aspects of Germany's Second World War experience. In what follows, I detail the struggle by a diverse range of social, cultural, and political formations to wrest the Prinz-Albrecht-Gelände from the oblivion of amnesia and cajole a sometimes less-than-willing citizenry into confronting the trauma of its recent past.

After briefly tracing the history – or, more accurately, stagnation – of the site in the decades following the end of hostilities in 1945, I will take up the issue of how various constituencies mobilized nostalgia, or active confrontation with a hitherto repressed past, or even willed amnesia as a means of 'normalizing' the past in their engagements with the imbricated temporalities overlaid on the Topography of Terror.<sup>2</sup> Next, I will spend some time detailing the 're-discovery' of the terrain and the subsequent heated debates ignited by that rediscovery, for it is the multivalency of these debates of the 1980s that greatly influenced the institutionalized form that the Topography of Terror, as championed by its eponymously named foundation, eventually began to assume by the mid-1990s.

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*Understanding Urban Change in Berlin and Beyond*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006; and Brian Ladd, *The Ghosts of Berlin: Confronting German History in the Urban Landscape*, Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1997.

<sup>2</sup> It is worth pointing out that each of these constituencies perceived their own response to the site to be an authentic response.

Grounding these intense debates was the failed design competition of 1983-1984, the repercussions of which foreshadow the issues and limitations of subsequent engagements with the site down to 2010. This was only the first of three acrimonious design competitions spanning three decades. (The other two were in 1993 and in 2005-2006). That the two other memorial sites in the so-called ‘trio’ of memory-projects comprising the ‘memory district’ that emerged in the 2000s – the Jewish Museum and the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe – were inaugurated earlier than the permanent exhibition hall on the Topography of Terror is testament to the difficulties of how to adequately confront and appropriately represent perpetrator pasts.<sup>3</sup>

All of the debates regarding just what to build on this toxic site – if anything at all – culminated in the ‘provisional exhibition’ of 1987 which lent the site its current name. But the Topography of Terror exhibition was no ordinary provisional exhibition. Suffice it to say, the ‘provisional’ exhibition unveiled on this affectively charged site played a significant role as an acute reminder of a ‘past that would not pass’ during Berlin’s 750<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations in 1987. More importantly, though planned as a temporary exhibition as part of the events commemorating the 750<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Berlin’s founding, the success of the Topography of Terror exhibition anchored the site in the collective imaginary, lending support for a more ‘permanent solution’ that would prevent the site from sinking, once again, into obscurity.

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<sup>3</sup> The Jewish Museum conducted its design competition in 1988 and selected Daniel Libeskind’s design proposal in 1989. Construction was completed in 1999, after which the museum exhibition was installed. As it were, the museum was slated to open on 11 September 2011; the ceremony was postponed, but the museum welcomed its first guests shortly thereafter. The Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe got its start with the citizens’ initiative *Perspektive Berlin’s* 1988 proposal for a memorial on the site of what we now know as the Topography of Terror. Despite controversy and the need for two design competitions to decide upon the eventual concept to be built on a different site, the project was dedicated in 2005.

## THE POSTWAR HISTORICAL BACKDROP TO THE GESTAPO-GELÄNDE'S OBSCURITY

During the Third Reich, bona fide German resistance to the Nazis was rare. But the existence of serviceable heroes in the form of the 20 July 1944 resistance fighters connected with the Colonel Claus von Stauffenberg plot to assassinate Hitler enabled the first postwar German chancellor, Konrad Adenauer (CDU), to spin a palliative myth that covered over the shame of non-resistance at best, or complicity at worst.<sup>4</sup> Viable ‘heroes’ in the incarnation of resisters and victims were, to a large degree, seen as efficacious, useful, and, moreover, necessary in the laying of the foundations of the postwar (Western) democratic state. Adenauer made no secret of his distaste for the excesses of denazification inaugurated by the Allies, and symbolized by the widely loathed ‘Fragebogen’ (questionnaires). But the sedulous work of such proceedings pointed to a constituency that liberal democratic politicians could not take for granted: a potentially volatile mixture of unreconstructed Nazis, disoriented expellees,<sup>5</sup> and a mass of National Socialist ‘fellow travelers’ who saw themselves less as guilty of crimes than as among those persecuted by the Nazis. Jeffrey Herf points to evidence uncovered by officials working for OMGUS (Office of the Military Government, United States) underscoring the continued prevalence of anti-Semitic and anti-democratic sentiment. One survey from 1947 found that “fifteen percent of Germans in American occupation zones [...] were willing to suppress left-wing parties; 18 percent agreed that a dictator was important for creating a strong nation; 29

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<sup>4</sup> The German Resistance Memorial Center traced its origins back to 1953 when, at the behest of the relatives of the 20 July 1944 resistance fighters, a monument was unveiled at the Bendlerblock. By 1967-1968, the German Resistance Memorial Center had become a conventional national monument, but did not develop its current comprehensive form until the years between 1980 and 1989. Significantly, the German Resistance Memorial Center developed in parallel with and reflected the formative debates then raging at the Gestapo-Gelände. It goes without saying that the newly critical thrust of these debates gave the lie to the mythology cultivated by Adenauer and others of widespread German resistance.

<sup>5</sup> Known in German as the *Vertriebene*, these were the several million ‘repatriated’ Germans uprooted and expelled from their erstwhile domiciles east of the Oder-Neisse line during the massive population transfers in the wake of the Second World War.

percent were amenable to censorship of publications critical of the government; and 33 percent felt that Jews should not have the same rights as others.”<sup>6</sup>

By 1950, social integration trumped confrontation.<sup>7</sup> For political actors such as Adenauer, who feared a Nazi resurgence, dwelling on the deeds of the perpetrators bordered on imprudence among a generation in which active participation, collaboration, and passive support for National Socialism was widespread.<sup>8</sup> Among center-right politicians of the recently proclaimed Federal Republic of Germany, rolling back denazification was a means of deflating the demagogic rhetoric of the far right, a rhetoric that excelled at the skillful manipulation of denazification in order to play on the anxieties of an insecure population.<sup>9</sup> A studied silence appeared the better part of the valour of active confrontation, for a thorough public accounting would reveal just how compromised Germans of that generation were. Better to live a ‘normal’ life, to passively enjoy the fruits of peace-time material prosperity during the Adenauer era, than to be active participants in the questioning of a traumatic past. ‘Normalization’ became the watchword of the 1950s, a normalization predicated upon the twin pillars of the production and consumption of commodities, and reticence about one’s activities during the war.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Jeffrey Herf, *Divided Memory: The Nazi Past in Two Germanies*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997, p.205. See also Norbert Frei, *Vergangenheitspolitik: Die Anfänge der Bundesrepublik und die NS-Vergangenheit* (1996), Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1999, pp.55-56. Frei points out that the SPD (Social Democratic Party) under Kurt Schumacher (who had languished for years in Nazi concentration camps, including a stint in the ‘house prison’ of the Gestapo on the Prinz-Albrecht-Gelände) strongly opposed the formula of ‘here criminal leadership, there a persecuted people’ that underpinned denazification.

<sup>7</sup> Frei, *op.cit.*, pp.57-58.

<sup>8</sup> Norbert Frei cites an OMGUS survey from 1949 showing that nearly three-quarters of the population living in the American-occupied zone were ‘unsatisfied’ with denazification. (Frei, p.61). Jeffrey Herf describes the bitter reaction of one historian (Lutz Niethammer) who saw the denazification process as ‘fellow traveler factories’ rehabilitating as many former Nazis as it punished. See Herf, *Divided Memory*, p.204.

<sup>9</sup> See Frei, pp.60-61, where he discusses these anxieties against the backdrop of upcoming state-level elections. These fears were not misplaced, as a sampling of the election results indicate. For example, the local elections of 1950 in Lower Saxony yielded 11 percent of the vote for the *Sozialistische Reichspartei*. (The figure is cited in Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945*, New York and London: Penguin Books, 2005, p.270).

<sup>10</sup> See Lutz Niethammer, “‘Normalization’ in the West: Traces of Memory Leading Back into the 1950s,” in Hanna Schissler (ed.), *The Miracle Years: A Cultural History of West Germany, 1949-1968*, Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001, pp.237-238. Observing that the 1950s have been the object of many a projected fantasy, Niethammer pointedly asks: “According to which operative norms did the 1950s ‘return to normal’?”



Referencing the psychic economy of Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich's *The Inability to Mourn*, Robert Moeller notes that "creating for the future was a way to avoid the past."<sup>11</sup> In an analysis of the discourse of 'German suffering' of the 1950s – one that, incidentally, presages the more recent turn to 'German suffering' of the late 1990s and 2000s – Moeller contends that the veil of silence was anything but absolute. He argues that it was not so much forgetting as 'selective remembering' – of hardship, destroyed homes and livelihoods, of expellee stories and experience, of the rape of German women at the hands of the advancing Red Army, of the detention of German POWs, of occupation – that characterized the late 1940s and 1950s. In short, the memory of shared suffering as an integrative myth was a major factor contributing to the national cohesion of the 1950s.<sup>12</sup>

Nevertheless, the silence that accompanied selective remembering was purchased at a price – the repression of painful memories.<sup>13</sup> And if Freudian psychoanalysis is of use as a guide here, repressed memories of trauma often make themselves felt but belatedly. It was this repression of traumatic memory against which a younger generation coming of age in the 1960s – and who, starting in 1962, were only just beginning to have their first taste of recently-

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(p.238). Of note also is the slightly different valence of the invocation of 'normalization' in the 1950s and 1980s. On the one hand, as Niethammer shows, 'normalization' of the 1950s pointed toward a perceived 'normal,' everyday existence. On the other hand, the 'normalization' of the 1980s concerned itself with the status of Germany as a 'normal' member of the international community. To effect this 'normalization,' a similar operation had to take place on Germany's recent past, somehow domesticating it and incorporating it into the long sweep of German history.

<sup>11</sup> Robert G. Moeller, "Remembering the War in a Nation of Victims: West German Pasts in the 1950s," in Hanna Schissler (ed.), *The Miracle Years*, p.100.

<sup>12</sup> See Moeller, pp.83-86 and pp.99-101.

<sup>13</sup> While Moeller's verdict illuminates some of the blind spots of the Mitscherlich's thesis, it does not overturn one of the central tenets of the argument – that taking leave of this painful past was predicated on a massive psychic investment in Germany's 'economic miracle.' This investment was, moreover, predicated precisely upon the 'selective forgetting' that forms the flipside of Moeller's 'selective remembering': victimization of the Jews (and a whole host of other 'races' and individuals besides who were deemed unfit for membership in a 'racially pure' German community); the terrorist state that they had ushered into power; and their subsequent complicit participation in the Nazi system that murdered millions.

instituted history lessons dealing with the events of 1933-1945<sup>14</sup> – would turn the force of their critique. In the realm of collective memory, this eventually emerged as a struggle between those who downplayed the extent of German involvement with the failed Nazi adventure, and those who confronted their fellow citizens with the conveniently forgotten or elided crimes of their tacit complicity at best, and active involvement at worst.

Though this may ring as a gross oversimplification of complexly aligned constituencies and overlapping allegiances, the re-evaluation of the National Socialist past fragmented largely along generational lines. The desire for a frank engagement with the National Socialist past that characterized the emergent turn toward critically informed commemoration pitted a compromised generation that had put this past behind them in pursuit of less tainted ideals – as it were, replacing the heady draft of national glory for the decidedly more mundane pursuit of a secure, comfortable, and above all quiet existence – against a dissident younger generation that saw as duplicitous the silence upon which postwar West German prosperity was founded. The fate of the Prinz-Albrecht-Gelände, erstwhile scene of a past that some preferred to forget, may well be read as an allegory for postwar prosperity premised on forgetting.

Some might object that the Freudian notion of ‘repressed memory’ is not a useful, much less accurate, framework for understanding the seismic generational shift that cast its shadow over the 1960s and 1970s. Since the extent of active involvement or complicity of the average citizen or ‘ordinary German’ member of the armed services was subject to ‘active concealment’ or ‘selective remembering,’ if not exactly unconscious repression, might it not be advisable to approach the compromises, complicity, and crimes committed under the auspices of National Socialism as an ‘open secret,’ or active suppression, rather than as repressed memory? The work

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<sup>14</sup> 1962 was the year in which West German *Länder* made the National Socialist period – and the extermination of the Jews – a mandatory school subject. See Tony Judt, *Postwar*, p.810.

of Moeller and other scholars suggests that this approach would have as much critical purchase on the period from the mid-1940s to the early 1960s as a psychoanalytically-inflected approach such as that of the Mitscherlichs.<sup>15</sup> But if this notion of an open secret might contribute to an explanation of how the generational cohort with direct experience of the Third Reich ‘remembered’ and conducted themselves vis-à-vis the events of the Second World War during the immediate postwar period, nonetheless we might fruitfully argue that the *next* generation experienced this ‘selective remembering’ (*pace* Moeller) as an at times deafening silence, a veritable repression of something terrible at the core of postwar German society.

For Freud, “repression is a preliminary stage of condemnation”<sup>16</sup> whose essence “lies in simply turning something away, and keeping it at a distance, from the conscious.”<sup>17</sup> J. Laplanche and J.-B. Pontalis add that repression, which is manifest in hysteria but also plays a role in normal psychology, “is an operation whereby the subject attempts to repel, or to confine to the unconscious, representations (thoughts, images, memories) which are bound to an instinct. Repression occurs when to satisfy an instinct – though likely to be pleasurable in itself – would incur the risk of provoking unpleasure because of other requirements.”<sup>18</sup> In the case of postwar Germany, ‘other requirements’ might be read, by turns, as the avoidance of shame or guilt with respect to one’s past actions; the need to ‘forget the past’ so as to rebuild in the present; or the desire to avoid detection by occupation authorities during the denazification process.

While not every member of the wartime generational cohort might have repressed the painful elements of his or her memories of National Socialism in this classically Freudian

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<sup>15</sup> In fact, the entire selection of essays collected in Hanna Schissler (ed.), *The Miracle Years*, is aimed at debunking the notion that the time period under consideration was one of silence.

<sup>16</sup> Sigmund Freud, “Repression” (1915), *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Vol.14, trans. James Strachey, London: The Hogarth Press, 1957, p.146.

<sup>17</sup> Freud, “Repression” (1915), p.147.

<sup>18</sup> J. Laplanche and J.-B. Pontalis, *The Language of Psychoanalysis* (1967), trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith, New York and London: W.W. Norton Company, 1973, p.390.

manner, nonetheless collective memory was marked by this void of memory. Parents and teachers remained, for the most part, tight-lipped. It is striking that German youth began learning of the extermination of the Jews only in 1962.<sup>19</sup> And the information circulating in the public sphere at the time was hardly a torrent. It was not until the Ulm Einsatzgruppen Trial of 1958 that whisperings about the terrible deeds committed under the auspices of National Socialism rustled through the public sphere, and not until the Frankfurt Auschwitz Trials of 1963-1965 that the discussion became more animated and wide-spread.<sup>20</sup> Albeit an earnest beginning, this did not yet count as a frank reassessment of the past.

Numerous commentators confirm this reticence, including Jürgen Habermas, who, on the occasion of the *Historikerstreit*, wrote the following words apropos of ‘the images of that unloading ramp at Auschwitz’: “Only in the 1980s did this moral imperfection burned into our national history – this traumatic ‘past that will not pass’ – enter into the broader public consciousness.”<sup>21</sup> What this very brief account of the gradual re-emergence of a hitherto concealed past suggests is that for a younger generation coming of age in the 1960s, this silence, this open secret, appears to have constituted an ‘absent presence,’ a ‘repressed memory’ whose excess remainder haunted sites such as the Prinz-Albrecht-Gelände.

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<sup>19</sup> Judt, *Postwar*, p.810.

<sup>20</sup> The Ulm Trial, which prosecuted the Nazi commando, ‘Tilsit,’ whose field of operations was Lithuania, was significant insofar as it drove home the point to a German audience that Nazi atrocities were committed largely in Eastern Europe, well beyond the borders of the Third Reich.

<sup>21</sup> Jürgen Habermas, “Vom öffentlichen Gebrauch der Historie: Das offizielle Selbstverständnis der Bundesrepublik bricht auf,” in *‘Historikerstreit’: Dokumentation der Kontroverse um die Einzigartigkeit der nationalsozialistischen Judenvernichtung*, ed. Piper Verlag, Munich: Piper, 1987. Jeremy Leaman provides a translation of this piece, which originally appeared in *Die Zeit*, 7 November 1986. See Habermas, “Concerning the Public Use of History,” trans. Jeremy Leaman, *New German Critique* (44), Spring-Summer 1988, pp.40-50.

## FROM 'WASTELAND OF MEMORY' TO GESTAPO-GELÄNDE

The history of the Topography of Terror is one of 'imbricated temporalities' evoking radically different pasts. Located in the residential district of what was once southern Friedrichstadt, the site of the current Topography of Terror derives its significance in no small part from its proximity to the Prussian, Weimar German, National Socialist and, since 1989, Berliner Republic government quarter. These imbricated temporalities are still visible and legible in the layout and the archaeological remnants bearing witness to the multiple spectacles in which the site in its various incarnations as 'Prinz-Albrecht-Gelände' and 'Gestapo-Gelände' has performed a role. Up until its emergence as the Topography of Terror after the eponymously named provisional exhibition on the site that was part of Berlin's 750<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations, nostalgia for pre-war Prussian grandeur and traumatic memories of Nazi terror mingled and co-existed uneasily on and around this site.

### The (Pre-)History of Topography of Terror as 'Site of Trauma'

Incorporated into Berlin proper in 1710, the northern section of Friedrichstadt became home in the 1730s to an increasing number of aristocratic mansions ('Palais') which, after the founding of the German nation-state in 1871, were converted into government and diplomatic buildings.<sup>22</sup> In contrast, southern Friedrichstadt was working-class in character, settled predominantly by protestants from Bohemia. The one exception was an uncommonly splendid mansion built on southern Wilhelmstrasse by Baron Vernezobre de Laurieux, which was

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<sup>22</sup> In recounting the history of the Prinz-Albrecht-Gelände, I rely on Reinhard Rürup, *Topographie des Terrors: Gestapo, SS und Reichssicherheitshauptamt auf dem "Prinz-Albrecht-Gelände": Eine Dokumentation*. Berlin: Verlag Willmuth Arenhövel, 1987, pp.11-35; Dieter Hoffmann-Axthelm, "Prinz-Albrecht-Palais oder Reichssicherheitshauptamt?" *Bauwelt*, Heft 43, 1983; Florian von Buttlar, "Prinz-Albrecht-Palais: Zu einer Typologie der Vergangenheitsbewältigung," in *Aktuelles Bauen: Das schweizerische Bau- und Planungsmagazin* (19), October 1984; Ulrich Linse, "Die wiedergefundene Erinnerung: Zur Archäologie der Zeitgeschichte," *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht* (7) 1988; and the works of Stefanie Endlich, who has written voluminously on the topic as both critic and active participant in the debates.

eventually inherited in 1830 by Prince Albrecht of Prussia, son of Friedrich Wilhelm III. Upon acquiring the property, Albrecht had the now-eponymously named mansion remodeled by Karl Friedrich Schinkel of Neue Wache, Gendarmenmarkt, and Altes Museum fame, and contracted the services of Peter Joseph Lenné to design the gardens. As Berlin grew throughout the mid-nineteenth century and nearby Potsdamer Platz and Anhalter Bahnhof became bustling transportation hubs, southern Friedrichstadt retained its quiet character well into the 1870s. An edition of the Baedeker guide dating from 1878 stated peremptorily: “Little to offer the foreign visitor.”<sup>23</sup>

In the years following the Nazi seizure of power in 1933, the Nazis turned their attention increasingly to the conveniently located ‘Prinz-Albrecht-Gelände’ directly bordering the government district of Wilhelmstrasse, incorporating a number of buildings into the Nazi security apparatus. As early as May 1933, the Gestapo had set up its headquarters in the Kunstgewerbeschule (School for Industrial Arts and Crafts) at Prinz-Albrecht-Strasse 8. By the end of 1934, and shortly after Heinrich Himmler had attained the rank of ‘Reichsführer SS’ in April, the SS and SD had been moved from Munich, with many of its most important branches settled in buildings dotting the Prinz-Albrecht-Gelände, including the Reinhard Heydrich-headed RSHA (Reichssicherheitshauptamt) in the Prinz-Albrecht-Palais. From there the so-called ‘desk perpetrators’ along with the more violent henchmen of the Nazis conducted the systematic extinguishing of political dissent, planned the conquest of ‘Lebensraum’ to the east, and laid the groundwork for the roundup, deportation, and extermination of the European Jews and other groups deemed ‘racially unfit.’

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<sup>23</sup> Cited in Rürup, *Topographie des Terrors: Eine Dokumentation*, p.16.

## The Prinz-Albrecht-Gelände as Margin: History Made Invisible in the Immediate Postwar Period

Following the intensification of the Allied aerial bombardment of Berlin in 1943, the government district was specifically targeted in April and May 1944. By the time of German capitulation in May 1945, much of the Prinz-Albrecht-Gelände had been reduced to rubble. Though badly burned and damaged, the Gestapo headquarters at Prinz-Albrecht-Strasse 8 and the neighbouring Gropius-Bau maintained their structural integrity.<sup>24</sup> Since the Allied occupying forces focused their energies primarily on the removal of the symbolically significant buildings such as Hitler's Reich Chancellery, the battered headquarters of the Gestapo and RSHA garnered little attention, and were left to languish in the furthest reaches of what was now the American sector of occupied Berlin. Official indifference abetted the onset of amnesia surrounding this address from which had issued so much violence and death. The sometimes convenient forgetting – National Socialism had, after all, sprung forth from the midst of German society, and had enjoyed a high degree of enthusiastic support – mirrored a broader cultural trend during the late 1940s. This cultural trend was marked by a defense reaction favouring repression of the painful memories over attempts to comprehend what went wrong.<sup>25</sup>

As the ruined wasteland of the Prinz-Albrecht-Gelände now found itself on the outer margins of the boundary between Soviet-administered Mitte and American-administered

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<sup>24</sup> For a thorough accounting of the damages and destruction wrought upon the Prinz-Albrecht-Gelände by the Allied aerial bombardment, see Rürup, *Topographie des Terrors: Eine Dokumentation*, pp.178-179. Of these two buildings, the Gropius-Bau – untainted by any significant association with the cogs of the National Socialist administration – still stands.

<sup>25</sup> This happened largely despite the best efforts on the part of the Allied Occupation to 're-educate' the German citizenry. See Dagmar Barnouw, *Germany 1945: Views of War and Violence*, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996, especially her chapter, "To Make Them See" (pp. 1-41), for gripping accounts of German civilians forced to view the photographic evidence of Nazi atrocities in an attempt to compel them to recognize their guilt. As Barnouw and others have argued, these measures failed. Norbert Frei's *Vergangenheitspolitik* provides the most sustained and comprehensive analysis of the immediate postwar period's political history, one which created the climate for looking forward rather than reflecting on the past. See, also, Mark Mazower, *Dark Continent: Europe's Twentieth Century*, New York: Vintage Books, 1998, pp.288-289, along with Judt, *Postwar*, pgs.244, 270, and *passim.*, for immediate postwar chancellor Konrad Adenauer's role in the fostering of forgetting.

Kreuzberg in the wake of the 1948-1949 Berlin Blockade, the area slowly faded into obscurity. In contrast to the demolition of Hitler's new Reichschancellery in February 1949, the detonation of the ruins of the Prinz-Albrecht-Palais on 27-28 April 1949 occasioned little reaction. And of course, by 1961 the Berlin Wall had sprung up along the stretch of Prinz-Albrecht-Strasse facing the Gestapo-Gelände from the Soviet sector.<sup>26</sup> This only added to the site's geographical isolation. With these acts by the West Berlin administration, the wasteland of the Prinz-Albrecht-Gelände was effectively purged of its traces of a tainted recent past. Despite the occasional debates signaling a reluctant and desultory desire to 'come to terms with the past' in the 1950s and 1960s,<sup>27</sup> the Prinz-Albrecht-Gelände, confined to the neglected physical and mental margins both of West Berlin and West German society and memory, became an apt material metaphor for the repression of painful and traumatic memories in the immediate postwar years until the emergence on the scene of a new generation that began to ask increasingly insistent questions in the late 1960s.

### **RECYCLING THE PAST: THE EMERGENCE OF THE GESTAPO-GELÄNDE OUT OF THE RUBBLE HEAPS OF KREUZBERG (1979-1984)**

Against the backdrop of what was increasingly becoming a fragmented collective memory of the Third Reich, it is not accidental, then, that members of the generational cohort who came of age in the late 1960s were instrumental in the 'rediscovery' of the Prinz-Albrecht-Gelände's historical significance.<sup>28</sup> As we have seen, an earlier generation had not shed any tears

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<sup>26</sup> Since 1951 renamed Niederkirchnerstrasse by GDR officials in honour of communist resistance member Käthe Niederkirchner, who died in 1944.

<sup>27</sup> Examples include the Frankfurt Auschwitz trials of 1963-1965 and the sporadic debates about extending the statute of limitations in the case of Nazi criminals discussed in a previous chapter.

<sup>28</sup> Dieter Hoffmann-Axthelm was born in 1940, and the other key interlocutors during the 1980s were born between the mid-1930s and the early 1950s.



when the damaged buildings on the Prinz-Albrecht-Gelände were razed in the 1950s. By the late 1970s, a scrap company processing building renovation detritus from the Kreuzberg area was operating on the northern end of the Prinz-Albrecht-Gelände, and an autodrome for people learning to drive snaked its way through the robinia grove that had sprouted and prolifically covered the southern reaches of the Prinz-Albrecht-Gelände during its years of neglect. Billboards advertizing cigarettes, along with a sign for Lachboys Dance Bühne, a transvestite club run by the owners of the autodrome, belied the historical significance of the site. Only in the late 1970s would citizens' initiatives linked to the environmentalist, anti-nuclear, anti-authoritarian, and anti-fascist 'new social movements' begin the long process of critical engagement with the central site of National Socialist history. It was not until Dieter Hoffmann-Axthelm, an architectural historian associated with the Internationale Bauausstellung Berlin (IBA), 're-discovered' the significance of this site that these fallow urban fields would become the focus of a series of heated debates about how best to proceed with this 'Gestapo-Gelände,' debates that would eventually cut to core of German national identity well beyond German unification.<sup>29</sup>

In 1978, Hoffmann-Axthelm, who went on to become one of the key interlocutors in the debates down to the present, staged what he called a 'public symbolic rediscovery' of the significance of the site during the TUNIX Kongress gathering of the Berlin alternative scene.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Dieter Hoffmann-Axthelm, "Prinz-Albrecht-Palais oder Reichssicherheitsamt?" in *Bauwelt* 43, 1982, p.1778. The IBA 87 formed in 1979 in anticipation of the 750<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Berlin. Constituted explicitly against the Interbau 1957, which was responsible for the large-scale Hansaviertel modernist urban design experiment north of the Tiergarten, the architects of the IBA favoured 'critical reconstruction' of existing infrastructure – 'old building stock' – over the wholesale demolition of existing neighbourhoods to make room for new developments. I will continue to refer to the organization using the abbreviation of the German term, *Internationale Bauausstellung* (IBA).

<sup>30</sup> See Dieter Hoffmann-Axthelm, "Prinz-Albrecht-Palais oder Reichssicherheitsamt?" Hoffmann-Axthelm writes about his staging of a 'symbolic rediscovery' during the 1978 TUNIX-Kongress of what he terms the 'Ungelände' that would eventually become the Topography of Terror. TUNIX is a play on 'tue nichts' (do nothing) and the gathering's origins at the Technische Universität, commonly referred to as TU, and was convened in January 1978 as a response to the crackdown on leftist violence during the *Deutscher Herbst* of 1977. The TUNIX-Kongress was

Such initiatives brought what was being planned at the nearby Gropius-Bau next door<sup>31</sup> – an exhibition slated to open in 1981 exhibition, “Taking Stock of Prussia” (Preußen: Versuch einer Bilanz) – into stark relief with this toxic ‘anti-site,’ this material reminder of Nazi crimes. As news of this rediscovery at the hands of the IBA began to permeate a broader public, it was as if a generation had awoken from an amnesiac stupor. Not even Andreas Nachama (b.1951), future managing director of the Topography of Terror, was aware in the 1970s of the significance of this site adjacent to the Gropius-Bau. As he recalls:

I remember going home and telling my parents that the Prussia exhibition I was working on would be displayed in the Gropius building. [...]. Well, that was at Prinz-Albrecht-Strasse, now called Niederkirchnerstrasse. My mother, who had survived the Third Reich hiding in Berlin, said that this is one of the worst addresses in Berlin because that was where the Gestapo was. I became interested, and a couple of other people also tried to discover what was there because of the reconstruction of the [Gropius-Bau]. This is how a group of people got together [...] and formed a citizens’ initiative that argued that when you reconstruct the Martin Gropius Bau, you cannot ignore the history of the adjacent places.<sup>32</sup>

Outrage continued to mount against the audacious misguidedness of an exhibition reappraising a more distant time period in Germany’s past right next door to what many – in particular, those who subscribed to the *Sonderweg* thesis of Germany’s historical trajectory – saw as connected with, even a result of, Prussian militarism.

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significant within the context of the new social movements (*neue soziale Bewegungen*) of the 1970s as the end-point of the *Spontibewegung* (a movement that saw the spontaneity of the masses as the motor of revolutionary change) and the increasing influence of autonomism in Germany. For a discussion of the TUNIX-Kongress, see Dieter Hoffmann-Axthelm, “Diaspora: Die Wiedervereinigung der Erfahrung,” in Dieter Hoffmann-Axthelm, Otto Kallscheuer, Eberhard Knödler-Bunte, and Brigitte Wartmann (eds.), *Zwei Kulturen? TUNIX, Mescalero und die Folgen*, Berlin: Ästhetik und Kommunikation Verlag, 1978. As I point out elsewhere, what is significant is the extent to which radical social movements were responsible for forcing Berliners to pay renewed attention to the forgotten swath of land in northern Kreuzberg. In other words, the impulse to re-evaluate the past did not issue forth ‘from the middle of German society,’ as has been claimed.

<sup>31</sup> The Martin-Gropius-Bau was originally built in the nineteenth century to house the Museum of Industrial Arts and Crafts.

<sup>32</sup> From an interview conducted by Karen Till in 1993 with current Topography of Terror director, Andreas Nachama, then a historian working with the Berliner Festspiele GmbH, cited in Till, *The New Berlin*, pp.64-65.

## Materially-embodied Reminders of Repressed Pasts

The Prinz-Albrecht-Gelände represented a physical reminder of traumatic memories best forgotten in the postwar economy of affective investment. A younger generation seized upon the physical remnants of these memories to rend the veil of silence spun by an older generation over the painful and shameful history of the Third Reich. The relative belatedness of this re-discovery of a painful past that had haunted postwar Germany is significant in that it underscores the extent to which residents of Berlin sought to forget about the recent Nazi past. At the same time, the widespread prevalence of amnesia – willed or otherwise – among the general populace short-circuits more recent criticisms of historical amnesia that tended to pin the blame solely on government officials who, the story goes,<sup>33</sup> had allowed weeds and debris to cover over and effectively impose a vow of silence on this site, this material witness attesting to some of the most violent aspects of Germany’s recent past.<sup>34</sup> Writing almost two decades later not about the Topography of Terror, but about the belatedness of a monument to Jewish victims of German crimes, Tilman Fichter observes that “adult Germans who had, for example, looked away while their Jewish neighbours were being transported off, had no desire to be confronted with their guilt.”<sup>35</sup>

To an astute and critical observer like Hoffmann-Axthelm, the Prinz-Albrecht-Gelände as it appeared in the late 1970s presented an apposite allegory, namely, the postwar history of collective silence. Hoffmann-Axthelm’s reading of the site attempted to decouple the painful past represented by this site from the silence that surrounded it. From the vantage point of thirty-odd years removed from the late 1970s, I would like to suggest that not only can we read the

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<sup>33</sup> We will encounter several versions of this critique below.

<sup>34</sup> This is in no way to deny the obstacles thrown up by the Berlin Senate throughout the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s, a dominant motif that will punctuate the following chapters at regular intervals.

<sup>35</sup> Tilman Fichter, “Zur Vorgeschichte des Denkmals: Fünf Generationen nach Auschwitz,” in Lea Rosh, *“Die Juden, das sind doch die anderen”*: Der Streit um ein deutsches Denkmal, Berlin: Philo, 1999, p.176.

rubble heaps on this neglected urban wasteland as a metaphor for repressed memory. We can, more importantly, read the site itself as a materially legible instance of the concealment of the ‘violence at the origin’ inscribed in the urban geography of postwar Berlin and the liberal democratic West German polity. Fast-forwarding for a moment, the metaphor of a repressed violence at the origin of the Federal Republic was so impressive that the preservation of the rubble heaps on the grounds of the Gestapo-Gelände became a prerequisite of the second of the three design competitions it took to design the site between 1983 and 2006.<sup>36</sup> At any rate, the ‘forgetting’ of this origin – whether by way of ‘active concealment’ initiated by Adenauer and other center-right political figures, opportunistic silence, selective remembering or forgetting, or the repression occasioned by the ‘inability to mourn’ – enabled the emergence of a prosperous postwar German collectivity working together to effect the ‘economic miracle,’ and partaking together of its fruits.

### **TO TURN BACK THE CLOCK ON A TIME OF ‘PRUSSIAN SPLENDOR,’ OR TO CONFRONT GERMANY’S NAZI PAST? MONUMENTS AND MUSEUMS ON THE GESTAPO-GELÄNDE**

By the early 1980s, the repressed had returned, acting as a catalyst both for a younger generation recently made aware of the significance of the Prinz-Albrecht-Gelände and for those with direct experience of persecution at the hands of the Nazis, such as the Working Group of Persecuted Social Democrats (Arbeitsgemeinschaft Verfolgter Sozialdemokraten, or AVS), to pressure city officials into a critical reappraisal of the site. Yet no one could agree upon the form that this critical reappraisal should take, or whether a critical reappraisal was even necessary. Proposals for the site ranged from a monument to anti-fascism, ‘critical reconstruction,’ and the

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<sup>36</sup> They are no longer there, however, for structural engineering complications arising from Peter Zumthor’s prize-winning proposal in the 1993 design competition necessitated the removal of the rubble heaps.

rebuilding of a replica of the Prinz-Albrecht-Palais.<sup>37</sup> Some thought the site should be left as it was, as testament to the repression of traumatic memory. The most oft-heard variation was that of the ‘open wound’ in the center of the city. Indeed the figure of the ‘open wound’ gained a fair amount of traction, influencing thinking about the site in the wake of the failed 1983-1984 design competition, becoming codified in the Expert Commission’s Final Report of 1990 (which I take up in the next chapter), and making an appearance in the subsequent calls for design proposals in 1993 and 2005-2006.

Others came to view the open space of Prinz-Albrecht-Gelände as the perfect site for the future German Historical Museum, either in the existing Gropius-Bau, or in a (re)built structure elsewhere on the site. Even though the development of the two institutions is often discussed in isolation, the 1980s history of the Topography of Terror out of the Prinz-Albrecht-Gelände is inextricably bound up with the controversial decision to found a museum of German national history. A full accounting of the fascinating relationship between the German Historical Museum (DHM) debates and the Prinz-Albrecht-Gelände would take me beyond the scope of this project, but a brief description is in order. Calls for a German history museum had been reverberating ever more insistently since the late 1970s, and received an immense boost from Helmut Kohl’s 1983 *Regierungserklärung* (‘statement of government intent’) speech, in which he threw the backing of the federal government behind plans to open a museum of German history to coincide with Berlin’s 750-year anniversary.<sup>38</sup> Even before this, prominent historians had been meeting to discuss the feasibility and location of a future museum of German history. In a 1982 memo written by Hartmut Boockmann, Eberhard Jäckel, Hagen Schulze, and Michael Stürmer, all were

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<sup>37</sup> The term ‘critical reconstruction’ was popularized by the IBA, but would be appropriated to different ends during the post-1989 Berlin building boom.

<sup>38</sup> Helmut Kohl, “Regierungserklärung des Bundeskanzlers am 4. Mai 1983 vor dem Deutschen Bundestag in Bonn: ‘Programm der Erneuerung, Freiheit, Mitmenschlichkeit, Verantwortung,’” *Bulletin* (43), Bonn, 5 May 1983, pp.40-41.

unanimous in their preference of the Gropius-Bau over two other possibilities, the Zitadelle in Spandau, and the Reichstag. Not only did its former function as a museum already recommend it; the building was also surrounded by illustrious sites of Prussian history, buildings of the Third Reich, and the Berlin Wall. “Nowhere is the integration of the museum into German history so sensuously perceptible as here,” wrote the authors of the report.<sup>39</sup>

Absent, however, was any mention of the buildings that no longer existed on the very site occupied by the Gropius-Bau, to say nothing of their function during the Third Reich – an omission which, unsurprisingly, occasioned much debate along fault lines that were anything but tidy. For example, many who opposed the siting of the German historical museum on the Prinz-Albrecht-Gelände – and even some historians and commentators critical of the ‘rightist’ leaning of the emphasis on affirmative and conventionally ‘national’ narratives of German history – nonetheless supported the idea of a German historical museum that tackled thematic issues such as militarism, genocide, and the rise of National Socialism.

Significantly, with the exception of Boockmann, all of the historians involved in writing the 1982 memo would contribute to the *Historikerstreit* of 1986-1987. Indeed, the early struggles over both what would get built on the Prinz-Albrecht-Gelände and what the site meant in German historiography played a role in shaping the contours of the more widely-debated *Historikerstreit*, a role that has not yet been fully appreciated.<sup>40</sup> The debates not only about the siting of the German Historical Museum, but also about the content of the museum, presaged the

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<sup>39</sup> “Deutsches Historisches Museum in Berlin: Denkschrift von Hartmut Boockmann, Eberhard Jäckel, Hagen Schulze, und Michael Stürmer für den Senator für Wissenschaft und Kulturelle Angelegenheiten des Landes Berlin,” January 1982, reprinted in Christoph Stölzl (ed.), *Deutsches Historisches Museum: Ideen – Kontroversen – Perspektiven*, Frankfurt: Propyläen, 1988, p.63.

<sup>40</sup> See “Deutsches Historisches Museum in Berlin,” in Stölzl (ed.), *Deutsches Historisches Museum*, for a foretaste of the issues that predominated during the *Historikerstreit*. For an incisive discussion about the relationship between the nascent German Historical Museum and *Historikerstreit* – a discussion which, incidentally, makes no mention of the controversy unfolding over what to do with the Gestapo-Gelände – see Charles Maier’s essay, “A Usable Past?” in his *The Unmasterable Past: History, Holocaust, and German National Identity*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988, pp.121-159.

controversy over ‘normalization’ and the forging of a ‘positive’ German identity that marked the *Historikerstreit*.<sup>41</sup>

What is important to bear in mind across all of the positions outlined in the previous pages is the self-perceived legitimacy of the various perspectives, along with how each perspective deployed the discourse of authenticity. In a word, the Prinz-Albrecht-Palais, the Prinz-Albrecht-Gelände, the Gestapo-Gelände, and (later) the Topography of Terror meant different things to different individuals and groups at different times. The meaning of the site was anything but uniform, playing a role in multiple narratives, spectacles, and memories – all of them ‘authentic’ to some degree, or at least framed as such. It is significant that all groups and interests involved in the debate referenced authenticity to buttress their claims, be it the authenticity of Schinkel’s Berlin, the authenticity of German resistance to fascism, even the authenticity of postwar German amnesia.

As the debate intensified over the course of the 1980s with the increasing consciousness of the role of ‘ordinary Germans’ in the perpetration of the atrocities of the Second World War, conflict emerged as to *what* even ought to be remembered at this toxic, traumatic site. What is more, the debate did not fracture neatly along anything remotely resembling a monolithic constituency on either side of the political spectrum.<sup>42</sup> Groups on the left, such as the SPD

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<sup>41</sup> See “Deutsches Historisches Museum in Berlin,” p.63. See also Michael Ludwig Müller, “Gropius-Bau soll Museum für deutsche Geschichte werden,” *Berliner Morgenpost*, 12 February 1982. In another ‘rediscovery’ of forgotten pasts – this time Prussian – Müller reported the following: “The most important result of the [Prussian Exhibition] in 1981 consists in the fact that after a thirty-year taboo surrounding Prussia, the public sphere has again taken up the theme intensely.” Due to the success of this exhibition held in the Gropius-Bau, FDP representative Jürgen Dittberner proposed the Gropius-Bau as an ideal home of a future German Historical Museum.

<sup>42</sup> The involvement of Volker Hassemer, the CDU (Christian Democratic Union) Senator for Cultural Affairs at the Berlin state level of government, helps to dispel any notion that the Right presented a monolithic front. Hassemer emerged as a sincere advocate of the need to confront Germany’s National Socialist past. Despite initial misgivings on the part of activists and citizens’ initiatives who dealt with Hassemer (especially regarding his position on the Gropius-Bau as a potential site of the proposed German Historical Museum), his ongoing involvement with the Topography of Terror stands in direct contrast to, among others, then-mayor Eberhard Diepgen (CDU), who favoured a historical reconstruction of the Prinz-Albrecht-Palais. Hassemer’s position also stands in stark relief to Diepgen’s decade-long equivocations on the Topography of Terror portfolio. For representative examples of

(Social Democratic Party) and the *Aktives Museum Faschismus und Widerstand in Berlin*<sup>43</sup> in its early days shared with some conservatives a desire for a monument to be erected on the site, significant differences in content notwithstanding. And while the proposal on the part of activists of a younger generation to preserve the rubble on the site as a metaphor for the repression of memory during the postwar period contrasted with calls for a nostalgic ‘historical reconstruction’ of the Prinz-Albrecht-Palais that effectively erased the history of National Socialism on the Gestapo-Gelände, both groups advocated some sort of historical preservation of the site.<sup>44</sup> Still others were critical of any monument whatsoever, seeing this commemorative focus on the victim as an alibi that detracted from a more complex engagement with the site that marked its traumatic history while situating it within the fabric of contemporary German collective memory. Proponents of a national history museum were not averse to a small monument or memorial plaque, but envisioned an institution that would obviate the need for a substantial exhibition and documentation center by ‘containing’ the history of National Socialism within the narrative sweep of German history.<sup>45</sup>

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Hassemer’s public engagements with the various constituencies invested in the Topography of Terror, see Akademie der Künste (ed.), *Diskussion zum Umgang mit dem ‘Gestapo-Gelände’: Dokumentation*, Berlin, 1986, especially p.12 and pp.25-26.

<sup>43</sup> Usually translated by commentators simply as ‘Active Museum Fascism and Resistance,’ this does not quite capture the notion of resistance against fascism. So as to avoid an awkward circumlocution, I will refer to this citizens’ initiative henceforth as the *Aktives Museum*.

<sup>44</sup> During the 1986 public hearings held under the auspices of the Academy of the Arts, author Günther Grass echoed Hoffmann-Axthelm’s earlier sentiments that the postwar history of repressed memory was an integral part of the history of German crimes because, as Grass wryly noted, “the manner of repression provides an indication of the causes of the crime.” Cited in Akademie der Künste, *op.cit.*, p.22.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Drucksache 9/649 (Berlin Abgeordnetenhaus), 21 June 1982. Presaging the acrimonious debates of the *Historikerstreit*, critics of a proposed German History Museum saw this attempt to portray German history in a ‘positive’ light as naught more than a dubious relativization of National Socialist crimes under the guise of ‘normalization.’ For an incisive sampling of these criticisms voiced in the midst of the *Historikerstreit*, see “Wider die Entsorgung der Deutschen Geschichte,” *Auszüge der Streitschrift der ‘Grünen’ im Bundestag gegen die geplanten historischen Museen in Berlin und Bonn (Dezember 1986)*,” reprinted in Stölzl (ed.), *Deutsches Historisches Museum*, pp.482-510. See also Arbeitsgruppe ‘Kunst und Kultur’ der SPD-Bundestagsfraktion, “Anhörung der SPD-Bundesfraktion zum Deutschen Historischen Museum Berlin,” herausgegeben von Freimut Duve, Protokoll vom 2. Juli 1986. Papers were delivered by Jürgen Habermas, Jürgen Kocka, and Hans Mommsen, and discussants included academics, intellectuals, and SPD party members.



In the wake of the 1981 Prussia exhibition, as calls grew more intense for a monument to be erected on this recently ‘unearthed’ traumatic site next door to the Gropius-Bau, the SPD stepped forward in February 1982 with a motion in the Berlin Parliament. Observing that the fiftieth anniversary of Hitler’s seizure of power on 30 January 1933 was fast approaching, the SPD motion called on the Berlin Senate (cabinet) to erect a monument to all those who had been persecuted, tortured, or killed in concentration camps or penal houses, with particular attention to be paid to Jewish victims. In addition, the motion called for a memorial center to be established that would house an exhibition along with research facilities. Most importantly, and reflecting the views of activists and citizens’ groups advocating for the development of the site, the SPD motion perceived the historical responsibility Berlin bore in terms of transmitting the memory of victimhood at the hands of National Socialism to future generations *through* the development of this affectively charged site.<sup>46</sup> The Senate agreed in principle that a monument should be erected on the site, but deferred a decision until further discussion had taken place, a discussion that, as has been hinted at, embroiled the Gestapo-Gelände in plans for the establishment of a German history museum in the Gropius-Bau.<sup>47</sup>

As alluded to above, not all interlocutors on the left agreed with the desirability of a monument (*Mahnmal*). During the selection process of the 1983-1984 design competition, the

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<sup>46</sup> Drucksache 9/393 (Abgeordnetenhaus von Berlin), “Antrag der Fraktion der SPD über Errichtung eines Mahnmals für die Opfer der nationalsozialistischen Gewaltherrschaft,” 24 February 1982.

<sup>47</sup> Drucksache 9/649 (Abgeordnetenhaus von Berlin), 21 June 1982. The Senate expressed disagreement, however, with the proposal for research facilities, citing the incipient plans for the establishment of a national history museum along with the existence of the recently founded Institute for the Study of Anti-Semitism at Technische Universität. Unaware of how much resistance such a position would engender, the Senate response to the SPD motion suggested that the very location of a monument adjacent to the proposed museum would suffice to make clear to the perceptive visitor what the connection was between the narrative of German history on display in the museum and the site next door. To generalize, while one side saw the success of the Prussia exhibition as confirming a desire among the populace for a national history museum, the other side, as mentioned, viewed the location of this museum next door to the Gestapo-Gelände as highly inappropriate.

*Berliner Geschichtswerkstatt* (Berlin History Workshop)<sup>48</sup> submitted the following open letter highly critical of monumental approaches to the site: “What is needed here is not a pompous monument, as justified as the demands of the persecuted groups may be. Rather, an *artistic* solution that gave form to the landscape is something to be sought after. In a certain kind of simplicity, [the ideal solution] will *invite* adults and children to remain for a time.”<sup>49</sup> In a similar vein, and though sympathetic to the sentiments of those who wanted to erect a monument as a kind of bearing witness to the suffering of the victims, Hoffmann-Axthelm stood opposed to such proposals insofar as they obscured the postwar history of the site. In recognizing the degree to which the various temporalities of the Prinz-Albrecht-Gelände, the Gestapo-Gelände, and the postwar history of the site as forgotten wasteland intersect with one another and are inscribed on at the site itself, Hoffmann-Axthelm goes on to critique the desire to erect a conventional monument on the site as a fruitless and ultimately unhelpful attempt to return to 1945.<sup>50</sup> Taking aim as much at a ‘historical reconstruction’ of the site as at positions that did not take sufficient account of the history of repression and displacement that marked the site between 1945 and 1981, Hoffmann-Axthelm’s remarks underscore the historicity of authentic responses to the site. As he argues: “The place where the Gestapo headquarters itself stood exists for us today not

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<sup>48</sup> The Berlin History Workshop was one of a number of grassroots citizens’ groups, anti-authoritarian in outlook, that had banded together to wrest the control of ‘history’ from the professional ‘guild.’

<sup>49</sup> Berliner Geschichtswerkstatt, “Offener Brief an den Vorsitzenden des Preisgerichts des Wettbewerbs zur Gestaltung des Geländes des ehemaligen Prinz-Albrecht-Palais,” dated 23 March 1984, reprinted in “Offener Wettbewerb. Gestaltung des Geländes des ehemaligen Prinz-Albrecht-Palais. Ausstellung der Wettbewerbsarbeiten vom 12.März 1984 bis 25.März 1984. Auswertung und Zusammenstellung der Beiträge und Stellungnahmen,” Berlin, 1984, unpaginated (emphasis mine). Of note is that in 1983-1984, artistic expressions that shaped the Gestapo-Gelände as memorial site were still being entertained. As we shall see later, artistic solutions eventually became anathema to what increasingly came to be perceived as a ‘legitimate’ or ‘appropriate’ approach to the Topography of Terror.

<sup>50</sup> Dieter Hoffmann-Axthelm, “Prinz-Albrecht-Palais oder Reichssicherheitsamt?” p.1782.

simply as the past site of the Gestapo headquarters. [...] Rather, it exists for us also through the historical engagement with the site between 1945 and 1981.”<sup>51</sup>

## **GIVING SHAPE TO MEMORY: THE DESIGN COMPETITION OF 1983-1984 AND ITS DISCONTENTS**

Roughly a year after the SPD motion calling for a monument to be erected on the Prinz-Albrecht-Gelände, the Berlin Senate sent out a call for proposals for a design competition to develop the site. Explicitly referencing the visible and invisible traces of National Socialist history contained on the site, but also explicitly devolving the weight of historical interpretation onto the German history museum still being planned for the adjacent Gropius-Bau, then-mayor Richard von Weizsäcker (CDU, Christian Democratic Union) envisioned the brief as an opportunity to meld historical reflection with the provision of much-needed recreational facilities for the Kreuzberg district.<sup>52</sup>

Resting on the premise of the ‘authenticity of place’ as a means of keeping present the memory and knowledge of the crimes of National Socialism, and with a strong emphasis on philosophical and aesthetic approaches to commemoration, the general contours of the call for proposals reflected the rising influence of the counter-monumental impulse driving

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p.1782. See also Gerhard Schoenberger, “Prinz Albrecht: ein deutsches Trauerspiel,” in *Der Senator für Bau und Wohnungswesen, Offener Wettbewerb Berlin, Südliche Friedrichsstadt: Gestaltung des Geländes des ehemaligen Prinz-Albrecht-Palais* (Ausschreibungstext), Berlin: “Internationale Bauausstellung Berlin 1987,” 1985. Against the monumentalizing impulse of calls for a German history museum, Schoenberger, president at the time of the *Aktives Museum* citizens’ initiative, criticized the implicit relativizing tendency that sought to domesticate the trauma of the Gestapo-Gelände either by inserting it into the broad sweep of one thousand years of German history, or by advocating a historical reconstruction of the Prinz-Albrecht-Palais to house the museum. Such a move would only “expunge the last traces of the bloody past” and fill the void visually with a dubiously sanitized narrative (p.33).

<sup>52</sup> See Weizsäcker’s introductory remarks to the design competition, “Geleitwort des Regierenden Bürgermeisters, Richard von Weizsäcker, zum Ausschreibungstext des Architektenwettbewerbs, 1983,” cited in *Offener Wettbewerb Berlin* (Ausschreibungstext), p.1.

commemorative practices in 1980s Germany.<sup>53</sup> Yet the fateful combination of historical reflection and contemporary leisure referred to in Weizsäcker's introductory words took on all the more confounding dimensions in the following pages of the call for proposals. In terms of the historical significance of the site, the call for proposals suggested the following:

Through the medium of architecture and art, the history of National Socialist tyranny should consequently remain present as a history of its victims without becoming divorced from the space and substance of the city. On the contrary, this history is to become an inseparable part of city life through [the importance of] place. What is more, this history is not meant to be marked off merely as a singular, isolated incident from which one can seal oneself off with justified and self-righteous indignation. Instead, it should be perceived as an unspeakably tragic and terrible high point of a totalitarianism that in no way was exorcized in 1945 as a political and social phenomenon, but rather as a phenomenon which now as then threatens human life and community behind ever new disguises in ever new places. [...] All in all the history of this site should stand as an emblem and matrix that exists beyond the concrete crimes to which it was a silent witness, a symbol that illustrates both possible and still occurring crimes. [Its role] is not to calm and soothe, but rather to call attention to the crimes, to critique, and to unsettle.<sup>54</sup>

After describing the task at hand as “an artistic challenge in the true and complete sense of the word,”<sup>55</sup> and after having just asserted the importance not of contentment vis-à-vis the site but of a critical awareness and disposition, the text of the call for proposals reverses itself drastically. The framers of the call for proposals noted that Kreuzberg was infamously under-provisioned with green space, and went on to conclude that the grounds to the east of the former Museum of Industrial Arts and Crafts (Martin-Gropius-Bau) should “become a place of leisure and relaxation for the inhabitants of the immediate vicinity.”<sup>56</sup> With this subsequent emphasis on

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<sup>53</sup> For the general framework outlining both the nature of the site to be developed and the task at hand, see *Offener Wettbewerb Berlin* (Ausschreibungstext), 1983, pp.4-5.

<sup>54</sup> *Offener Wettbewerb Berlin* (Ausschreibungstext), 1983, p.4.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p.4. Of note here is the implicit predilection for ‘symbolic’ approaches to shaping the terrain. This ‘aesthetic’ tendency would later come into conflict with material-realistic ‘authentic expressions of place’ as it presented itself, a Rankean notion of historiography that eventually carried the day in discourses about how best to approach the Topography of Terror. We shall explore this in greater detail in the chapter on the aesthetics of sobriety.

<sup>56</sup> See *Offener Wettbewerb Berlin* (Ausschreibungstext), 1983, p.4.

the need for leisure and green space over the remainder of the introductory framework of the call for proposals, architects, artists, and designers submitting proposals under tight time constraints were faced with an insurmountable challenge: how to reconcile the representation of a dark and traumatic past with contemporary land use needs.<sup>57</sup>

In a decidedly gray Kreuzberg still bespeckled with vacant lots and piles of rubble from nearly forty years previous, the requirement of green space seemed to make sense from the perspective of city planning. And the desire to not create a sacralized space cordoned off from the everyday life of residential Kreuzberg was a pervasive sentiment at that time and since.<sup>58</sup> Because of the close involvement of the IBA in the design competition (the jury was headed by Josef Paul Kleihues, an influential architect linked with the IBA, and Dieter Hoffmann-Axthelm was an advisor to the jury), it is not surprising that questions of community reintegration received careful attention in the wake of the wave of dismal modernist urban experiments that had swept both sides of Berlin in the postwar period. However, the IBA's laudable historical approach to the development of livable neighbourhoods as a goal of city planning gave rise to a rather curious anomaly in the call for proposals, whereby historical and contemporary descriptions of buildings and neighbourhoods obscured the significance of the site as the headquarters of the Gestapo and the RSHA. Over the twenty-six pages of the call for proposals, the National Socialist history of the site receives mention but four times.

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<sup>57</sup> Florian von Buttlar and Stefanie Endlich, "Der Wettbewerb," in Leonie Baumann and Sabine Weißler (eds.), *Der umschwiegene Ort*, Berlin: Neue Gesellschaft für Bildende Kunst, 1987, p.42ff.

<sup>58</sup> This sentiment played a significant role in the conceptualization of the 'counter-monuments' of the 1980s and 1990s such as Horst Hoheisel's Aschrott Brunen, Jochen Gerz's 'sinking/sunken' monument against fascism in Hamburg, and Renata Stih and Frieder Schnock's powerful but subtle Memorial to the Deported Jewish Citizens of the Bayrische Viertel in Berlin. (See James E. Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1993, and Young, *At Memory's Edge: After-Images of the Holocaust in Contemporary Art and Architecture*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000). And though one might argue that the recently completed Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe serves, for some, as a sacralized space of mourning where different rules of comportment apply, nonetheless the field of stele remains open to the public twenty-four hours per day, and is used by citizens and tourists alike in a variety of ways.

In the end, the requirement that the terrain lying to the east of the Gropius-Bau should become a city park given over to recreation needs of Kreuzberg residents all but condemned to failure an otherwise interesting, albeit vague call for proposals. In a commentary on the design competition, architect Florian Buttlar, a preliminary examiner (Vorprüfer) on the jury panel, underlined the consequences of both “the overburdening of the site through [the weight of] the events and the overtaxing of those submitting design proposals in terms of the requirement to process these events into something visible.”<sup>59</sup> Going further, Buttlar identifies a key characteristic of the way in which architects approach the representation of history: “We as planners and architects are inclined (perhaps even called) to search after the sensuously graspable counterparts of difficult-to-portray contents like history and its ramifications [...] and as a result all too often grasp at dramatic allegories and symbols.”<sup>60</sup>

Though perhaps extreme, Matthias Hass’ caustic critique of the call for proposals encapsulates the confusion and inability to agree on the use of the site: the fundamentally flawed premises of the design competition appeared destined to yield nothing more than a ‘Gestapo-Erholungspark’ (Gestapo Leisure and Recreation Park).<sup>61</sup> Given these conflicting aims, it is not surprising that the call for proposals gave rise to a wide array of artistic interpretations – from traditional monuments through artificial landscapes and ruins to renditions incorporating symbols as diverse as swastikas and stars of David. Several entries wisely side-stepped the vexed issue of the combination of ‘Gestapo’ with ‘Erholungspark’ all together. The documentation detailing the design competition lists just a small sample of the interpretations of the call for

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<sup>59</sup> Florian von Buttlar, “Ein IBA-Wettbewerb – Prinz-Albrecht-Palais: Zu einer Typologie der Vergangenheitsbewältigung,” in *aktuelles bauen: das schweizerische Bau-, Architektur-, und Planungsmagazin* (19), October 1984, p.27.

<sup>60</sup> Buttlar, p.27. As further evidence of this difficulty compounded by the wording of the call for proposals, Buttlar points out that only 194 proposals resulted from over 450 requests for the documents detailing the competition.

<sup>61</sup> Matthias Hass, *op.cit.*, p.156.

proposals: decentralized, symbolic art objects in a park; monumental art objects in the center of a park or natural landscape formation; parks containing traces, with places on the terrain excavated or marked in some way; buildings in the park (conceived as monument or ‘active museum’); the terrain as either natural or artificial landscape; the terrain as the result of symbolically understood geological forces (erosion, fault lines); the terrain as ‘art garden’ with buildings; the terrain as square or plateau (usually paved over); the terrain as ‘wasteland’; the terrain as altered and overgrown structure.<sup>62</sup>

Buttlar provides a serviceable typology of six broad categories into which the proposals fell.<sup>63</sup> Buttlar’s additional categories beyond ‘monuments in parks’ and ‘landscape formations as symbols of history,’ which encompassed many entries in the sample of interpretations listed above, hint at the richness of interpretations of a vague and problematic call for proposals not yet narrowed in terms of scope and clarity. Proposals typical of the category ‘the affective environment’ sought to convey the past by placing the visitor in a physical environment conducive to the sensation of fear and terror, transmitting to the visitor the sense that there is no way out.<sup>64</sup> These proposals attempted in problematic but interesting ways to convey a sense of the ‘authentic reality’ of the past, either through the simulation of being in jail (the third prize submission), through giant labyrinths, or via traversable holes dug fifty metres into the ground.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Der Senator für Bau und Wohnungswesen, *Dokumentation; Offener Wettbewerb Berlin, Südliche Friedrichsstadt: Gestaltung des Geländes des ehemaligen Prinz-Albrecht-Palais*, Berlin: Internationale Bauausstellung Berlin 1987, 1985, pp.54-56. These pages go into even further detail as to how individual proposals sought to reconcile the exigencies of the design competition brief.

<sup>63</sup> See Florian von Buttlar, “Ein IBA-Wettbewerb,” pp.24-26. His six categories are: ‘the monument in the park’; ‘the affective environment’; ‘the sealed site’; ‘landscape formation as historical symbol’; ‘the archeological concept’; and ‘the new site.’

<sup>64</sup> Where the vague aims of the 1983-1984 call for proposals presented insurmountable challenges but elicited a vast range of responses from architects and artists, the much more tightly focused 1993 and 2005-2006 calls for proposals were that much more limiting, foreclosing on an array of experimental approaches to the site. (As we shall see below, this was, in fact, the aim of these calls for proposals).

<sup>65</sup> Buttlar, “Ein IBA-Wettbewerb,” p.24.

Proposals tending toward an ‘archeological conceptualization’ of the terrain were the most complicated and often fragmentary compositions of the past. Though calling forth often radically divergent interpretations of the Gestapo-Gelände, what typified many of the archeological conceptualizations was some combination of the conservation of elements of the former buildings, either through excavation or through reconstruction of the ground floor walls, with a preservation of landscape elements that had spread over the terrain in the postwar period, such as overgrowth and rubble piles. Interestingly, the second prize submission employed abstract elements that expressed the imbrication of historical layers that had marked the site from the baroque period through Schinkel’s classicism to the Third Reich.<sup>66</sup>

Proposals belonging to the category of ‘the sealed site’ made some of the strongest statements concerning the *failure* of architecture, documentation, and sculpture in the face of the horrors of history. “No park. No playground. No refuge,” intoned one submission.<sup>67</sup> Such polemical sentiments bore more than a passing resemblance to the emerging discourse of ‘sublime un(re)presentability’ that took up and transformed Adorno’s famous dictum on poetry after Auschwitz. But with their uncompromising refusals, with their calling into question of the limits of representation, these proposals were also the most problematic insofar as a sealing of the site entailed yet a further repression of the past.<sup>68</sup>

Included in the proposals to seal up the Gestapo-Gelände was the first prize submission of Jürgen Wenzel and Nikolaus Lang, which set up a nuanced contrast between the living and the dead through the use of inert iron plates and living vegetation punctuating the sealed ground at

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<sup>66</sup> For a discussion of these proposals, see Buttlar, pp.25-26.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., p.24.

<sup>68</sup> It is worth bearing in mind that the discourse of unrepresentability emerged as a notion against which an increasingly influential group of actors concerned with the Gestapo-Gelände began to coalesce. As we shall see below, this group – comprising the *Aktives Museum*, the *Initiative zum Umgang mit dem Gestapo-Gelände*, and eventually the foundation entrusted with the planning and operation of the Topography of Terror – pulled the Topography of Terror resolutely in the direction of documentary realism: the National Socialist time period as eminently and urgently explainable. I take up this issue again in the aesthetics of sobriety chapter.



regular intervals.<sup>69</sup> Wenzel and Lang planned to select a multiplicity of documents ranging from death lists, proclamations, ordinances, arrest warrants, and transport schedules to pages from the diaries of perpetrators and victims. These documents would then be enlarged and embossed on cast-iron plates of approximately one square meter in size, and placed over the entire terrain, indicating the former buildings in relief. The proposal proceeded from the assumption that the dimensions of administered death planned, organized, and executed from this site exceeded the ability of traditional norms and criteria of memorial representation. The result would be a presentation of documents ‘cast in iron,’ confronting anyone who passed over the space with evidence of the fear, injustice, and inhumanity that marked the site. But even the terms of this contrast between living vegetation and inert material called forth interesting ambiguities and tensions, for the geometrically planted chestnut trees could evoke life growing over the dead iron at the same time that it could be read as a reproduction of rigid bureaucratic conformity. The ‘interred site’ also garnered multiple readings. Though the prize jury praised the complexity of this design that inserted itself as a ‘foreign body’ into the city fabric while simultaneously eschewing monumentality and remaining open to the public in all directions, it also foresaw negative interpretations, intimating that the idea to completely seal over the terrain could stand modification.<sup>70</sup>

While some viewed this absolute refusal to engage with the terms of the call for proposals in a favourable light, others took a dim view of this sealing up of the site with heavy cast-iron plates, claiming that the gesture entailed a reconciliation with the past at best, and a questionable desire to turn the page, even repress that past at worst. In defense of the design,

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<sup>69</sup> The following description is based on Jürgen Wenzel and Nikolaus Lang’s elucidation of their concept for the design competition, which can be found in *Dokumentation; Offener Wettbewerb Berlin*, 1985, pp.62-64.

<sup>70</sup> See “Beurteilung durch das Preisgericht: 1. Preis,” contained in *Dokumentation; Offener Wettbewerb Berlin*, 1985, p.65.

then-Senator for Cultural Affairs, Volker Hassemer, emphasized the affective dynamics of the Wenzel-Lang proposal, asserting that it, like no other, rendered palpable the terrible particularity of this site. Hassemer saw the iron plates covering the site not merely as an open book of information to be traversed by the visitor; he perceived in them the ostensible power of the original document to move the visitor to a critical engagement with the past.<sup>71</sup> Others were less convinced. Ulrich Eckhardt, intendent of the Berliner Festspiele and one of the representatives of the upcoming Berlin 750<sup>th</sup> anniversary planning committee, criticized the sealing of the site as a hermetically totalizing formation of perception, the bleakness of which foreclosed on other experiential possibilities at the same time that it restricted the visitor's ability to retain the information cast in iron.<sup>72</sup> And Hoffmann-Axthelm, in his typically forthright manner of critique, excoriated what he saw as yet another return to Stunde Null: "At the time, no memorial site was constructed because people just wanted the place gotten rid of. And now we have the award-winning proposal that, for its part, again carries on as if there were never anything here before. Forty years of postwar history on this site – where have they gone?"<sup>73</sup>

In one of her many commentaries on what she saw as the dangers of unspecific symbolic interpretation, Stefanie Endlich posed what emerged as one of the central questions in the subsequent decades of debate: "Does the site even lend itself to being defined in a formal way?"

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<sup>71</sup> Volker Hassemer, "Gelände als „begehbare Buch“ weckt Betroffenheit," *Berliner Morgenpost*, June 1984, reprinted in *Dokumentation; Offener Wettbewerb Berlin*, 1985, p.50. Incidentally, the 'power of the original document' became a hallmark of engagements with the site from 1987 onwards.

<sup>72</sup> Ulrich Eckhardt, "Prinz-Albrecht-Palais soll Forum für deutsche Geschichte und Gegenwart sein," in *Berliner Morgenpost*, July 1984, reprinted in *Dokumentation; Offener Wettbewerb Berlin*, 1985, p.50. Eckhardt favoured a site that did not alienate visitors, but invited them to linger. It is also worth noting that his critique of outsized documents 'cast in iron' sprung from his belief in the force of the decidedly life-sized document presented in all its everyday banality – and the best place to present these documents was not in the open air, but in a museum. No doubt Eckhardt's advocacy of a German history museum in the Gropius-Bau motivated his position on the modalities of documentary presentation. See also Stefanie Endlich's interview with Ulrich Eckhardt in Akademie der Künste (ed.), *Zum Umgang mit dem Gestapo-Gelände: Gutachten im Auftrag der Akademie der Künste Berlin*, Berlin, December 1988, pp.39-41.

<sup>73</sup> Dieter Hoffmann-Axthelm, cited in Rürup, *Topographie des Terrors*, 1987, p.212.

Does not such a formalization restrict and narrow the complex dimensions of the site?”<sup>74</sup> In framing the contours of the debate in favour of a complex though *concrete* site, Endlich’s question foreshadowed the relatively restricted terms of the 2005-2006 design competition that yielded the reserved, functional, yet reticent Ursula Willms design completed in 2010. Presaging a number of occurrences, including the eventual failure, in 2004, of the Zumthor design selected during the 1993 design competition, the carefully-worded call for proposals for the third Topography of Terror design competition in 2005-2006, and the eventual selection and completion of the Willms design, Endlich writes in 1987 apropos of the 1983-1984 design competition:

The quality of the different architectural proposals is not what is at issue here. What is important to grasp is that monumental, archetypal, historicizing, or symbolically marked architectural forms were far less convincing to the jury than were restrained and functional proposals. Already during the design competition there were controversial assessments regarding whether development [*Bebauung*] of the site was even sensible, or whether a rejection of new buildings might not be the only appropriate solution.<sup>75</sup>

Though Endlich asserts that symbolic interpretations received less favourable attention than did more ‘reserved’ interpretations, in fact the struggle over the relative appropriateness of ‘aesthetic’ solutions as opposed to those that concentrated on the ‘authenticity of the site’

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<sup>74</sup> Stefanie Endlich, “Gestapo-Gelände: Entwicklungen, Diskussionen, Meinungen, Forderungen, Perspektiven,” in Akademie der Künste (ed.), *Zum Umgang mit dem Gestapo-Gelände*, p.23. An art historian by training, not only was Endlich deeply involved in the 1983-1984 debates, but she went on to play a pivotal role in shaping perceptions about the Topography of Terror through her prolific writings on the topic. In addition, Endlich exerted an influence on the shape of Berlin’s memoryscape as a member of a number of official committees and bodies: as one of the eight members of the Expert Commission called into existence by the Berlin Senate in 1989; and through her role in the Topography of Terror Foundation that came into existence between 1992 and 1995, for which she acted as publicist until 2004. In addition, she was also a ‘Sach’ judge in the design competitions of 1993 and 2005-2006. Endlich’s influence also extended beyond the Topography of Terror. In an advisory capacity, she participated in the discussion sessions that gave rise to the Information Center beneath the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe.

<sup>75</sup> Stefanie Endlich, “Gestapo-Gelände,” in *Zum Umgang*, p.19.

exercised participants in the debates right down to the opening of the Willms-designed exhibition hall in May 2010.<sup>76</sup>

Returning, for a moment, to the broad categories of proposals submitted for the 1983-1984 design competition, a significant repercussion becomes apparent looking forward to the subsequent design competitions of 1993 and 2005-2006. While many criticized the confusing terms of the call for proposals of 1983-1984, its very ambiguity resulted, at least, in a broad variety of interpretations. And this array of ideas encouraged earnest and sustained debate in the public sphere not only about what it meant to engage critically with and commemorate painful aspects of the past, but also about what forms these acts of commemoration might take. What these multiple categories counter-indicate are the ways in which subsequent design competitions, well thought out and succinctly formulated though they were, had the unintended side-effect of limiting the ‘counter-memorial’ thrust evinced by several of the proposed designs for the Gestapo-Gelände.<sup>77</sup>

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Controversially handled and maladroitly conceived, the failed design competition of 1983-1984 pleased few.<sup>78</sup> Despite Weizsäcker’s introductory remarks referencing the urgent task

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<sup>76</sup> The stakes of the debate over ‘aestheticization’ versus ‘authenticity’ help account for the split in the 1993 jury between ‘Fach’ judges – predominantly architects and city planners – who placed a relatively higher value on bold architectural statements, and ‘Sach’ judges – predominantly historians, representatives of the citizen’s initiatives, and art historians – who valued the affective pedagogical potential of the authentic trace. I discuss the implications of distinctions between Fach and Sach judges in greater detail in the next chapter.

<sup>77</sup> In Hoffmann-Axthelm’s assault on the ‘conformity’ that resulted from the 2005-2006 competition, he remarks acerbically that the top eight designs were uncannily similar. (Dieter Hoffmann-Axthelm, “Die Topographen sind am Ziel, der Ort geht unter,” in *Bauwelt*, 97:6, 24 February 2006). In a similar but different vein, I interpret this similarity as a case of the participating architects ‘reading’ the intentions of the jury more shrewdly than past participants had.

<sup>78</sup> See Rürup, *Topographie des Terrors*, 1987, pp.210-212 for a sampling of positions articulated by journalist and activist, Lore Ditzen, Hardt-Walther Hämer (member of the Academy of the Arts), and Ulrich Conrad (editor-in-chief of the architecture and design publication, *Bauwelt*), among others for representative positions against the Wenzel-Lang proposal.

facing Berlin as “trustee of German history, good or evil,”<sup>79</sup> critics attacked the resulting *process*, finding crucial flaws in the lack of public debate prior to the call for proposals, and in the brevity of the entire design competition. Regina Cohn and Udo Gößwald, composers of an open letter from the Berlin History Workshop, faulted the lack of public discussion about the historical significance of the site for placing limitations on those architects who took part in the competition.<sup>80</sup> Cohn, Gößwald, and several other commentators representing various citizen initiatives saw this foreshortened public discussion as indicative of the exclusionary politics practiced by the Berlin Senate, complaining that the behaviour of the Senate indicated a desire to avoid a prolonged and divisive debate and to push quickly toward ‘closure’ of this unsettling wound next next to the Gropius-Bau. To current head of the *Aktives Museum*, and at that time a founding committee member, Christine Fischer-Defoy (and many others besides), though it was commendable that such a large number of architects had come forward with design proposals, nonetheless it was not surprising that many of these proposals were doomed to failure from the outset. The call for proposals worked at cross-purposes in that it implicitly demanded not only a general knowledge of the historiography of fascism but also a particular knowledge of how fascism was manifested through the National Socialist terror apparatus housed at this site – and then combined this with land use requirements bundling together green space, playground, museum, memorial center, and park.<sup>81</sup>

Gerhard Schoenberner’s scathing critique of the entire process is representative of suspicions that the Berlin Senate was attempting to draw a quiet ‘Schlußstrich’ under the history

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<sup>79</sup> “Gleitwort,” in *Offener Wettbewerb Berlin*, (Ausschreibungstext), 1983.

<sup>80</sup> See Berliner Geschichtswerkstatt, *op.cit.*, 23 March 1984.

<sup>81</sup> Christine Fischer-Defoy, “Einige Anmerkungen zu den Entwürfen zur Gestaltung des Geländes des ehemaligen Prinz-Albrecht-Palais” dated 21 March 1984, and contained in “Offener Wettbewerb. Gestaltung des Geländes des ehemaligen Prinz-Albrecht-Palais,” Berlin, 1984, unpaginated.

of this troubling site both by limiting public participation and by imposing strict time constraints on the process:

Ignorance of historical facts, lack of historical consciousness, irrelevance to the subject matter at hand: all of this was immense. Empty theatricality instead of [productive] agitation [...] prevailed. The few proposals that approached the closest approximation of their ideas [...] were, for the most part, not developed to their fullest in the execution stage. And so these designs were shut out of the process early, even if one should have discussed them in more depth. But the jury was only interested in finished projects.<sup>82</sup>

In the wake of the public uproar over the winning design, Eberhard Diepgen (CDU), Weizsäcker's successor in the mayoral chair, abruptly cancelled Wenzel and Lang's prize-winning design on 4 December 1984. If there was plenty to critique about the process of the design competition, neither the prize jury nor those who submitted proposals for the competition faced the brunt of the blame for the failure of the process. Critics had the Berlin Senate squarely in their sights.<sup>83</sup> Florian Buttlar and Stefanie Endlich, both of whom were involved in the jury deliberation process along with Schoenberner, also had harsh words for the conduct of the design competition and its eventual cancellation, calling the stated conditions in the call for proposals of citizen participation a 'farce.'<sup>84</sup> In light of increasingly vocal calls for a German national history museum on the site forming a significant part of the context for the call for proposals and design competition of 1983-1984, the Berlin Senate attempted, clumsily, to forestall debate about the Gestapo-Gelände.<sup>85</sup> When the dust had settled, the Berlin Senate had neither calmed calls for a

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<sup>82</sup> Gerhard Schoenberner, "Zum Wettbewerb," in *Aktives Museum Faschismus und Widerstand in Berlin, Zum Umgang mit einem Erbe*, Berlin, 1985, p.21.

<sup>83</sup> See Hass, pp.160-163.

<sup>84</sup> Buttlar and Endlich, in *Der umschwiegene Ort*, p.43.

<sup>85</sup> As noted above, Chancellor Kohl had already committed to backing a museum of German history in Berlin. In April 1984, just weeks after the jury had decided on the Wenzel-Lang design, the president of the Abgeordnetenhaus (local/state-level parliament) announced plans in conjunction with the 1987 anniversary celebrations to house the newly established Forum für Geschichte und Gegenwart in the Gropius-Bau as a precursor to the establishment of a German history museum. See Mitteilung des Präsidenten an das Abgeordnetenhaus von Berlin, "Ein Forum für den Dialog der Gegenwart mit der Geschichte," 16 April 1984, collected in Stölzl (ed.), *Deutsches Historisches Museum*, pp.238-239.

critical engagement with the site, nor did it have a clear development concept for this terrain symbolizing a past that refused to go away. To the contrary. Much maligned then and since, the design competition of 1983-1984, along with its peremptorily cancelled first-prize design, touched off a prolonged period of heated debate and discussion encompassing the 1987 ‘provisional’ Topography of Terror exhibition, and culminating in a 1990 Expert Commission set of recommendations. All of this set the stage for the next design competition in 1993, and also had a profound bearing upon the even more intense nationally widespread and internationally significant 1990s debates surrounding what eventually became the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe.<sup>86</sup>

#### **THE ‘ORIGINS’ OF THE 1990S BERLIN MEMORYSCAPE IN THE ‘PROVISIONAL EXHIBITION’ OF 1987**

On the same 5 May 1985 day that Helmut Kohl and Ronald Reagan pushed on with their controversial visit to the Bitburg cemetery,<sup>87</sup> citizens’ initiatives in Berlin organized a symbolic dig on the Gestapo-Gelände in search of remnants of the Prinz-Albrecht-Palais and other buildings rumoured to be buried on the site. Looking back after his resignation as Research Director of the Topography of Terror Foundation in 2005, Reinhard Rürup recollected his initial misgivings about the efficacy of the symbolic dig of 1985.<sup>88</sup> Clearly, he had underestimated the emotional impact of uncovering historical traces on the site. Rürup’s admission strengthens the general argument some have made regarding the linkages between authentic trace and the

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<sup>86</sup> I touch upon this in the next chapter.

<sup>87</sup> The visit touched off a firestorm of protest for a number of reasons, not least of which was the existence in the Bitburg cemetery of a number of Waffen-SS soldier graves. See Geoffrey Hartman (ed.), *Bitburg in Moral and Political Perspective*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986.

<sup>88</sup> Reinhard Rürup, “Die Berliner *Topographie des Terrors* in der deutschen NS-Gedenkstättenlandschaft,” in *vorgänge*, Heft 1, 2005, p.80. See Christine Fischer-Defoy, “Von der Bürgerinitiative zur Institution: Das Aktive Museum und die Stiftung Topographie des Terrors,” *Aktives Museum Mitgliederrundbrief* (63), July 2010, p.5 for more on this symbolic ‘excavation-action.’

affective dimensions of contact with authentic traces or sites. In the case of the Topography of Terror, the material tangibility of the trace guaranteed the continued existence of the site as one dedicated to memorial issues.<sup>89</sup> The symbolic, performative act of ‘excavating memory’ challenged city officials to rethink plans that might have enacted a second repression of traumatic pasts on the former site of the Nazi terror apparatus. On the strength of this rising tide of support, the opposition ranks within the Berlin Abgeordnetenhaus (parliament) – some of whose members were involved with the symbolic dig – began to pressure the Senate to bring some clarity to future plans for the site, and to dispel the rumours still in circulation pertaining to the development of the site.<sup>90</sup>

Coming as it did on the eve of the *Historikerstreit*, the ensuing Berlin parliamentary debate revealed the tensions between those advocating a confrontation with the shameful, unsavoury aspects of Germany’s recent past, and those who favoured the ‘normalization’ of this past. The initial temptation is to read this debate as a sustained and uncompromising critique of the city government’s parsimonious sharing of information and lack of transparency. The opposition parties portrayed this as part and parcel of the ongoing ‘process of repression’ of postwar German history as reflected in the Gestapo-Gelände, intimating that the city government would rather efface the scars of this past rather than engage in continual memory-work.<sup>91</sup> A

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<sup>89</sup> Hardt-Walther Hämer, “Zur Entwicklung nach dem Hearing vom 27.2.1986,” in Akademie der Künste, *Diskussion zum Umgang mit dem ‘Gestapo-Gelände’: Dokumentation*, Berlin, 1986, pp.48-49.

<sup>90</sup> Rumours still persisted that the Gestapo-Gelände would be the site of the new museum in spite of Kohl’s stated preference (February 1985) for a new building in the vicinity of the Reichstag to house the DHM (See Helmut Trotnow, “Die Konzeption: Entwicklung und Kontroversen (1983-1987),” in Stölzl (ed.), *Deutsches Historisches Museum*, p.247, where Trotnow cites Kohl’s 27 February 1985 “Bericht zur Lage der Nation” (‘report on the state of the nation’), in which Kohl promised to build a German Historical Museum as a ‘birthday present’ for Berlin’s 750 year jubilee). Though all parties were apprised of the federal government’s decision to build the German Historical Museum elsewhere by the time the debate took place in parliament, opposition parties still had reason to criticize the Berlin Senate’s ‘information politics’ characterized by the avoidance of public discussion. See Alternative Liste (AL) representative Christiane Zieseke’s opening comments to the debate, in Plenarprotokoll 10/9 (Abgeordnetenhaus von Berlin), 12 September 1985, pp.375-376.

<sup>91</sup> Plenarprotokoll 10/9 (Abgeordnetenhaus von Berlin), 12 September 1985, pp.375-376, in particular the remarks of AL representative, Christiane Zieseke.



closer reading of the debate, however, serves to reveal the extent to which the efforts of the citizens' initiatives and opposition politicians were beginning to exert an influence on an (as yet) admittedly inchoate city government policy on the Gestapo-Gelände.

The heated rhetoric and acrimonious recriminations of this parliamentary debate notwithstanding, the city government was no closer to a decision on the site than it was when the Wenzel-Lang design was cancelled. Even after Kohl had selected a site across from the Reichstag for the German Historical Museum, nonetheless some conservatives, including mayor Eberhard Diepgen, continued to favour 'historical reconstruction' of the Prinz-Albrecht-Gelände as a means of tidying up this 'eyesore' (*Schandfleck*) flanking the refurbished Gropius-Bau. In light of these persistent proposals to reconstruct the Prinz-Albrecht-Palais, activists redoubled their efforts to pressure the Senate into committing to an orientation that would protect the integrity of the site.<sup>92</sup>

Under growing pressure from an increasing number of groups in the public sphere<sup>93</sup> and from among the ranks of the opposition in the Berlin Abgeordnetenhaus, the Berlin Senate eventually relented and commissioned a formal excavation of the site under the auspices of the Senator for Culture, which took place between July and September 1986.<sup>94</sup> Among other traces unearthed were parts of the cellar walls of the Prinz-Albrecht-Palais, and remnants of a few cells of the Gestapo's 'house prison.' The result was a literal unearthing of the physical layers of

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<sup>92</sup> See Till, pgs. 96 and 250. See also Hass, p.161. In the lead-up to the 750-year anniversary of the founding of Berlin, then-mayor Eberhard Diepgen went on what became an infamous Schandflecktour ('eyesore tour') of Berlin, and cited the vacant expanse behind the recently-refurbished Gropius Bau as but one example of the 'eyesores' that needed cleaning up prior to the 1987 festivities.

<sup>93</sup> One of many examples is the Public Hearing that took place under the auspices of the Academy of the Arts in February 1986, a hearing similar in scope to the one that had taken place in 1983 (also under the auspices of the Academy of the Arts) to debate, among other things, the future usage of the Martin-Gropius-Bau, the planned museum of German history, and the relationship of both to the recently 'rediscovered' Gestapo-Gelände. For transcripts of the debates, along with follow-up essays and articles, see Akademie der Künste (ed.), *Diskussion zum Umgang mit dem 'Gestapo-Gelände': Dokumentation*, Berlin, 1986.

<sup>94</sup> Rürup, 1987, p.215.

history that had remained invisible to an official narrative proclaiming that there was nothing to see at the site. That it took something akin to a Foucauldian ‘archeology’ offering up tangible ‘authentic traces’ of the past to secure the Berlin Senate’s reluctant commitment to the future of the site is testament to the conflicting emotions the site continued to arouse, and to the resistance that needed to be overcome to prevent the site from being developed otherwise.<sup>95</sup>

With these visible, tangible fragments of the past at their disposal, Reinhard Rürup and Gottfried Korff set about curating the 1987 provisional exhibition that gave the vacant lot its current name.<sup>96</sup> The planning group opted for documentation in favour of interpretation so as to be acceptable to all political and religious orientations of the groups who had been involved in advocating for the Gestapo-Gelände. The facts were to speak for themselves, and interpretation was offered only during guided tours or discussions.<sup>97</sup> Significantly, the curators attempted to draw attention to what was made *invisible* during the postwar period, preserving the traces of postwar repression of traumatic memory as symbolized by the rubble heaps left by the scrap company.

In addition, multiple information placards documented the rise and spread of National Socialism in front of what remained of the buildings that served as the central apparatus of Nazi terror. The aim was to draw an experiential connection between the place itself and the historical documentation of the significance of the site. The exhibition catalogue returns repeatedly to the ‘making visible’ of traces; in turn, contact with these traces contributes to an ‘immediate

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<sup>95</sup> It is important to emphasize here that the Senate had committed to the ‘provisional’ development of the site in accordance with the plans for the 750 year anniversary, but after that, all options were still open.

<sup>96</sup> Among others involved with the planning of the provisional exhibition were Gerhard Schoenberger, and Klaus Hesse (who is the current photography curator of the Topography of Terror). Hesse’s ongoing involvement is one of the many examples of personnel continuity spanning the 1980s through 2000s.

<sup>97</sup> See Stefanie Endlich, Stefanie Endlich, “Gestapo-Gelände: Entwicklungen, Diskussionen, Meinungen, Forderungen, Perspektiven,” in Akademie der Künste (ed.), *Zum Umgang mit dem Gestapo-Gelände: Gutachten im Auftrag der Akademie der Künste Berlin*, Berlin, December 1988, p.8.

experience' of the past.<sup>98</sup> As Rürup explains, "what was emphasized was the character of the site of terror as [...] as a particular place of warning (*Mahnung*) and of reflection (*Nachdenken*) upon the premises and consequences of National Socialist domination."<sup>99</sup> Rürup's curatorial emphasis on the relationship between trace, visibility, site, and experience had a marked influence on the subsequent conceptualization of the Topography of Terror as a pedagogical 'site of reflection and learning' (Denkort, Lernort).<sup>100</sup> At the same time, though, this was no 'mythic communion' with the past, but rather a 'coming to know of the past' through contact with its traces. To their credit, the curators actively resisted any mythologization of the site. Authentic, but not fetishized – that was to be the watchword henceforth. And, moreover, this was to be an authenticity qualified by an adequate amount of information that combated the auraticizing pull of the authentic trace – what many critics saw as a 'Denkmal effect' that was but a pale shadow of the event it commemorated.<sup>101</sup>

Not only did the exhibition strategy create a sense of proximity between past and present on the site itself, the very use of the word 'topography' in the title of the exhibition served to situate the history of the Nazis, Gestapo, and SS squarely within the contemporary geography of Berlin. Though the 'authentic trace' integrated into an exhibition that encompassed the entire site held pride of place, the exhibition strategy devised by Rürup and Korff with the input of the citizens' initiatives diverged from traditional museum display. The exhibition displayed no artifacts or historical recreations. Rather, the provisional exhibition of 1987 drew upon the

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<sup>98</sup> See Rürup, 1987, p.216 for relevant passages.

<sup>99</sup> Rürup, 1987, p.216. See also Rürup "Die Berliner *Topographie des Terrors* in der deutschen NS-Gedenkstättenlandschaft," 2005, for a discussion of his rationale behind the exhibition.

<sup>100</sup> The Final Report handed down in 1990 by the Expert Commission (chaired, significantly, by Rürup) bore to no small degree the stamp of Rürup's curatorship of the Provisional Exhibition. See also Endlich, "Gestapo-Gelände: Entwicklungen, Diskussionen, Meinungen, Forderungen, Perspektiven," pp.7-13.

<sup>101</sup> In addition to works by Endlich, Buttlar, and Rürup already cited, the public gatherings held at the Academy of the Arts in 1983 and especially in 1986 signal the degree to which the critique of a certain type of conventional monumentality was beginning to shape the approaches to transforming the site.

powerful topographical referentiality of ‘this-happened-here,’ the spatial echo to Roland Barthes’ musings on the temporal referentiality of the photograph: ‘that-has-been.’<sup>102</sup> This eschewal of historical re-creation has remained constant throughout the various iterations of the exhibition, from the time it was housed in the temporary pavilion until the mid-1990s, through its tenure as outdoor exhibition over the next decade, to its current manifestation in the Willms building. That no artifact is exhibited is a key point distinguishing the Topography of Terror from the Jewish Museum, and even the information center attached to the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, a section of which recounts broken family histories with the aid of artifacts such as personal effects, diaries, and letters.

The absence of artifact or historical recreation also sets the Topography of Terror off sharply from the Shôwakan and the Yûshûkan.<sup>103</sup> As we have seen above, the Shôwakan is nothing if not an attempt at historical creation relying on soundscapes and donated objects installed to evoke a sense of ‘how it really was’ back then. As for the Yûshûkan, it, too, relies on artifacts – swords, tanks, artillery pieces, airplanes, and, most importantly in terms of affective dynamics, material belongings of soldiers, ranging from clothing to diaries. I say ‘almost exclusively’ because – interestingly – the Yûshûkan relies as well on its situatedness within the sacred precinct of Yasukuni Shrine, lending it a sense of ‘topographical authenticity’ insofar as the Yûshûkan benefits from the haunting ‘presence’ of those heroic spirits (*eirei*) enshrined at Yasukuni.

Through its very tangibility referencing what has come to pass at the site, the provisional exhibition on the former Gestapo-Gelände exerted a powerful influence on the quality of the

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<sup>102</sup> See Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans. Richard Howard, New York: Hill and Wang, 1981.

<sup>103</sup> One might pose the question as to whether the documentary photograph, so central to the exhibition strategy of the Topography of Terror – and, it is worth pointing out, to the Wannsee Conference Villa and the Bendlerblock memorial sites – might not be a substitute for the artifact, a substitute that functions, ironically, as a kind of artifact.

experience a contemporary visitor might have at this ‘authentic site.’<sup>104</sup> Ironically, what was envisioned as a ‘provisional’ solution tied to an authentic site has been quite enduring, due in no small part to the popular resonance of the exhibition.<sup>105</sup> From 1987 hence, the existence of authentic traces of the past largely determined the official response to the site insofar as it was no longer an option for city officials to consider plans that would have permanently covered or destroyed what was on the site.

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The layers of memory that have condensed on the Topography of Terror are nothing if not legible: trauma inscribed in urban geography; rubble heaps as metaphor of repressed memory; a complex variety of meanings rooted in the imbricated temporalities that coexist on this particular site. Responses to the Topography of Terror varied over time, running the gamut from amnesia – willed or otherwise – to engagement and commemoration. In addition, several *genres* of monuments and memorials presented themselves as options, each associated with particular aesthetic forms, symbolic locations, cultural practices, and political agendas. Within this range of response, some constituencies preferred to emphasize the site’s pre-Gestapo history, calling for a ‘historical reconstruction’ of the buildings on the site that, in some cases, dovetailed with proposals to erect the much-discussed German History Museum on the site. But while this elision of the site’s Gestapo past proved unpalatable to many other constituencies whose ideas eventually determined the broad contours of engagement with the site going forward, the most ‘appropriate’ commemorative response remained elusive.

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<sup>104</sup> But not every ‘authentic site’ in Berlin exerted this kind of pull, as we shall see in the next chapter when we consider ‘affective resonance’ as a factor in the emergence of a site as an ‘authentic memorial site.’

<sup>105</sup> The ‘provisional’ Topography of Terror exhibition attracted over 300,000 visitors in its first year alone (Rürup, 1987, p.216), and continued to draw roughly 12,000 visitors per month into the 1990s (Ladd, p.162). In addition to the favourable reception in the international press, the exhibition resonated positively in the GDR press as well. (See Endlich, “Gestapo-Gelände: Entwicklungen, Diskussionen, Meinungen, Forderungen, Perspektiven,” p.9).

The preceding pages have also demonstrated the extent to which marking pasts in a particular way entails the erasure of other pasts with less resonance in collective memory at that particular historical moment: the eclipse of one ‘authenticity’ in favour of the preservation of another. But just as the postwar neglect of the Prinz-Albrecht-Gelände failed to expunge the traces of the National Socialist past from the site, thereby contributing to the belated recollection of that past, so do the material reminders both on and in the environs of the Topography of Terror call forth not only different pasts, but competing interpretations of these pasts. Significantly, in the case of the Topography of Terror and its immediate environs, these imbricated temporalities are visible – or have been made visible by the efforts of concerned citizens’ initiatives – as physical layers of different pasts.<sup>106</sup> The discovery of material remnants bolstered the case for the building of an information center on the site at the expense of counter-claims (arising for the first time in 1988) for the erection of a memorial to Jewish victims. The argument for a pedagogically oriented documentation center in favour of a static monument rested on those very traces that had been wrested from oblivion: in short, the Topography of Terror was posited as more ‘authentic’ than the proposed monument to Jewish victimhood.

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<sup>106</sup> Photographs in the Topography of Terror catalogue (Rürup, 1987, in particular, on pgs.12, 420, 421 and 423) furnish excellent visual examples from which we can ‘read’ imbricated temporalities. It bears mentioning that photography – and the existence of particular photographs – contributes immensely to our ability, retrospectively, to discern the imbricated temporalities layered on the Topography of Terror (or any site, for that matter). Each photograph testifies to a past reality of the site. Each photograph of the site at a particular time is a potential ‘ghost’ that haunts contemporary accounts of the site.

## CHAPTER 9

### UNCERTAIN TERRAIN: THE POLITICS OF COMMEMORATION IN BERLIN'S MEMORY DISTRICT

Writing in the midst of the two design competitions that eventually resulted in the June 1999 Bundestag selection of Peter Eisenman's field of stele as the design for the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe (*Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas*), Brian Ladd wrote that if the Holocaust monument were to be built at all, "it will be condemned as an effort to repress the past, and praised as a gesture of coming to terms with the Third Reich, and will presumably represent some combination of the two."<sup>1</sup> Eisenman's Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe was, indeed, built. And by the time it had welcomed its first guests in 2005, just about anyone capable of picking up a pen had expressed an opinion about the monument, not only within Germany, but further afield as well.<sup>2</sup> Designed by a renowned American deconstructivist architect, debated in symposia and conferences by a domestic and international cast of academics, museum curators, activists, journalists, and politicians alike, the monument first conceived of by Lea Rosh in 1988 and relentlessly promoted thereafter had something of a cosmopolitan flare about it.

Yet in its conception and political backing, this monument was anything but. In the eyes of *Perspektive Berlin*, the citizens' initiative headed by Lea Rosh and historian, Eberhard Jäckel, and in the wording of the 1994-1995 design competition brief, this was to be an entirely German

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<sup>1</sup> Brian Ladd, *The Ghosts of Berlin: Confronting German History in the Urban Landscape*, Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1997, p.173.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, the phone book-sized compendium of sources collected up to the eve of the 25 June 1999 Bundestag vote on the Holocaust monument compiled by Ute Heimrod, Günter Schlusche, and Horst Seferens, entitled *Der Denkmalstreit – Das Denkmal? Die Debatte um das 'Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas: Eine Dokumentation*, Berlin: Philo, 1999. The foundation entrusted with the administration of the memorial, Stiftung Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas, has also compiled a helpful dossier of media and scholarly responses to the memorial site immediately preceding and following its dedication in May 2005.

gesture of atonement and expiation – expiation of the ‘shame’ and ‘disgrace’ that even though monuments and museums existed in Washington and Jerusalem, no monument bore witness to the victims of the Nazi genocide in the land of the perpetrators.<sup>3</sup> What was needed, argued supporters of a Holocaust monument, was a single, central memorial site invested with intense symbolic significance, an outsized monument equal to the monumentality of the crime, one that would provide a focal point for German national identity in a post-Holocaust (and post-Cold War) world.<sup>4</sup> In short, *Perspektive Berlin* and its supporters evinced a sincere but arguably naïve attempt to capture the radical diversity of Holocaust memory in a single symbolic gesture – a tall order, to be sure. But at least a wide consensus favoured the establishment of some sort of memorial.<sup>5</sup> The question of what form this commemoration should take was more complicated. Then there was the question of location, made all the more problematic because, unlike the Topography of Terror on the other side of Potsdamer Platz, what eventually became Eisenman’s Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe did not find itself on an ‘authentic site,’ at least not in any direct relationship to the Holocaust.

As I alluded to in the previous chapter and will develop more in this chapter, all of the questions that animated the local, national, and international debates about the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe were prefigured by and arose out of the 1980s and early 1990s debates

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<sup>3</sup> Lea Rosh, “Ein Denkmal im Lande der Täter,” in Bürgerinitiative Perspektive Berlin (ed.), *Ein Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas: Dokumentation 1988-1995*, Berlin, 1995, pp.3-7. Founded in 1988 by outspoken media personality, Lea Rosh, *Perspektive Berlin*’s central reason for existence was the building of a monument in the center of Berlin to the Jews murdered by the Germans in the Second World War. Since 1995 called the *Förderkreis zur Errichtung eines Denkmals für die ermordeten Juden Europas* (Society for the Promotion of Monument to the Murdered Jews of Europe), the citizens’ initiative is still in existence and still headed by Rosh. A more in-depth discussion of Rosh’s central and often polarizing role in what became the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe would take me beyond the scope of this study.

<sup>4</sup> For some of the many discussions of Lea Rosh and her *Perspektive Berlin*, see Brian Ladd, *The Ghosts of Berlin*, pp.167-173, and Peter Carrier, *Holocaust Monuments and National Memory in France and Germany since 1989: The Origins and Political Function of the Vél d’Hiv’ in Paris and the Holocaust Monument in Berlin*, New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2005, especially Ch.4.

<sup>5</sup> See Ute Frevert’s contribution to her work co-authored with Aleida Assmann, in Aleida Assmann and Ute Frevert, *Geschichtsvergessenheit, Geschichtsversessenheit*, Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1999, pp.274-275.



over the fate of what eventually became known as the Topography of Terror.<sup>6</sup> These include issues such as the authenticity of particular sites, monumentalism, aesthetic expression and the role of public art, the question of whom to commemorate, and the complicated issue of whether a (national) monument was even effective, much less appropriate in relation to other possible modes of commemoration. Since so much ink has already flowed apropos of the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, I will train my sights on an equally important yet oft overlooked story. My argument regarding the Memorial to the Murdered Jews is simple – no Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe without the citizen agitation that rescued the Gestapo-Gelände from oblivion in the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>7</sup> Whether the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe would become an odious space for the performance of empty political spectacles (such as wreath-laying ceremonies), as detractors feared, or a “Stolperstein in the political architecture and routine of a republic that had built its identity on the memory of the Holocaust”<sup>8</sup> hinged on two interrelated processes: the citizen agitation and activism surrounding the Topography of Terror, and the recommendations of the Expert Commission convened in 1989 to sift through the multiplicity of viewpoints put forward in favour of competing conceptions of commemoration.

In this chapter, I continue with my narration of the emergence of the Topography of Terror, covering the period from the late 1980s through the mid-2000s. Many journalists writing about the dedication of the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe in May 2005 expressed

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<sup>6</sup> I will use the term ‘Topography of Terror’ to refer, interchangeably, to the exhibition, its trustees (the Topography of Terror Foundation), its curatorial and academic staff, and, of course, to the memorial site itself.

<sup>7</sup> Throughout, I will leave ‘Gestapo-Gelände’ in German, rather than translate the various shades of ‘Gelände,’ which can refer to a site, grounds (such as exhibition grounds), or terrain (with topographical nuances).

<sup>8</sup> Claus Leggewie and Erik Meyer, *“Ein Ort, an den man gerne geht”*: *Das Holocaust-Mahnmal und die deutsche Geschichtspolitik nach 1989*, Munich and Vienna: Carl Hanser Verlag, 2005, p.10. ‘Stolpersteine’ are, literally, ‘tripping stones.’ The reference is to the slightly raised stones set in among the cobblestones at the entrance to residential buildings in Berlin and other German cities. The stones bear engravings of the names and fates of Jews who had once lived in these buildings, but who had been dispossessed, deported, and, in most cases, murdered in the death camps.

surprise that the memorial site had been in the works for seventeen years.<sup>9</sup> In this seventeen-year period of the much-longer history of the development of the Topography of Terror, the histories of both memorial sites were intertwined at first insofar as Lea Rosh's project had its origins in the late-1980s debates about what to do with the Gestapo-Gelände in the wake of the 'provisional' Topography of Terror exhibition. Thereafter, the trials and tribulations of each project ran on parallel tracks throughout the late 1990s, but remained as counterpoints to one another. In this period, the idea for a monument to the German genocidal murder of the Jews was conceived in 1988, and the Eisenman memorial was dedicated in 2005. Spanning virtually the same period, the Berlin Senate (cabinet) called an Expert Commission into being in 1989 to come up with a solution to the by-then decade-old question of what to do with the vacant wasteland in the nether reaches of West Berlin, a question made all the more salient by the events of November 1989. A second design competition was held in 1993 for the development of the Topography of Terror. Peter Zumthor's ambitious design was selected, construction began, stopped, started again, and never finished. A scant half a year before the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe was dedicated, Zumthor's unfinished white elephant was unceremoniously demolished.

This final act in the Zumthor saga capped a significant fifteen-year period of parallel histories – significant, for it sheds light on several issues at once. Intermingled with issues concerning questions of authenticity and aesthetics with respect to monuments and commemoration, the occasionally intertwined debates highlight, by turns, several points.

Foremost is the status of victim and perpetrator in post-Cold War Germany. Another is the

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<sup>9</sup> For a minute sampling of the multitude of media responses to the opening of the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, see: Heinrich Wefing, "Aus dem Boden. Wider aller Erwartungen: Das Berliner Holocaust-Mahnmal," in *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 4 May 2005; Severin Weiland, "Holocaust Mahnmal: 2711 Stelen gegen das Vergessen," in *Spiegel Online*, 10 May 2005 (<http://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/0,1518,355437,00.html>); and Craig Whitlock, "Going to the Heart of the Holocaust," in *Washington Post*, 7 May 2005.

attendant tensions and complexities inherent to confronting and narrating perpetrator pasts. Related to these two points is the question of national or ‘post-national’ identity in the wake of the Holocaust and National Socialism over the postwar period, and in the ‘new Germany’ more recently. Though this chapter is, in the main, about the Topography of Terror,<sup>10</sup> taking up the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe at various points helps in our understanding of some of the broader questions that have been informing the chapters of this project: how collective memory ‘condenses’ in and around certain sites, and how certain memorial sites become incorporated into officially sanctioned memory while others resist comfortable institutionalization within a given dominant (national) narrative.

#### **THE PEDAGOGICAL IMPORTANCE OF SITE AND TRACE**

That the Topography of Terror would survive its status as provisional exhibition was anything but a foregone conclusion in the years immediately before and after the events of 1989. This raises the question regarding what it is that contributes to the relative eclipse of one legitimately ‘authentic’ past at the expense of another, when a variety of pasts are visible on a site, if only in palimpsest. In her work tracing urban change in Berlin, Jennifer Jordan identifies resonance as one of the factors that contributes to the anchoring of a particular site in the collective memory of a given group.<sup>11</sup> One important aspect of resonance that Jordan’s

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<sup>10</sup> Admittedly, my treatment of the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe in this study is cursory at best. Suffice it to say, though, consulting the vast array of primary and secondary sources covering the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe reveals to what extent the debates mirrored and took their cue from the earlier Topography of Terror debates.

<sup>11</sup> See Jennifer A. Jordan, *Structures of Memory: Understanding Urban Change in Berlin and Beyond*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006, pp.9-14. In addition to resonance, Jordan discusses other conditions that affect whether or not a particular site becomes a memorial site. One important factor is the issue of current and proposed land use. For example, apartments or shops might now exist on a particular site, making it more difficult to consecrate it as a memorial site. The issue of land ownership plays a crucial role as well. Most of the prominent Berlin memorials have been erected on state-owned property, with the Topography of Terror and the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe being no exception.

deployment of the term gestures toward but does not develop, however, is the *historical* aspect of resonance, for the Prinz-Albrecht-Gelände clearly *did not* resonate in collective memory for decades after the end of the Second World War. And yet, over the few score decades since the generational upheavals of the 1960s, a particular interpretation of the site succeeded in awakening the erstwhile dormant ghosts of Nazi terror while in turn rejecting nostalgic appeals to Schinkel's Berlin – burying one past, as it were, in order to confront another.

Despite identifying resonance as a key factor in whether or not any-site-whatever gains public acceptance as a memorial, Jordan overlooks the affective dynamics of resonance as an important component of shifting generational relationships. To address this oversight, I argue that the affective dynamics of resonance is something which is as important – if not more so – than the catalytic effect of individuals and groups in understanding both the resonance of a given site and the attraction of authenticity. Affective resonance might be figured alternately as pride or shame in a national past, as a kind of frisson in the presence of an original relic or trace, as anxiety or discomfort vis-à-vis a particular representation of the past, even at the very existence of a given memorial site, or as something that mingles a plethora of dimly apparent bodily sensations or perceptions experienced while visiting a memorial site. Affect is also intertwined with the collective psychological dimensions of repression and the accompanying impact on collectivities of the belated recollection of traumatic experience. This is brought into all the more stark relief when considering the differential authenticities of the Topography of Terror and the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe.<sup>12</sup> These kinds of affective dynamics – which, at a very basic level, motivate the individuals and groups responsible for increasing the prominence

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<sup>12</sup> If the Topography of Terror can be figured as an 'authentic site,' the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe is an 'authentic gesture.' This is, of course, a porous distinction.

of particular sites – contribute to the relative ease of identifying with the victims on one site as opposed to confronting the reality of perpetration on the other.<sup>13</sup>

The Topography of Terror’s continued existence as a memorial site depended largely, then, on the resonance of the site within the broader public sphere. The ever-increasing public support and public involvement that had been mounting since the early 1980s, along with the acclaimed 1987 provisional exhibition of the historical traces uncovered during the archeological excavation of the site, tipped the balance toward a heightened public awareness favouring preservation.<sup>14</sup> More than all of that, however, the archeological unearthing of building remnants on the site squarely enshrined the discourse of authenticity as a defining characteristic of the Gestapo-Gelände. Perceived merely as an eyesore by a decreasing number of actors prominent in the public sphere, interlocutors now deemed the Topography of Terror to be an ‘open wound’ both pierced by authentic remnants of the Nazi terror apparatus that had spread genocidal suffering and death throughout Europe, and haunted by those persecuted and tortured at the site.

A further consequence of the work of the citizens’ initiatives, political debates, and public sphere hearings and discussions that marked the time period between the failed design competition of 1983-1984 and the installation of the ‘provisional’ Topography of Terror exhibition’ of 1987 was the gradual emergence of what set the Topography of Terror apart from other memorial sites in Berlin and the Federal Republic. A focus on the victims of National Socialism, as evinced by the initial proposals discussed in the previous chapter to erect a monument to the victims of National Socialism on the Gestapo-Gelände gradually gave way to a

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<sup>13</sup> I will bracket this question for now and revisit it later in this chapter and again in the next chapter.

<sup>14</sup> Of note also is the large number of school groups that visited the exhibition in the wake of the Senator for Education’s August 1987 promotion of the site’s ability to augment classroom lessons through discussions with exhibition staff. See Stefanie Endlich, “Gestapo-Gelände: Entwicklungen, Diskussionen, Meinungen, Forderungen, Perspektiven,” in Akademie der Künste (ed.), *Zum Umgang mit dem Gestapo-Gelände: Gutachten im Auftrag der Akademie der Künste Berlin*, Berlin, December 1988, p.8.

sober realization that this was an authentic site, first and foremost, where the perpetration of unspeakable deeds was planned and executed.<sup>15</sup> A series of interviews marking the 2008 twenty-fifth anniversary of the *Aktives Museum* citizens' initiative and collected in its newsletter trace this emergence. Rainer Höynck emphasized the difficulties of confronting perpetration at a memorial site, recalling that although "it was the idea of the *Aktives Museum* that the site should mark perpetration rather than victimhood," nonetheless "no one knew exactly what one wanted – what one did not want, however, emerged quickly to the fore."<sup>16</sup> And what they did not want was exemplified by a firm opposition to any kind of monumentalism that went hand-in-hand with political spectacle. This was not to be a site at which dignitaries gathered to mark important dates, give somber speeches, piously lay wreaths, and then go home.

Nonetheless, what did emerge as a consensus of sorts over the course of the 1980s was the pedagogical importance of the Topography of Terror. The authenticity of the site provided the pedagogical opportunity to link traces of historical significance to scholarly research initiatives that attempted to understand the development and spread of National Socialism as a broad social phenomenon, and then to present this understanding of the dynamics of perpetration to visitors of the site. As Leonie Baumann relates in a recent interview:

The idea was to create a place on this terrain that did not revolve around a fascination in the face of terror, the inconceivable, and the ungraspable. – Six million murdered is simply difficult to imagine, and this can cause people to tune out, or render them incapable of acting. In order to [help visitors] grasp the unique chance offered by the terrain, the perfidy of the machinery of persecution, bureaucratically thought through as it was, should be *shown*. This is because, in the first instance, the visitor sees nothing on the terrain. Rather, the task centers on leading the visitor to understand the *relationships* presented by the site. Here was this central site, from which the entire abomination was thought out and implemented according to a bureaucratically organized production schedule. How

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<sup>15</sup> See Matthias Hass, *Gestaltetes Gedenken. Yad Vashem, Das U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, und die Stiftung Topographie des Terrors*, Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 2002, pp.170-173.

<sup>16</sup> Rainer Höynck, cited in Nicole Warmbold, "Mit dem Blick Zurück nach Vorn: Eine Interview-Collage zum 25. Geburtstag des Aktiven Museums," in *Aktives Museum: Mitgliederrundbrief* (59), July 2008, p.14.

these constituent bureaucratic units, duties, and processes worked together – this is what is imaginable in the present.<sup>17</sup>

In this clear repudiation of the unrepresentability of the horrors of National Socialism, we catch a glimpse of the emerging contours of the favoured approach to representing the National Socialist past at the Topography of Terror, one which rested on a particular understanding of historiography: the ability of documents and black and white photographs to show how the dynamics of bureaucratized death unfolded. Before turning our attention to the relative merits and limitations of this approach in the next chapter, it is important to account for how the views of citizens' initiatives such as the *Aktives Museum* and the *Initiative zum Umgang mit dem Gestapo-Gelände* came to intersect increasingly with a nascent (and still at the time equivocal) political will to devise a 'permanent solution' for the site.

#### **THE EXPERT COMMISSION RECOMMENDATIONS AND THE FUTURE SHAPE OF PUBLIC MEMORY IN BERLIN**

The provisional status of both the exhibition and its administration notwithstanding, constituencies with otherwise opposing agendas came to acknowledge that, by and large, the Topography of Terror was a site that represented the geographical embeddedness of the linkages between the Nazi state apparatus and German society. A general consensus also opposed any substantial repurposing of the site. By the late 1980s and early 1990s, however, the broader debate over the relationship between history and memory in Germany had shifted away from questions of guilt and overcoming the past to appropriate and effective means of transmitting an increasingly mediated experience of the past to coming generations. The clash with *Perspektive Berlin* in the late 1980s was significant to the extent that *Perspektive Berlin* represented a viable

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<sup>17</sup> Leonie Baumann, cited in Nicole Warmbold, "Mit dem Blick Zurück nach Vorn," p.14 (emphasis added). We will revisit this emphasis on 'documentary realism' – show, demonstrate, explain – in the next chapter.

‘other’ against which individuals and groups involved with the *Aktives Museum and Initiative zum Umgang mit dem Gestapo-Gelände* could begin to delineate a coherent notion of what they saw to be the ‘uniqueness’ of the Topography of Terror – an authentic site of reflection charged with a pedagogical mission to transmit the experience of Germany’s past as perpetrators by way of documentation illuminating the remaining traces on the site.

*Perspektive Berlin*’s dramatic entry into the fray served only to further polarize the various interests involved with the site. In a surprising move in light of the passivity with which elected officials had faced the challenges posed by the Topography of Terror, the Berlin Abgeordnetenhaus (state parliament) mobilized itself to break the deadlock in November 1988. Based on a recommendation from the civic government’s Committee for Cultural Affairs, the state parliament tasked the Senate with the formation of a working group to hammer out recommendations regarding the future design of the Prinz-Albrecht-Gelände in consultation with all interested groups, organizations, and institutions in Berlin and beyond Germany’s borders.<sup>18</sup> Not all was smooth sailing, however. After being called into being by the Berlin parliament, and spending upwards of twenty-two sessions in deliberations, the commission saw its report languish on the backburner of Berlin Senate affairs in the wake of the fall of the Wall. This did not bode well for a sustained political commitment at the local level, especially in light of the Topography of Terror’s new-found geographic centrality in Berlin

In retrospect premature, but far from misplaced in light of endemic political foot-dragging, angst at the fate that might befall the Topography of Terror – perennially in danger of succumbing to political indifference – was palpable and justified in the heady months following the fall of the Berlin Wall. As real-estate prices climbed steadily, unprofitable enterprises

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<sup>18</sup> Drucksache 10/2579 (Abgeordnetenhaus von Berlin), “Beschlußempfehlung des Ausschusses für Kulturelle Angelegenheiten vom 10. Oktober 1988 zum Antrag der Fraktion der AL über Sicherung der ausgegrabenen Fundamente und Fortsetzung der provisorischen Ausstellung auf dem Gestapo-Gelände,” 26 October 1988.



disappeared. But the question persisted not only as to how to value the ineffable benefits of memory, but whether a place of reflection would even be tolerated in this newly-dynamic section of the city.<sup>19</sup> A more pressing question was whether a forward-looking nationalism might yet again efface those memories of the past either too painful or too inconvenient to weave into the identity of a reunited Germany. In the days following reunification, the initial thrust was in the direction of federal funds to restore reassuringly ‘national’ monuments, such as the Kaiser-Wilhelm-Nationaldenkmal in Halle, or the Kaiser-Wilhelm-Denkmal at ‘Deutsches Eck’ in Koblenz.<sup>20</sup> Once this initial impulse subsided and attention returned to more unsettling aspects of Germany’s past, ‘the price of memory’ – and the unpalatable squabbles to which such questions of value gave rise in terms of which victims deserved what – eventually became an all too dominant theme in subsequent years, especially in light of state and local budgets feeling the squeeze of reunification.<sup>21</sup> Yet in spite of the political stagnation<sup>21</sup> that had set in over the course of the 1980s surrounding what to do with the Topography of Terror, and despite the chronic political hesitation in implementing the recommendations of the expert commission over the course of the 1990s, the appointment, subsequent deliberations, and Final Report of the Expert Commission are significant in terms of the influence the process itself had on the subsequent development of Berlin’s mnemonic landscape in the years after the fall of the Wall.

The emerging intersection of views articulating the pedagogical importance of the Topography of Terror as a uniquely authentic site of perpetration crystallized in the work of this

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<sup>19</sup> See Stefanie Endlich, *Denkort Gestapo-Gelände*, Berlin: Aktives Museum Faschismus und Widerstand in Berlin E.V., 1990, p.48.

<sup>20</sup> See Endlich, *Denkort*, p.49.

<sup>21</sup> In Germany, the maintenance of memorial sites was and still is a largely decentralized affair, with the federal government contributing cash largely in a supporting role to state budgets. Museums, monuments, and memorial sites perceived to be of national significance typically garner more financial support. In comparison with the secure federal funding the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe enjoyed, the uncertain financial footing of the Topography of Terror throughout the 1990s and up to 2005 sheds light on the vagaries of what constituted ‘national significance.’

expert commission appointed in February 1989 by Senator for Culture, Volker Hassemer, and chaired by Reinhard Rürup. One might take a dim view of the increasing institutionalization of the interaction with the Gestapo-Gelände insofar as this institutionalization dissipated the energies and enthusiasm of citizen engagement hitherto relatively unfettered by ‘professionalized’ museal and historiographical considerations. This was a legitimate concern expressed, in particular, by the citizens’ initiatives involved with the Topography of Terror.<sup>22</sup> But by the time the provisional exhibition of 1987 was underway, the limitations of this provisional approach became apparent. Thinly staffed, and contracted for a fixed term, personnel involved with the site were soon overwhelmed by the success of the exhibition. Setting the Topography of Terror – as both site and exhibition – on a more permanent footing would enable an expanded staff to meet the demands of integrating the Topography of Terror into the network of other memorial sites in Berlin.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Much has been made about the downsides of institutionalization, and many see the institutionalization of memorial sites such as the Topography of Terror as an unfortunate crystallization of the fluid process of memory work. But even many of those who harboured reservations about the institutionalization of the site also acknowledge, if begrudgingly, that the trusteeship arrangement put into place in 1992 has contributed immensely to the survival of the site in times of uncertainty and economic turmoil as the new Berlin sought to define itself. Though citizens’ initiatives were not shut out of the Foundation that took shape between 1992 and 1995, the increasing linkages with the local and federal political process contributed to a de-emphasizing of left-leaning activism that had indelibly marked dealings with the site throughout the 1980s. For further treatment of the committee’s deliberations from one of its members, see Stefanie Endlich, “Die Zukunft des Berliner „Prinz-Albrecht-Geländes“ („Gestapo-Geländes“) zum Abschlussbericht der Fachkommission zur Erarbeitung von Vorschlägen für die künftige Nutzung des „Prinz-Albrecht-Geländes“ („Gestapo-Geländes“) in Berlin-Kreuzberg,” Berlin (undated: 1990-1991), and Endlich, *Denkort*. See also Christine Fischer-Defoy, “Von der Bürgerinitiative zur Institution: Das Aktive Museum und die Stiftung Topographie des Terrors,” *Aktives Museum: Mitgliederrundbrief* (63), July 2010, p.6, where she recalls the soul-searching that beset the members of this citizens’ initiative on the 1992 eve of its association with the newly-founded Topography of Terror Foundation. In the end, a decision was taken to participate in the foundation as a critical voice. Taking stock twenty years after the formation of the *Aktives Museum*, Gerhard Schoenberner remarks that “all of our key demands and concepts were, without exception, adopted by the future planning group of the Topography of Terror board in which we were represented then, just as we are now.” (Gerhard Schoenberner, “Am Beginn des dritten Jahrzehnts,” *Aktives Museum: Mitgliederrundbrief* (49), July 2003, p.7).

<sup>23</sup> See Matthias Hass, *Gestaltetes Gedenken*, pp.204-239 for a discussion of the ways in which an institutionalization of the Topography of Terror would enhance its continued viability within the Berlin memoryscape. See also Stefanie Endlich, “Gestapo-Gelände: Entwicklungen, Diskussionen, Meinungen, Forderungen, Perspektiven,” 1988, p.11.

Based as it was on public hearings alongside consultations with experts, the report the commission eventually tabled in March 1990 reflected lessons learned from the preceding decade of heated debate, as well as the new geopolitical position in which Berlin, Germany, and the Topography of Terror found themselves with the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989.<sup>24</sup> Broadly speaking, the commission's eighty-six-page report recommended that an exhibition, documentation, and meeting center be established on the site. It also decisively rejected any form of monumental memorialization as out of keeping with the tenor of the site. Rather, the framers of the report emphasized their preference for preserving and maintaining those traces (scrap heaps, unkempt fields and woods, along with the architectural foundation traces that had been excavated) that bore witness to the history of postwar repressed memory.<sup>25</sup>

Studying this report along with the variety of views it represented is crucial not only in order to shed light on the subsequent development of the Topography of Terror as site, exhibition, and institution.<sup>26</sup> Doing so also facilitates a deeper understanding of the post-1989 unfolding of the Berlin memoryscape in general, including the memory 'mega-projects' represented by the Jewish Museum and the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe. Other commentators on the Topography of Terror, such as Matthias Hass, Karen Till, Brian Ladd,

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<sup>24</sup> The first of these public hearings took place on 1-2 June 1989, to which were invited all of the organizations and initiatives inside and outside of Berlin who had taken part in the debates about the future of the Gestapo-Gelände – some twenty-five groups in total. Memorial site directors and staff – including many participants from, among other institutions, Yad Vashem, the Anne Frank Foundation, and the Holocaust Memorial Museum (Washington, DC) – contributed an international dimension along with their expertise during the second hearing, which took place between 10-11 August 1989. For partial transcripts of both of these hearings, see Endlich, "Die Zukunft," (undated: 1990-1991), pp.9-25. Incidentally, the sheer domestic and international scope of the hearings – the socio-cultural comprehensiveness of which was repeated during the 1990s debates about the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe – is something that sets commemorative debates in Berlin apart from those that have taken part in Tokyo over the same period.

<sup>25</sup> See Endlich, *Denkort Gestapo-Gelände*, p.15.

<sup>26</sup> Glancing through the pages of the Fachkommission (expert commission) report some twenty years on makes for a rather uncanny experience in light of the Zumthor debacle, for the final report reads almost as a blueprint for the recently completed Willms pavilion, the exhibition it houses, and the relationship of both to the site. (See, especially, "Abschlussbericht der Fachkommission zur Erarbeitung von Vorschlägen für die künftige Nutzung des „Prinz-Albrecht-Geländes“ („Gestapo-Geländes“) in Berlin-Kreuzberg," March 1990, pp.34-36).

Jennifer Jordan, and Dariusz Zifonun spend little time with the expert commission's report. Where Hass and Zifonun detail the formation of the Topography of Terror Foundation formed in 1992 and tasked with administering the site, I will spend correspondingly little time on the Foundation, save to note that it represented the institutionalization and embodiment of expert commission recommendations. This does not in any way diminish its importance, nor the careful work done by Hass and Zifonun.<sup>27</sup> But for my purposes, activating as it does questions of aesthetics, affect, experience, and authenticity along with particular historiographical orientations toward the representation of what transpired at the site, a careful study of the workings of the expert commission and its final report yields the contours of a framework that enables broader comparisons to be made with memorial sites in other places such as Japan.

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Characteristic of the aforementioned shift away from the 'silences' of the 1950s and 1960s and turn toward questions of transmitting the past to future generations during the 1970s and 1980s was a focus on remembrance as an opportunity for learning through self-reflexivity. The work of the expert commission, building as it did on the activist experiences of the 1980s, was at the forefront of this shift. The expert commission's final report is thus of prime significance for the unfolding of subsequent memory debates, for not only did it form the basis of the 1993 and 2005-2006 design competitions, but it also shaped the parameters of the debate about both visual expression and exhibited content at the Topography of Terror and beyond. To advance our discussion about how the 'authentic trace' contributes to an affectively charged aesthetic experience of the past at memorial sites, I will focus on the following issues arising out of recommendations put forward in the expert commission's final report: the effect on

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<sup>27</sup> For Dariusz Zifonun's work, see his *Gedenken und Identität: Der deutsche Erinnerungsdiskurs*, Frankfurt/New York: Campus Verlag, 2004.

commemorative practice of the radically altered geo-political situation of Germany in the wake of the fall of the Berlin Wall; the relationship between engaging critically with a history of perpetration and commemorating victims of National Socialism; and the desire to maintain the then-current character of the site while resisting the dual temptation of monumentalization or ‘aestheticization.’

The altered geo-political situation of Germany in the wake of the fall of the Berlin Wall added an unforeseen saliency to the committee deliberations. Unfolding while the committee was in the midst of its deliberations, this unexpected occurrence radically altered the prominence of the Topography of Terror in particular, and the urgency of engaging with the crimes of National Socialism in general, lest the memory of these crimes be engulfed by a new tide of nationalism. Suddenly, the Topography of Terror found itself in the center of Berlin, no longer confined to the geographic and metaphoric margins of the city. In light of the ongoing political developments in the German Democratic Republic, the framers of the report underscored the increased international historical significance of the site, claiming its uniqueness as a site of perpetration not only for Berlin, but for Germany and Europe.<sup>28</sup> Leaving no doubt as to the historical significance of the Topography of Terror, the framers of the report wasted no time in cataloging

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<sup>28</sup> See “Abschlussbericht,” March 1990, pp.7-8, and p.12. To support its promotion of the transnational dimensions of the Nazi terror, and to lend its frank acknowledgment of German historical responsibility added force, the commission recommended that an international board of trustees (*Kuratorium*) be attached to whatever future institution would oversee the development and day-to-day operations of the Topography of Terror. (See “Abschlussbericht,” March 1990, p.63-66). The provision, which guarantees international consultation on matters pertaining to the representation of pasts beyond Germany’s contemporary borders, is something that sets the Topography of Terror (and indeed the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe) apart from the memorial institutions in Tokyo under consideration in earlier chapters. This council was no mere window dressing. During the period of interminable deferrals and postponements of the Zumthor project, the admonishing voice and moral authority of this body made itself heard and felt at crucial junctures to keep the Berlin government minimally on task.

the evil misdeeds that had issued forth from this site during the period of National Socialism where Himmler had his office, and Heydrich and Kaltenbrunner had their desks.<sup>29</sup>

How a united Germany dealt with the charged symbolism of this site would deliver a message about the sincerity of post-Cold War engagements with troubling pasts, so the members of the committee reasoned. With the accent falling on the transnational significance of the Topography of Terror, committee members argued that German society could move beyond the debates about overcoming the past (*Vergangenheitsbewältigung*) and draw political and moral consequences from the site relevant to the present.<sup>30</sup> Speaking to the media on the occasion of the June 1990 public hearings to debate the committee recommendations, committee member Hardt-Walther Hämer (architect and urban planner), summed up the sentiment succinctly: observers beyond Germany's borders were keeping a keen eye on "how the soon-to-be unified German republic will deal with the darkest chapter of its past."<sup>31</sup> The site thus faced toward the past and the future simultaneously: not only was it figured as one of the most significant 'sites of memory' in contemporary Europe due to its uniqueness as a site of perpetration, but was also valued as being instrumental in the political education of future German citizens.<sup>32</sup>

The acknowledgment that future development of the site should focus primarily on the social forces that ushered the Nazis into power and contributed to Germany's role as perpetrator was not meant in any way to slight the victims of Nazi oppression, but rather to highlight the

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<sup>29</sup> "Abschlussbericht," March 1990, p.2.

<sup>30</sup> "Abschlussbericht," March 1990, p.52.

<sup>31</sup> "Kontroverse um Gestaltung des Prinz-Albrecht-Geländes," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 30 June 1990, reprinted in Endlich, "Die Zukunft," (undated: 1990-1991), p.44.

<sup>32</sup> *Mahnung* and *Aufklärung* are two words that come up most often in this context. Of note: In this context, *Aufklärung*, which is also the German word for the Enlightenment, has a pedagogical valence that tends in the direction of a 'clearing up' of any possible misconstrual of the past – for example, the myth of widespread heroic German resistance to National Socialism – as well as a 'clearing away' of any persistent cultural 'amnesias' concerning the role of 'ordinary German citizens' in the horrific events of the Second World War. *Mahnung* (warning, admonition) relates to *Mahnmal*, a kind of memorial site/monument that is different from a *Denkmal*. A *Mahnmal* admonishes visitors to 'never forget!' A *Denkmal* invites the visitor to reflect and remember.

structural dynamics that produced the terror. The very engagement with perpetration assured that the site would remain an exhortation to remember the victims.<sup>33</sup> This simultaneous recognition of perpetrator and victim was a delicate balancing act. With the recent Holocaust monument imbroglio weighing heavily on committee deliberations, it is not surprising that the vexed issue of engaging critically with the broad socio-cultural proliferation of National Socialism while paying sufficient attention to the commemoration of the victims of the crimes perpetrated by the Nazis dominated the recommendations. Responses to the controversy were varied during the public consultations held by the expert commission during the summer of 1989 as part of their mandate. But the broad tenor suggested that the majority of organizations involved in some capacity with the Topography of Terror were steadfastly aligned against a grandiloquent monument singling out a particular group in favour of another on the site of the former Gestapo headquarters.

In direct response to the divisiveness wrought by the unfortunate discussions of ‘victim hierarchalization’ in the wake of *Perspektive Berlin*’s proposal for an ‘immense and conspicuous’ monument in the heart of the ‘land of perpetrators,’<sup>34</sup> the commission refused to revisit the principles underlying the 1983-1984 design competition. In this sense, the commission’s report marked a decisive shift away from initial calls for a monument at the site dating back to the early 1980s, reflecting a more general cultural dissatisfaction with the way in which monuments had a tendency to impose a particular meaning on a passive viewer.<sup>35</sup> Of equal importance is the emphasis placed on the linking of contemporary representation of the past in the permanent exhibition with the ‘authentic traces’ of the past. It would not be an exaggeration

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<sup>33</sup> “Abschlussbericht,” March 1990, p.72.

<sup>34</sup> See especially Ch.2 of Endlich, *Denkort*, along with sources contained in both Ute Heimrod, Günter Schlusche, and Horst Seferens, *Der Denkmalstreit – Das Denkmal?*

<sup>35</sup> As we have seen in a previous chapter, however, the counter-monumental thrust evinced by artists and architects referenced in James Young’s writings was already subverting a more staid conception of a static monument.

to claim that the work of the expert commission, based as it was on the decade of critical citizen engagement with the past at the Topography of Terror, constituted a new museal concept that took very seriously the changing *quality* of the historical experience facing generations with an increasingly attenuated and highly mediated ‘experience’ of the past. Instead, this new museality rested on a faith in the ability of the museum as a *relational* community meeting space to actively transform historical consciousness. What this ethos aimed at was, in the words of Christine Fischer-Defoy of the *Aktives Museum*, the provision of opportunities for the ‘active appropriation of history’ through citizen involvement in the planning of exhibitions, films, and programs directed at high school students encouraging an engagement with the past.<sup>36</sup>

If the current iteration of the Topography of Terror opened in May 2010 falls short of the radical conception of citizen involvement envisioned by the grassroots organizations of the 1980s, the space as a whole – permanent exhibition, library and archive, seminar rooms for symposia and lectures – carries on this ethos of active involvement and eschewal of ‘fertige Meinungen’ (preformed opinions). Significantly, though this ethos contrasted sharply with the monumental impulses of Lea Rosh’s *Perspektive Berlin* in its early days, we can discern the influence of this pedagogical approach to the museum-within-the-city in the Bundestag and public sphere debates of the late 1990s surrounding the selection of a design for the Holocaust Monument. Eisenman’s agreement to scale back his design and his consent to the addition of an information center to complement his abstract sculptural statement signaled just how far the notion of the memorial site as relational community had pushed the debate about the aesthetic

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<sup>36</sup> Cited in Endlich, *Die Zukunft*, (undated: 1990-1991), p.14.



expression of the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe beyond a narrow nineteenth century-style monumentalism.<sup>37</sup>

### **TOPOGRAPHY OF TERROR AT THE CROSSROADS: THE NEW BERLIN AND THE ZUMTHOR INTERLUDE**

By the early 1990s, the multiple positions that were eventually embodied and codified in the 1990 Final Report of the Expert Commission – in particular, that the Topography of Terror was a ‘Denkort’ and ‘Lernort’<sup>38</sup> dedicated to the transmission to future generations of the memory of acts of Nazi/German perpetration – carried the day in the face of competing interests and desires that had played out on this site of contestation. The activities of the citizens’ initiatives had done much to lodge the Topography of Terror in public consciousness.<sup>39</sup> Even more, the work of citizens’ initiatives exerted a profound influence on the deliberations of the expert commission. But this is as far as any consensus reached, despite the efforts of some interlocutors closely associated with the citizens’ initiatives to claim that this ‘broad agreement’ extended to particulars, such as the perceived need for an expansion of the documentation of the existing traces dotting the site itself, and the building of an education center disseminating information.

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<sup>37</sup> At the urging of Michael Naumann, Federal Commissioner for Culture and Media (*Beaufragter der Bundesregierung für Kultur und Medien*) within the newly-minted Schröder administration (SPD), Eisenman acquiesced and included an information center as part of his design. In what became informally known as ‘Eisenman II,’ art joined forces with documentation, testifying to a predominant 1990s faith in the heuristic socio-cultural function of memorial sites that was nonetheless distrustful of purely symbolic statements. See, for example, Hermann Rudolf, “Ein Kraftakt ohne Kraft,” *Der Tagesspiegel*, 26 June 1999. See also James Young, *At Memory’s Edge: After-Images of the Holocaust in Contemporary Art and Architecture*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000, especially pp.208-216. At the juncture where Eisenman compromised with the sponsors of the design competition, Richard Serra, the sculptor who had originally partnered with Eisenman, pulled out of the project.

<sup>38</sup> ‘Denkort’ is a place conducive to thinking, while ‘Lernort’ is one conducive to learning.

<sup>39</sup> See Leonie Baumann, “Foreword” to Stefanie Endlich, *Denkort Gestapo-Gelände*, Berlin: Aktives Museum Faschismus und Widerstand in Berlin E.V., 1990, p.3, where she singles out the endeavours of the *Aktives Museum* in bringing this ‘broad general agreement’ to pass.

Occupying one of the minority positions were those who favoured leaving the site in its current state as a permanent reminder not only of National Socialism, but also the subsequent neglect of its memory.<sup>40</sup> Yet as we have seen, supporters of developing the site as a ‘built environment’ were in no way in agreement as to what kind of structure(s) should be erected on the site, and nor was it wholly agreed upon that documentation alone was the most appropriate way to represent the trauma of the National Socialist past.<sup>41</sup> The design competition resulting in the 1993 selection of Peter Zumthor’s ambitious proposal for the site revealed just how tenuous this ostensibly ‘broad consensus’ was. Stefanie Endlich likened the at times painfully hard-fought battle and resulting hard-won compromise of the preceding decade to ‘squaring the circle,’ a process that sought in earnest to balance the needs and desires of diverse and divergent constituencies. It is fair to take Endlich at her word that the 1990 expert commission report expressed a broad consensus. We may even empathize with her bitterness at the results of the 1993 design competition. That said, her voluminous writings on the subject underscore her persistent refusal to acknowledge that there still were – and are – equally legitimate and effective alternatives to those outlined in the commission’s report.<sup>42</sup> The emerging split between ‘Sach’ and ‘Fach’ jury members involved with the design competition underscore this point about legitimate alternatives, and bring into stark relief the existence of competing visions with respect to the most ‘appropriate’ treatment of the site.<sup>43</sup>

What is more, the conflict unfolded in parallel with the two other ‘memory mega-projects’ being debated and built in Berlin over the 1990s and into the 2000s: Daniel Libeskind’s

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<sup>40</sup> See, for example, James Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1993, pp.81ff.

<sup>41</sup> Dieter Hoffmann-Axthelm, whose work I examine in more detail in the next chapter, is one of the more insistent, articulate, and colourful of the critics of the ‘Expert Commission consensus.’

<sup>42</sup> See Stefanie Endlich, “Die ‘offene Wunde’ in der Stadtbrache: Zum Wettbewerb ‘Topographie des Terrors’” in Architektenkammer Berlin (ed.), *Architektur in Berlin: Jahrbuch 1993/1994*, Hamburg: Junius Verlag, 1994, especially p.58.

<sup>43</sup> We will return to this distinction between *Sach-* and *Fachpreisrichter* presently.

Jewish Museum, and Eisenman's Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe.<sup>44</sup> These prominent projects complicated the discussion about appropriate modes of commemoration with additional aesthetic and political nuances. The explicit linking of prominent architects and their projects – Libeskind's museum, Eisenman's memorial – is important here for several reasons. Poised to become the capital of a reunified Germany, Berlin was experiencing a frenzied building spree, attracting internationally renowned architects to lay out public spaces and erect buildings, museums, and memorials that reflected Berlin's new-found status. Against the backdrop of construction in anticipation of the shift of the capital from Bonn to Berlin, the 'memory mega-projects' competed not only for scarce public funds, but for public attention, support, and sympathy. Such was the immediate context for the 1993 Topography of Terror design competition resulting in the eventual choice of Peter Zumthor, an internationally acclaimed Swiss architect with a penchant for aesthetically daring and technically challenging buildings. The ensuing 'Zumthor controversy' that emerged during jury deliberations and which dominated the latter half of the 1990s pitted those who, for various reasons, advocated a bold architectural expression commensurate with those of the other two sites of Berlin's emergent memory district against the advocates of what I have termed an 'aesthetics of sobriety.'<sup>45</sup>

As the initial euphoria accompanying rebuilding gave way to the hangover of depleted civic coffers, political questions about the cost of memorial sites – especially the less popular ones that shone an insistent light on less savoury aspects of Germany's past while rejecting the increasingly fashionable redemptive spirit of atonement characterizing the commemoration of Germany's victims – inflected familiar aesthetic questions about the desirability of bold artistic

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<sup>44</sup> The Topography of Terror fitted in to the emergent 'memory quarter' as one of a trio of highly prominent projects that signaled Germany's confrontation with its Nazi past to those – including many Germans – uncomfortable with a reunited Germany whose seat of power was Berlin.

<sup>45</sup> This debate was not so much resolved as ended in 2004 when the federal government took the decisive step of cancelling the Zumthor project *in medias res*.

and symbolic statements with an ironic twist. What was the ‘value’ to be attached to commemorative sites that took a critical approach to the German past in comparison with those that affirmed a new German identity that had atoned for its sins by erecting memorials to its victims? More to the point, what was the cost of memory in financial terms, or of forgetting in political terms?<sup>46</sup> The rationale for such a critique rested on the symbolic value of the Zumthor name remaining attached to a memorial project as prominent as the Topography of Terror. In the eyes of these critics, the possibility that the Zumthor project might yet fall victim to the lassitude of Berlin politics signaled a potential de-elevation of the importance of this ‘site of perpetrators’ at the expense of the more self-congratulatory sites of contemporary German atonement. Against this, many supporters of the propriety of a restrained approach to the Topography of Terror viewed the Zumthor design as a grandiose form of ‘trophy architecture’ deemed out of keeping with the pedagogical aims of an ‘active’ museum that sought not the distraction or prosthetic quality of ‘aesthetic solutions.’<sup>47</sup>

The trials and tribulations of the Topography of Terror comprise, then, a key component in this broader unfolding of what some have termed the ‘memory boom’ of the 1990s.<sup>48</sup> At the time, 1993 looked to be a pivotal year in the development of the Topography of Terror, but for a different reason: the decision of the jury in favour of Zumthor appeared to dash the hopes of those who traced their engagement with the Topography of Terror from the recently established foundation back to the activist citizens’ initiatives of the 1980s. In retrospect, however, the

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<sup>46</sup> As a result of the technical challenges posed by Zumthor’s ambitious design, by 2000 the Berliner Bauverwaltung was reckoning with a projected rise in building costs from 45 million to 70 million DM. The series of building stops and starts kept alive the debate about the ‘cost of memory’ down through the *Aktives Museum*-organized occupation of the site in 2004, after which the federal government intervened in the future of the site.

<sup>47</sup> Of course, this critique of the ‘trophy status’ of Zumthor’s design did not prevent detractors of the Zumthor design from acknowledging the importance of the Topography of Terror both vis-à-vis the other sites of the trio of the emergent memory quarter and as a tourist destination in its own right, as evidenced by the 2005-2006 call for proposals detailed in the next chapter.

<sup>48</sup> See, for example, Andreas Huyssen, *Twilight Memories: Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia*, New York and London: Routledge, 1995, and Assmann and Frevert, *op.cit.*

decision of the 1993 design competition prize jury only postponed until very recently the realization of the expert commission recommendations. But the eventual eclipse of a star architect does not make the ‘Zumthor debacle’ any less interesting or revealing, insofar as the controversy provides a counterpoint against which to consider the development of an ‘aesthetics of sobriety’ embodied, eventually, by the Willms design completed in 2010, and to the extent that the controversy dovetailed with other memory debates of the 1990s, unfolding as it did alongside ongoing discussions pertaining to the Jewish Museum and the gripping debate about the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe.<sup>49</sup>

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In the spirit of rebuilding Berlin with the help of prominent architects, rather than hold an open competition the Berlin Senate put up sufficient funds to invite twelve internationally renowned architectural firms to submit design proposals.<sup>50</sup> The brief of the 1993 design competition was nothing if not challenging. But at least it enjoyed the merit of being a clear enough expression of the expert commission recommendations. Entrants were tasked with providing an expanded permanent exhibition space, visitor center with library, archival, and multi-media space, and a documentation center connected with the visitor center, which was to serve as a scholarly institution documenting the rise and results of the Nazi terror. But here was the difficulty: the architects were to put forward designs for a built environment that left that

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<sup>49</sup> The memoryscape of Berlin – and Germany more broadly – had been transforming itself since the 1980s. As we have seen, among the characteristics of this shift away from the discourse of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* were the rise of a ‘counter-memorial impulse’ that spawned the notion of an ‘active museum,’ and a readiness to engage more candidly with the National Socialist past. But these positions were far from consolidated, as evinced by another ‘memory event’ that occurred around the same time as the adoption of the Zumthor design: the dedication of the Neue Wache – which, along with the German Historical Museum and the *Haus der Geschichte* in Bonn, was one of then-chancellor Helmut Kohl’s pet memorial projects that attempted to effect a ‘normalization’ of German history. In what critics saw as a move to blunt the critical force of an engagement with Germany’s past as perpetrator, the Neue Wache was unveiled as the Federal Republic of Germany’s central memorial site dedicated to the victims of war and tyranny. (For a brief essay on the subject, see Reinhart Kosselleck, “Stellen uns die Toten einen Termin?” in Michael Jeismann (ed.), *Mahnmal Mitte: Eine Kontroverse*, Cologne: DuMont Buchverlag, 1999, pp.44-52.

<sup>50</sup> In contrast, the design competitions held in 1983-1984 and 2005-2006 were open.

environment – the large plot of land in the shadow of the Gropius-Bau and bordered by Niederkirchnerstrasse, Wilhelmstrasse, and Anhalterstrasse, marked as it was by the topographical history of postwar forgetting – largely untouched.<sup>51</sup>

In the opening pages outlining the aims of the design competition, the framers of the call for proposals expressed their desire for solutions that were able to weave together a ‘Gesamtkonzeption.’<sup>52</sup> Keeping the ‘holistic unity’ (*Gesamtheit*) squarely in their sights, entrants were to craft ‘functional’ buildings that blended subtly into the site itself.<sup>53</sup> With explicit reference to the recommendations of the expert commission but at the same time introducing a certain amount of ambiguity into its aims, the design competition brief called on contestants to produce an architecture “corresponding to the character of the place,” a design that set for itself the task of “a complex architecture that in its construction, form, and expression spoke a reserved yet clearly articulated language.”<sup>54</sup> In addition, they were to pay due attention to both the historical significance and the contemporary character of the Topography of Terror while considering ways to integrate the terrain into Berlin’s urban fabric. Yet this was no casually seamless integration. In short, the terrain should function in no less a capacity than “in its current character as a disturbance of the familiar, as an ‘open wound’ in the city and also in history. It should offer the possibility of an engagement with the history of the National Socialist terror.”<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> It bears mentioning that neither Libeskind nor Eisenman had to contend with such strict topographical limitations to their artistic visions when designing their memorial spaces. In contrast to the call for proposals of the 1983-1984 design competition, the brief of the 1993 competition made explicit reference to the incorporation of material traces brought to light by the recent excavations, defining them as “essential situational components of the property” to be developed. See Senatsverwaltung für Bau- und Wohnungswesen, *Beschränkter, kooperativer Realisierung und Ideenwettbewerb: Ausstellungshalle, Besucher- und Dokumentationszentrum, Internationales Begegnungszentrum, Topographie des Terrors*, Berlin, 1993, p.32.

<sup>52</sup> *Beschränkter, kooperativer Realisierung und Ideenwettbewerb*, p.5.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p.5.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p.35.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p.5.

Peter Zumthor's winning entry was a narrow, elongated, unadorned four-storey building of white concrete and glass that, in his own words, expressed "pure structure, that spoke no other language than that of its building materials, its construction, and its unique function."<sup>56</sup> The building spanned the excavated cellars and the site of the provisional exhibition, its abstract, clear form and glass translucence citing none of the previous architectural languages of the site. Zumthor proceeded from the assumption that an abstract building shell (*Gebäudehülle*) functioning as permanent exhibition site and scholarly institution at the same time would be the most appropriate means of assuring that the building did not dominate its environment. "The building is the background: the site itself speaks, along with the documents,"<sup>57</sup> claimed Zumthor.

The jury decision – 9:4 in favour of Zumthor – found plenty to recommend Zumthor's entry. At the same time, the decision was not as resounding as it might first appear, masking as it did the heated dissent of certain constituencies comprising the 'Sach' contingent of the jury. To understand how this could be the case, let us pause for a moment and consider the makings of a prize jury. The distinction between *Sach-* and *Fachpreisrichter* can have significant repercussions depending on the design competition.<sup>58</sup> Generally speaking, design competition juries for memorial sites are comprised of 'Fach' judges deemed to have professional competence with architecture, city engineering, and urban planning, in cooperation with 'Sach' judges, usually historians, journalists, art historians and others whose competence goes beyond

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<sup>56</sup> Peter Zumthor, "Geradlinig: Topographie des Terrors. Internationales Besucher- und Dokumentationszentrum in Berlin," *Bauwelt* (86) Heft 31, 1995, p.1701.

<sup>57</sup> Peter Zumthor, *Stabwerk: Internationales Besucher- und Dokumentationszentrum "Topographie des Terrors", Berlin*, Berlin: Stiftung Topographie des Terrors (Ausstellungskatalog), 1995, p.12.

<sup>58</sup> In what follows, I am grateful to Ulrich Tempel, archivist of the Topography of Terror Foundation, for introducing me to the complexities – and politics – of design competition juries. See also Dieter Hoffmann-Axthelm, "Die Topographen sind am Ziel, der Ort geht unter," *Bauwelt* (97), Nr.9, 24 February 2006, pp.14-17, for a discussion of the dynamic interplay between 'Fach' and 'Sach' jury members during the selection of the Willms design in 2005-2006.

technical matters.<sup>59</sup> Given that these distinctions in professional competence can engender sharply divergent opinions, it is less surprising that the vote in 1993 went in the direction it did.<sup>60</sup>

Shedding light on the powerplay that had been unfolding behind the scenes, Rudolf Stegers traces the maneuverings that led to the isolation of the Topography of Terror Foundation representatives on the jury.<sup>61</sup> Prior to the competition, two main constituencies had been vying for control over the outcome of the decision. As Stegers relates, in 1992 Stefanie Endlich and Florian Buttlar had sought to work out a procedure with the Senatsbauverwaltung (Senate Building Administration), the branch of local government responsible for the design competition, whereby no decision would be reached without the agreement of those hitherto concerned with the development of the site.<sup>62</sup> But Berlin building director, Hans Stimmann, would have nothing to do with this *prima facie* legitimization of a particular position based solely on prior participation in the debates and discussions.<sup>63</sup> For this was, after all, the new Berlin – and Stimmann was one of its most prominent boosters. What is more, from his position as ‘city architect,’ Stimmann wielded enormous power. In fact, critics dubbed Stimmann and his coterie of officials ‘taste dictators’ who sought to impose their nostalgic view of what Karen Till calls

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<sup>59</sup> Cabinet-level political officials with the requisite professional competence in either ‘Fach’ or ‘Sach’ matters are also represented on the juries.

<sup>60</sup> The significant difference in outcome between the 1993 and 2005-2006 design competitions suggests that the particular individuals selected – and the professions or official capacities they represent – have a considerable bearing on the degree of harmony or political volatility that characterizes various decisions. For example, since it was generally agreed that Topography of Terror foundation members and individuals conversant with their needs and desires would continue to fill the ‘Sach’ jury positions for the 2005-2006 design competition, the federal government’s selection of certain individuals sensitive to the stakes of the competition in terms of the Topography of Terror’s future as ‘Fach’ jury members signaled a deliberate attempt to forestall the deadlock and disappointment that marred the Zumthor years.

<sup>61</sup> See Rudolf Stegers, “Unort Denkort Bauort Kunstort: Peter Zumthors Neubau für die Stiftung ‘Topographie des Terrors’ Berlin,” in Peter Neitzke, Carl Steckeweh, and Reinhart Wustlich (eds.), *Centrum: Jahrbuch Architektur und Stadt, 1999-2000*, Basel: Birkhäuser – Verlag für Achitektur, 1999, p.143.

<sup>62</sup> That is, the newly minted Topography of Terror Foundation, embodying the recommendations put forward by the expert commission, and representing the interests of the broad coalition of citizens’ groups who had fought for the preservation and development of the site – some of whom, such as the *Aktives Museum* and *Initiative zum Umgang mit dem Gestapo-Gelände*, held positions within the foundation.

<sup>63</sup> Hans Stimmann was one of seven ‘Fach’ jury members during the 1993 competition. As an ostensible counterweight, Ulrich Roloff-Momin, Senator for Cultural Affairs, was appointed as one of the six ‘Sach’ jury members.



‘neotraditional critical reconstruction.’<sup>64</sup> Stimmann was a proponent of ‘critical reconstruction,’ but not of the variety espoused in the 1970s and 1980s by the socially progressive Internationale Bauausstellung (IBA). To step back briefly, in the words of Josef Paul Kleihues, a prominent Berlin architect associated with the IBA (and chairperson of the 1983-1984 design competition), the goal of the IBA critical reconstruction program was to “establish a dialogue between tradition and the modern ... [to] find the contradictions of modernism not in a break, but in a development that remains visible over stages of place and time.”<sup>65</sup>

This was not the kind of reconstruction that Stimmann had in mind. To that end, Stimmann saw to it that judges were appointed who would pass over ‘marginal’ architecture that put forward proposals of minimal intervention – precisely the kind of minimalist architectural expression the Topography of Terror Foundation desired.<sup>66</sup> Times had changed. The new unity and the coming capital lent this ‘old site’ a new significance in Stimmann’s eyes. Positioned newly and once again in the middle of Berlin, what this space needed was something ‘striking’ (*markant*) that responded to the grandeur of its surroundings.<sup>67</sup>

In any event, the jury decision accorded praise to Zumthor’s orientation toward Berlin’s urban planning needs in the wake of the fall of the Wall. With respect to the design of the building in particular, jury members saw in Zumthor’s lattice-like ‘staff-and-rod-support construction’ (*Zangen-Stützen-Konstruktion*), a bold construction method that lent the building a gossamer transparency. Hinting at the affective potential of the design, the report suggested that

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<sup>64</sup> See Till, pp.45-48.

<sup>65</sup> Cited in Till, p.45.

<sup>66</sup> In order to avoid this conflict between ‘*Sachpreisrichter*’ and ‘*Fachpreisrichter*’ in the future, those who framed the call for proposals for the 2005-2006 design competition stayed even closer to the recommendations of the 1990 expert commission report than did those who composed the 1993 call for proposals. Of even greater significance was the selection of jury members in 2005-2006. With more weight given to ‘Sach’ judges long since involved with the site, at the expense of the ‘Fach’ judges (in particular, those involved with the city planning administration), the jury steered the design competition away from ‘trophy architecture.’

<sup>67</sup> See Rudolf Stegers, “Unort Denkort Bauort Kunstort,” p.143.

“the building had a distancing effect, but was not overly cool (*abweisend*); rather, it awakens one’s curiosity.”<sup>68</sup> Significantly, especially given the antipathy toward ‘aesthetic solutions’ evinced by the expert commission’s final report,<sup>69</sup> Zumthor’s proposal attained first rank “due to its radical aesthetic formulation.”<sup>70</sup>

But not everyone agreed with this assessment. As has already been noted, the choice of Zumthor’s design ran counter to the wishes of those ‘Sach’ prize jurists representing the interests of the Topography of Terror Foundation. What was ‘unobtrusive’ to the majority of the jury was still too bold for these representatives.<sup>71</sup> Giving vent to her frustration, Stefanie Endlich complained that “it is, admittedly, no secret – the building director even mentioned it at the press conference – that the ‘Sach’ judges who represented the concerns of the foundation voted against the proposal. The reason? At its root, Zumthor’s proposal represents the opposite of what had been fostered in a years-long attempt to seek consensus, and of what we had recommended to the participants in the design competition.”<sup>72</sup> It was feared that Zumthor’s sleek, uncompromising design would be an imposing place, the dreaded temple of high culture, rather than a space that would assuage the ‘Schwellenangst’<sup>73</sup> of the tourist or passerby unfamiliar with the history documented by the site’s permanent exhibition.

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<sup>68</sup> Senatsverwaltung für Bau- und Wohnungswesen, *Beschränkter, kooperativer Realisierung und Ideenwettbewerb*, 1993, p.30.

<sup>69</sup> As I have suggested above, despite the overall clarity of the design competition statement, nonetheless the framers allowed a certain amount of ambiguity to enter into the brief, an ambiguity that appears to have been seized upon by members of the jury who favoured innovative architectural expression even within the constraints imposed by the design competition brief.

<sup>70</sup> *Beschränkter, kooperativer Realisierung und Ideenwettbewerb*, 1993, p.30.

<sup>71</sup> There is also a certain amount of irony here, given that Hans Stimmann, whose jury selection had decisively influenced the outcome of the design competition, was no radical architectural visionary himself. When lined up alongside architecture by, say Frank Gehry, Santiago Calatrava, Rem Koolhaas – or even Libeskind’s Jewish Museum – Zumthor’s proposal is decidedly subdued.

<sup>72</sup> Stefanie Endlich, “Die ‘offene Wunde’ in der Stadtbrache,” p.58.

<sup>73</sup> ‘Schwellenangst’ is a word that comes up often in the debates. Inelegantly translated, it means something like ‘anxiety at the prospect of crossing the threshold,’ or, more simply, ‘aversion.’

Endlich's frustration puts a finer point on the power struggle that emerged between representatives of the foundation and representatives of the Senate building administration. In the intervening years since the expert commission had completed its deliberations, Berlin had become a much changed place. Instead of the modest approach to this 'open wound in the center of the city' espoused by the expert commission and taken up by the Topography of Terror Foundation, other constituencies favoured a 'striking, prominent' solution that would bring what was seen by some as an eyesore into 'architectural solidarity' with the Gropius Bau, the new seat of the Berlin parliament (*Abgeordnetenhaus*) across from the Topography of Terror, and the Internationale Bauausstellung (IBA) architecture of the 1970s and 1980s bordering the eastern edge of the Topography of Terror. Put simply, the conflict pitted those who wanted an unassuming design that did not violate the 'character' of the site against others who demanded a design that need not conceal itself from the other architectural gems in the area. Under pressure, and in order to avoid both postponements of crucial work needing to be done and the risk further political complications, the representatives of the foundation acquiesced.<sup>74</sup>

Commenting a decade later on the design competition, Matthias Hass noted that "the architect failed to answer the question of how the opposing elements, 'exhibition' and 'place of reflection,' were bound together on this central spot" where Zumthor had chosen to site his building.<sup>75</sup> In addition, Hass charged that the very abstractness for which the building had been praised "yielded no reference to the historical place on which it found itself, and nor did it refer to the thematic connection in which it had to be seen." Instead, "the visitor is supposed to experience a sense of place upon traversing the 'historical' ground."<sup>76</sup> Unlike commentators who had an aversion to symbolism of any kind, Hass rests his critique of the Zumthor design's

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<sup>74</sup> See Endlich, *op.cit.*, p.59.

<sup>75</sup> Hass, *Gestaltetes Gedenken*, p.224.

<sup>76</sup> Hass, p.224.

abstract lack of connection with historical place and thematic significance on a comparison with the Holocaust Museum of Washington, DC. There, it was precisely the architectural *symbolism* that furnished the connections between Washington, DC, and the historical event represented.<sup>77</sup> But what Hass's insightful critique fails to capitalize on is the sacralized dimensions of the near-mystical encounter Zumthor attempts to establish with the 'historical ground,' where "one senses the odour of the earth" in a kind of sublime communion with a dehistoricized and flattened past. The passage to which Hass refers reads as follows: "Dually protected by the rod-and-glass hull, this holistic space is meant to evince the character of a state of reflection. One traverses the bare, historical ground, which is sealed in the simplest of fashions with natural material. One senses the odour of the earth and the shadows of the rubble heaps of the terrain outside against the length of the walls."<sup>78</sup> This passage cries out for commentary, yet speaks volumes in its own right. Needless to say, many commentators – not least those involved with the Topography of Terror Foundation – felt strongly that the disconnected severity of the Zumthor design along with Zumthor's flights of fancy would compromise the concept of an 'inviting, open place of learning' that the foundation staff had endeavoured to create over the years. What in model form looked like a 'gentle milk-coloured glass cube' would be, in reality, a "150 metre-long endless row of concrete ribs" whose "aesthetic effect, even authoritarian dominance, is highly questionable in its relationship to this place of reflection (*Gedenkort*)."<sup>79</sup>

Had Zumthor been willing to compromise as the costs and technical difficulties of his project mounted over the decade since his plan received approval, and had he not been so seduced by his mystical vision of architecture as enabling a dubious presencing of the 'bare

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<sup>77</sup> This move has interesting repercussions for our discussion in the next chapter of how authenticity underwrites the 'aesthetics of sobriety.'

<sup>78</sup> Peter Zumthor, *Stabwerk*, p.12.

<sup>79</sup> Stefanie Endlich, "Die 'offene Wunde' in der Stadtbrache," p.60.

ground of history,' we might be able to debate whether the aesthetic effect of his building was, in fact, one of 'authoritarian dominance.' That Zumthor's failed project would eventually offer itself up only as a speculative reference point against which to contrast or critique the effectiveness of the Willms design would have heartened his critics. But as it were, the equivocation of the Berlin government during a series of building stops and starts resulting from a dire financial situation presented those opposed to Zumthor's design with a more pressing concern forcing them to mute their displeasure. That concern was whether any project would reach completion at all.

#### **AT WHAT PRICE MEMORY?**

The optimism of the 8 May 1995 ground-breaking ceremony, attended by, among others, dignitaries such as Eberhard Diepgen (once again mayor of Berlin), his Minister for Cultural Affairs, Ulrich Roloff-Momin, and Ignatz Bubis (Chairperson of the Central Council of Jews in Germany), was short-lived. In retrospect, though, the attendance of one participant in particular would prove significant – Klaus Töpfer, the federal Building Minister. As part of a comprehensive policy on memorial sites in the wake of reunification that took shape between 1993 and 1995, the federal government moved to take a more active interest in commemorative projects. Leaving intact the long-cherished decentralization of the German memorial network, the federal government of a recently-reunified Germany understood the need to offer support to German commemorative projects as a visible sign of German collective responsibility for actions which formed the historical experiences of many other nations besides Germany.<sup>80</sup> As a partner in the newly independent Topography of Terror Foundation, the federal government guaranteed

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<sup>80</sup> See Deutscher Bundestag, Drucksache 12/7884, "Beschlußempfehlung und Bericht des Innenausschusses (4. Ausschuß)," 15 June 1994.

the financial solvency of the foundation, providing a minimum assurance that the long hoped-for permanent housing of the exhibitionary wings and the research wings of the Topography of Terror would come to fruition. The German federal government and the Berlin civic government guaranteed the foundations' continued existence in the form of an annual subsidy.<sup>81</sup> As mentioned above, the question of state involvement raised the specter of diminished autonomy. But the expert commission recognized, in the first place, that given the transnational dimensions of what was being commemorated at the Topography of Terror, international legitimacy depended upon federal government involvement. This first acknowledgment directly engendered a second: state involvement, whether at the federal or civic level, ensured that the state continued to honour its ongoing historical responsibility to those victims of state-perpetrated violence, persecution, murder, and genocide. As things turned out, this federal support would prove crucial in the face of the gridlock posed by the intransigence both of the Berlin government and of Zumthor himself in the mid-2000s.

But this fortunate turn of events was still a decade away from the May 1995 groundbreaking ceremony. No sooner had the dignitaries departed and the churned up soil dried than uncertainty about the future of the Topography of Terror set in once again. In the same space of time in which both the Jewish Museum and Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe had been planned, debated (at times, acrimoniously), built, and opened to much fanfare, the next decade unfolded on the Topography of Terror according to the same repetitive fashion: postponement, then protest, followed by a tentative resumption of work.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> See Zifonun, *Gedenken und Identität*, p.76. Zifonun pegs the amount at 1.5 million euros per year, but his source for this figure appears to be from 1995, which would mean that the denomination was likely deutschmarks as opposed to euros.

<sup>82</sup> Zifonun counts four financial crises surrounding the Topography of Terror between 1995 and 2003 (p.83).

A mere half year after the symbolic commencement of work, and citing a rise in projected costs from 35 million DM to 45 million DM in light of the architectural challenges posed by a building for which, at any rate, Zumthor still had not drawn up finalized plans, the Berlin Senate announced that the formal start of building would be delayed for a year. In a heated plenary session of parliament (January 1996) that followed the announcement, Green Party representative Alice Ströver lashed out at the newly-minted CDU-SPD coalition for sending a “catastrophically false signal” that had disgraced Germany in the eyes of the international community. Instead of delay, Berlin should be sending an altogether different signal – one that demonstrated that the new capital was conscious of its past – by speeding up completion in time for the sixtieth anniversary of the 9 November 1938 pogroms.<sup>83</sup> Thomas Flierl (PDS – Party of Democratic Socialism) pointedly asked: “Does the concept of an ‘open wound’ no longer fit in the landscape of a city that now feels itself as healed, cleansed of its historical disturbances and ruptures?”<sup>84</sup> With emphasis on the ongoing nature of working through the past, Irana Rusta (SPD) added her voice to the opposition, reminding her coalition partners that critical engagement with the past was not about temporary projects, but rather about enduring institutions that afforded the necessary tools to keep alive the memory of the National Socialist past.<sup>85</sup>

The reaction from the public sphere was equally severe. In what was to become a hallmark of the discourse surrounding the political mishandling of the Topography of Terror over the next decade, historian and research director of the German Resistance Memorial Center, Peter Steinbach, foregrounded the historical responsibility borne by contemporary political actors in terms of the cost of memory. Remembrance was as much future-oriented (*viz.* the

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<sup>83</sup> Plenarprotokoll 13/3 (Abgeordnetenhaus von Berlin), 25 January 1996, p.102.

<sup>84</sup> Plenarprotokoll 13/3, p.103.

<sup>85</sup> Plenarprotokoll 13/3, p.104.

transmission of past experience to future generations) as it is rooted in present interaction with the survivors. For that very reason, Steinbach states emphatically that memory is decidedly *not* something that should fall within the purview of budget considerations, motivated by short-term considerations and therefore politically charged as they are. Playing on the German words ‘Haus’ and ‘Haushalt’ (budget), Steinbach writes: “Memory has need of a house in which people speak, meet with one another, present exhibitions, or organize encounters across generations. [...] Because this costs money, memory work also affects the budget.”<sup>86</sup> But ‘houses of memory’ are not the same as government quarters, or commercial buildings, for they stand on an ‘unstable foundation of memory.’ It is this unstable and uncertain nature of the ‘foundation of memory’ that necessitates ongoing affirmation of memory work on the part of political actors. To Steinbach, the absence of this unwavering affirmation on the part of politicians threw the seriousness and sincerity of Germany’s memory work into question.<sup>87</sup> At a time when an entire ensemble of impressive memorial institutions stood poised to be built, Steinbach envisioned the stakes thus: “Whoever in Berlin hazards leaving out a cornerstone – even if this happens only through delay – threatens an entire ensemble of memorial sites.”<sup>88</sup> In short, the way in which contemporary Berlin engaged with perpetrator memory at the Gestapo-Gelände would bear

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<sup>86</sup> Peter Steinbach, “Bewährung für Berliner Senat: ‘Topographie des Terrors’ darf keine Etatfrage sein,” *Tribüne* (35), Heft 137, 1996, p.30.

<sup>87</sup> Peter Steinbach, “Bewährung,” p.30. Incidentally, the mishandling of the ‘Zumthor debacle’ on the part of the Berlin civic government is further evidence against convenient portrayals of a united, harmonious German engagement with memory often invoked by the Western media when critiquing the perceived intransigence of ‘the Japanese.’ (See, for example, Philip Seaton, *Japan’s Contested War Memories: The ‘Memory Rifts’ in Historical Consciousness of World War II*: London: Routledge, 2007). I elaborate upon this in the introductory chapters of this study.

<sup>88</sup> Steinbach, “Bewährung,” p.31.



eloquent testimony to the way in which 1990s Germany chose to confront its National Socialist past – frankly, or in a piously ritualized manner that passed over perpetration in silence.<sup>89</sup>

On the heels of this and similarly strong admonitions regarding the contemporary state's historical responsibility to the past, the Berlin Senate lurched into action. Yet despite assurances from the Minister for Science, Research, and Culture,<sup>90</sup> Peter Radunski (CDU) that building would proceed as planned,<sup>91</sup> later that autumn (October 1996) it was announced that building would be put off until the start of the next millennium. This ambivalent attitude on the part of the civic authorities unleashed debates about the real financial cost and the metaphorical value of memory. What were the possible repercussions, both in terms of Germany's international image, and in terms of more deep-seated anxieties regarding the recrudescence of virile nationalism, of yet again forgetting the past in this rush to secure Germany's present and future identity? In a vein similar to Steinbach's critiques, Walter Jens asserted that a 'liberal capital of culture' ought never to forget the years of its shame, adding that to do so would entail a grave rejection of a far-reaching, permanent sign of gratitude to those "who, in dark times, were tortured and murdered for championing an other place, tolerant and humane."<sup>92</sup>

Desperate to get the project back on track, the directorship of the Topography of Terror Foundation, Reinhard Rürup (director of research) and Andreas Nachama (director of business affairs), reminded the Berlin government of the unique importance of the Topography of Terror

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<sup>89</sup> This last point is especially salient, given that the German Historical Museum (DHM) did not see its earmarked funding – already higher than what was to be put toward the Zumthor project on a yearly basis – decreased over this same period of time. See Steinbach, "Bewährung," p.36.

<sup>90</sup> Senator für Wissenschaft, Forschung, und Kultur, formerly Senator für Kulturelle Angelegenheiten.

<sup>91</sup> See Drucksache 13/697 (Abgeordnetenhaus von Berlin), 9 August 1996, in which Peter Radunski laid out a timetable in response to criticism from the Bündnis 90/Die Grünen (Drucksache 13/82 [Abgeordnetenhaus von Berlin], 15 January 1996) and the PDS (Drucksache 13/97 [Abgeordnetenhaus von Berlin], 16 January 1996), setting October 1998 as the deadline by which the completed building would be handed over to the Topography of Terror Foundation.

<sup>92</sup> Walter Jens, "Erklärung der Mitgliederversammlung der Akademie der Künste," 26 October 1996, contained in *Gedenkstätten Rundbrief* (74), Stiftung Topographie des Terrors, December 1996 (unpaginated).

in the contemporary Berliner memorial landscape, placed as no other memorial site to engage with National Socialist crimes, their causes, and their consequences. Significantly, Rürup and Nachama juxtaposed the uniqueness of the Topography of Terror to the proposed Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, which was then gearing up for its second design competition.<sup>93</sup> So as to avoid a needlessly damaging competition for public funds and attention, the directors of the Topography of Terror stressed that “especially when this kind of monument in the center of Berlin is slated for completion, it becomes all the more urgent at the same time to create the kind of place in which knowledge [about National Socialism and the Holocaust] can be conveyed and mediated.”<sup>94</sup> Rürup and Nachama thus acknowledged the desire for a monument to the Holocaust while sharply delineating the pedagogical function of the Topography of Terror as an institution committed to the conveying of an understanding of National Socialism to future generations. To ignore this uniquely indispensable component of German historical-political culture in order to fund less ticklish projects exclusively (such as the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe) would be akin to a dangerous abnegation of historical responsibility on the eve of the transfer of the capital from Bonn to Berlin.<sup>95</sup>

#### **OF SITES SPECIFIC AND UNSPECIFIC: AUTHENTICITY AND AFFECT IN CENTRAL BERLIN**

Rürup and Nachama’s joint statement provides us with an opportunity to pause briefly and reflect on the differing qualities and characteristics of the Topography of Terror and the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe before returning to the fate that befell the Zumthor

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<sup>93</sup> A year previous (March 1995), then-Chancellor Helmut Kohl had vetoed the dual first-prize design proposals by Simon Ungers and Christine Jacob Marcks which had been selected out of 528 entries during the 1994 design competition. This veto set the stage for the second design competition of 1997, which would select a design by Eisenman for implementation after modifications.

<sup>94</sup> Reinhard Rürup and Andreas Nachama, “Erklärung des Direktoriums der Stiftung Topographie des Terrors,” 30 October 1996, *Gedenkstätten Rundbrief* (74), Stiftung Topographie des Terrors, December 1996 (unpaginated).

<sup>95</sup> Reinhard Rürup and Andreas Nachama, “Erklärung des Direktoriums der Stiftung Topographie des Terrors.”

proposal. One salient characteristic of monuments identified by several commentators is the reduction of complex events and their aftermath to a single aspect deemed most important by the monument's sponsors.<sup>96</sup> Commenting on the 1983-1984 design competition to develop the Gestapo-Gelände, Brian Ladd puts his finger on what is at stake in the debate over the kind of 'nineteenth-century monumentalism' espoused by Lea Rosh and *Perspektive Berlin*: "A monument can obscure an urban and historical context and replace a rational search for understanding with an emotionally gripping symbol. Most Berliners committed to a deeper examination of the Nazi past feared that symbolic gestures encouraged the very nationalism exploited by the Nazis."<sup>97</sup> Peter Carrier also articulates this curious 'anachronistic monumentalism' as a contributing factor prolonging the controversy over the design of the Holocaust monument. He goes so far as to chide Lea Rosh and her supporters in the political and public sphere, including Helmut Kohl, for an intransigent insistence on sculptural monumentalism at the expense of considering other forms of commemoration more in line with the critically-engaged counter-monumental ethos that had swept Germany and elsewhere in the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>98</sup>

Despite occupying an 'authentic site' profoundly rooted in Berlin and German national history, and despite being routinely eclipsed in the international media by its more prominent cousins, Eisenman's monument and Libeskind's Jewish Museum, those involved with the Topography of Terror staunchly resisted – and continue to resist – the equation of 'national' and 'monument.' The supporters of the Topography of Terror remained vigilant against even the most benign forms of nationalism that could creep into the kind of monument that attempted to

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<sup>96</sup> See, *inter alia*, James Young, Matthias Hass, Peter Carrier, Karen Till, and, in particular, the activists, scholars, and journalists affiliated with the *Aktives Museum* and the *Initiative zum Umgang mit dem Gestapo-Gelände*.

<sup>97</sup> Ladd, p.168.

<sup>98</sup> See Peter Carrier, *Holocaust Monuments and National Memory in France and Germany since 1989*, pp.120-122.

posit an a priori German community of atonement. On the one hand, the supporters of the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe called, rather paradoxically, for a national monument that espoused universalistic sentiments about human suffering and hope for a humanitarian future. Conversely, those involved with the Topography of Terror since its early days have chosen to use the power of place – the former headquarters of the Gestapo and other Nazi state apparatuses responsible for the round-up, deportation, forced labour, and deaths of millions – to confront the specificity of past events perpetrated by Germans, events whose repercussions were international at the time, and, in terms of memory (traumatic or otherwise), global in the time since the Holocaust.

But – and this is something brought into stark relief, in particular, by the discussion about the fate of Peter Zumthor’s design for the Topography of Terror in terms of the ‘cost’ of memory in the late 1990s – it is not difficult to grasp why the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe has, arguably, had a higher degree of resonance in the contemporary mnemonic landscape of contemporary Berlin and Germany. On an affective level, it is perhaps easier (or, at least, less problematic) for contemporary Germans to remember the victims of Nazi aggression than it is to confront the role of ancestral relatives as perpetrators. As Ute Frevert suggests, one possible socio-cultural function of the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe is this: it allows the contemporary generation to exorcize the latent or manifest anti-Semitism of their parents’ or grandparents’ generation.<sup>99</sup> For the *Aktives Museum* and affiliated citizens’ initiatives, however, a monumental memorial working within the discourse of *Betroffenheit* (dismay, guilt) would encourage Germans to situate themselves in the emotive space of the victims.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Ute Frevert, in Assmann and Frevert, *Geschichtsvergessenheit, Geschichtsversessenheit*, p.276.

<sup>100</sup> See Karen Till, *The New Berlin*, p.127.

Rejecting what they saw as an unacceptable form of identification, the citizens' initiatives aligned with the *Aktives Museum* sought, instead, to thwart this easy pride in remembering the victims by shining a cold light on the Germans that produced the victims. The unspecific symbolism of a sculptural monument could not be counted on to do the difficult work of soberly confronting Germany's violent recent past. What this reveals is a fundamental rift with regard to a faith in the efficacy of public art to discharge the historical responsibility of the contemporary generation not only to remember, but to understand the structures and processes that gave rise to National Socialism and the Holocaust. In brief, Lea Rosh and her supporters held firm to the impact of symbolic gestures, whereas supporters of what eventually became the dominant vision driving the development of the Topography of Terror saw commemoration as a relational process that actively engaged memorial site visitors in their acquisition of understanding of past events. For this process of transmitting the experience of past events to have any hope of success, a monument was insufficient.<sup>101</sup>

Considering the Topography of Terror and the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe together also opens a window onto the increasingly prominent role of the state in this period and its impact on collective memory as well. As I alluded to above, on the one hand, state participation was desirable for two reasons. Firstly, state involvement assured funding, and, more importantly, the survival of memorial sites that otherwise might not have been completed. Secondly, state involvement was important on a symbolic level. By participating in memorial projects, the state sent a signal that took its historical responsibility seriously. But as the precarious history of the Topography of Terror amply illustrates, state involvement was anything but unproblematic. Some memorial sites were easier to 'buy into' than others for the state.

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<sup>101</sup> In the next chapter, I examine the efficacy of the Topography of Terror's alternative approach to monumentalism in greater detail.

Against the backdrop of the ‘Schuldfrage’ (the question of German guilt) which had transformed itself into an ‘Erinnerungsfrage’ (how to keep the events salient in collective memory), scholar Harald Schmid suggests that the controversy generated by the planning and development of memorial sites such as the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe exemplifies the degree to which the involvement of the state has tended toward a consensus surrounding commemoration.<sup>102</sup> In its drive toward a state-sanctioned ‘memory culture’ affirmative of German national identity, this consensus has tended to undermine counter-memorial culture. The result, argues Schmid, is a flattened memorial culture that is both insufficiently historicized and problematically ritualized.

It is worth noting that despite the influence of the expert commission findings on the shape of post-1989 Berlin and German memorial culture, state financing of a memorial site that took up the question of perpetration (like the Topography of Terror) proved much more divisive than the allocation of funds for sites commemorating the victims. Also worth bearing in mind is that from the time of Lea Rosh’s 1988 *Perspektive Berlin* proposal to erect a monument to the murdered Jews of Europe ‘in the heart of the land of the perpetrators’ – that is, on the Gestapo-Gelände – those championing the Topography of Terror as a site dedicated first and foremost to educating a future generation about the evils of National Socialism resisted such initiatives that reinforced the consensus of a memory culture affirmative of what some saw to be a problematic notion of national community.

Though both the Topography of Terror and the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe signified a heightened engagement with the crimes of Nazi Germany among a broad

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<sup>102</sup> Entitled “65 Jahre nach Kriegsende: Eine Bilanz – Von der „Vergangenheitsbewältigung“ zur „Erinnerungskultur“. Ein Rückblick auf 65 Jahre Nachgeschichte des Nationalsozialismus,” the talk, which took place on 20 May 2010 and was moderated by Hajo Funke, was one of the first symposia held in the newly opened confines of the Topography of Terror exhibition, library, and seminar space.

spectrum of society ranging from citizens' initiatives through to the highest political levels, the 'object' of commemorative engagement came into ever starker relief: the victims of National Socialism on the one hand (and, controversially, the Jewish victims to the exclusion of other victims); and on the other, those who perpetrated the crimes visited upon the victims. At the root of this tension between reflecting on the deeds of the perpetrator and commemorating the victim lie complex nuances, namely, particular understandings of 'authenticity' as opposed to 'inauthenticity' mapped onto 'documentary representation' (the Topography of Terror) in contrast to 'symbolic gesture' (the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe). Even if Eisenman's memorial did, indeed, integrate itself into its urban surroundings as an extension of the Tiergarten to the west and the government buildings, banks, office blocks, and embassies to the north, south, and east, the significance of the site itself remained general and imprecise, at best healing the rupture between the former eastern and western halves of Berlin.<sup>103</sup> To the Topography of Terror's site-specificity, the Memorial to the Murdered Jews remains 'site unspecific.' For its supporters, this is precisely its strength, for the site floats free of any association with specific events of the Holocaust, all the better to commemorate the uniqueness of the Holocaust *qua* event by making a grand symbolic gesture of atonement that would underwrite the new Germany's sincere democratic intentions in post-Cold War Europe. Conversely, the Topography of Terror – according to its advocates a site of learning and reflection – bore the larger burden not only of remembering *all* of the victims who had perished at the hands of the Nazi state, but of attempting to understand the structures and dynamics, violent or otherwise,<sup>104</sup> that gave rise to a Nazified German nation-state. Significantly for

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<sup>103</sup> See Peter Carrier, pp.100-104 for a discussion of the siting of the Holocaust monument and its urban context.

<sup>104</sup> Bureaucratized death, for example, first emphasized in Hannah Arendt's formulation, 'the banality of evil,' in reference to the Eichmann trials and massively documented in Raul Hilberg's *The Destruction of the European Jews*.

supporters of the Topography of Terror, the attempt to understand the past so as to transmit it to future generations rested on the existence of authentic traces of the past housed on an authentic site of perpetration.<sup>105</sup>

The implication of this line of reasoning is that the *Perspektive Berlin* alternative represented, in the eyes of the aforementioned citizens' initiatives linked with the Topography of Terror, what might be termed an 'invented authenticity' at best. Though never stated explicitly by anyone involved with the development of the Topography of Terror up until the confrontation with *Perspektive Berlin* or since, this logic resting on a presumptive 'distribution of authenticity' assumes that monuments to particular groups of victims of Nazi genocide, when appropriate at all, are best left to 'authentic sites of suffering,' such as Auschwitz. But this logic ignores two key points. Firstly, not all 'authentic sites' become authentic 'lieux de mémoire.'<sup>106</sup> Secondly, a site does not have to have witnessed an 'authentic past event' for it to become a bona fide 'lieu de mémoire' embraced by a particular public living in a particular space at a particular time. In framing his comparative project, Matthias Hass looks to the ways in which Yad Vashem and of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum resonate among a broad public, despite not being located on sites bearing an 'authentic' relationship to the pasts these museums seek to represent. We could go further and add the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe to Hass's list. At least the Holocaust monument does have a *prima facie* claim to 'authenticity of site' on account of its siting in Berlin, former capital of the Third Reich. When considered in terms of resonance, that does not make it any less 'authentic' or significant a site within the current configuration of Berlin's – and Germany's – mnemonic fabric.

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<sup>105</sup> And yet, as I explore in the next chapter, despite the refusal to fetishize authenticity in relation to the curation of the 1987 provisional exhibition and beyond, authentic site and trace cannot seem to escape their talismanic quality.

<sup>106</sup> Jennifer Jordan, *op.cit.*, enumerates forgotten or neglected sites ranging from former impromptu SA jails housed in restaurants and cellars to former sites of forced labour dotting Berlin.



## THE ECLIPSE OF ZUMTHOR

And so, Zumthor's ill-fated design proposal languished on the authentic site of the Topography of Terror, by now the most renowned ruin in Berlin. In the meantime, those who had invested so much time and energy into the Topography of Terror looked on helplessly while the rest of Berlin, Germany, and beyond busied themselves increasingly with the more palatable of the prominent Berlin memory projects. By 2002, the curtain would fall on yet another act of this grim tragi-comedy: the building materials company that had been producing the concrete rods and staffs for Zumthor's project – as it were, the *only* company capable of manufacturing these unique 23 cm-wide components – declared bankruptcy. In the ensuing debates, equivocation on the part of the Diepgen administration was matched only by Zumthor's obstinacy.<sup>107</sup> By mid-2004, Nachama lamented that “the dilapidated state of the exhibition grounds beyond the construction fence documents the inability to give form to the memory of the [...] central terror apparatuses of National Socialist Germany.”<sup>108</sup>

As was the case throughout the 1980s, most of the ire at the continual fits and starts on the Topography of Terror was directed against the Berlin government. But if the civic government is the ‘bad’ in this tragicomedy, then Peter Zumthor is ‘the ugly.’ For others still, he could do no wrong. Indeed Zumthor's design was widely praised and admired in museum and architectural publications.<sup>109</sup> Most of these writings recount a perfunctory boiler-plate history of

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<sup>107</sup> Of tangential note here is the readiness with which both Eisenman and Libeskind compromised in order to meet some of the more reasonable demands of their critics, and in order to keep costs in line.

<sup>108</sup> Andreas Nachama, “Wo steht die ‘Topographie des Terrors’ heute? Erfahrungen, Programm und Perspektiven der Stiftung” (Vortrag auf dem Symposium ‘Historischer Ort und historische Dokumentation: Bauen für die ‘Topographie des Terrors,’ 9 June 2004), in Stiftung Topographie des Terrors, *Bericht April 2003 bis März 2006*, Berlin, 2006, p.29.

<sup>109</sup> For a representative sampling of writing favourable to Zumthor's work, see, for example, Gabrielle Camphausen, “Dokumentation und Vertiefung am historischen Ort: Neue Planungen der Stiftung ‘Topographie des Terrors,’”

the Gestapo-Gelände leading up to the adoption of the Zumthor design, but then stop there. What is striking about much of this writing is the virtual absence of any consideration, at the expense of a discussion of Zumthor's design in purely formal terms, of Zumthor's proposal in relationship to the historical significance of the site. We might read this tendency as yet another clue illuminating the difference of viewpoints separating the 'Fach' and 'Sach' jury members. Rudolf Stegers presents a rare and refreshing exception to this tendency, critiquing Zumthor's espousal of the 'hyperpresence of materials' as a religious asceticism that produces ecstasy, "and with it a way out of immanence into transcendence."<sup>110</sup> Zumthor's formal abstraction harks back to Romanticism, echoing the pillars in the sacralized ruins of Caspar David Friedrich's paintings. The aporia of 'abstraction combined with Romanticism' produces "a sublime as the crowning of beauty and terror," a sublime generated by Zumthor's formal penchant for invoking the power of the infinite and the uniform in his building design – "a delicate analogy between the structure of terror on the one side and the structure of [Zumthor's architectural object] on the other."<sup>111</sup>

At the end of the day, one may still be inclined to empathize with Zumthor's architectonic vision for the site, and to appreciate how the abstractness for which the design was criticized might also be conducive to an attitude of contemplation vis-à-vis the past. Nonetheless, his obstinacy and at times hyperbolic statements indicate the degree to which Zumthor was out of touch both with the reality of Berlin's financial situation and the way the financial situation was exploited as a pretext by politicians of certain stripes bent on effecting the Topography of Terror's oblivion through inaction. In addition, and ultimately to his undoing, Zumthor remained

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*museumskunde* (64) Nr.2, 1999, in which she states that Zumthor's design would not present a clinically aseptic relationship with its surrounding space, but rather would maintain a forcefield (*Spannungsfeld*) between past and present (51-52). Britta Guski and Ingo Schaueremann, "Topographie des Terrors: Der Neubau Peter Zumthors auf dem Prinz-Albrecht-Gelände in Berlin," in Wolfram Martini (ed.), *Architektur und Erinnerung*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000, pp.218-229, completely eschew critique of Zumthor, presenting what amounts to unqualified adulation for his design.

<sup>110</sup> Rudolf Stegers, *op.cit.*, p.143.

<sup>111</sup> Stegers, p.144.

superciliously cavalier about the needs of the Topography of Terror Foundation and the still very active and influential citizens' initiatives in the orbit of the foundation.<sup>112</sup> In a 2001 interview that rings simultaneously comical and perverse, Zumthor launches into an acerbic critique of the 'budget-conscious types' who see architecture only in terms of its purpose.<sup>113</sup> The Berliner politicians and its citizens stood at the moment of truth, proclaimed Zumthor: "They have to come to the realization that they need double the amount of money for the project. The cost calculations are running close to 90 million DM, yet they have allotted only 47 million thus far."<sup>114</sup> His supremely confident responses to subsequent questions as to whether the project would reach completion go quite far in substantiating the disconnect between Zumthor and his patrons. Despite declaring that "the design is already bound up in peoples' minds with the site," Zumthor distances himself from his patrons, stating categorically that "the sensitivity of the people and the sensitivity of the artist are drifting apart here."<sup>115</sup> And so it came to pass.

This time around, the seismic rumblings in the public sphere would bring down the Zumthor project. First, the International Advisory Council of the Topography of Terror Foundation declared that no time was to be lost in hammering out alternatives, and that "further postponements for reasons of unsolved building questions are no longer acceptable."<sup>116</sup> What had been left largely unspoken in official foundation publications had now resurfaced: if the

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<sup>112</sup> As recently as late 2010, Zumthor remained unrepentant, apparently incapable of grasping to what extent his self-identification as a visionary architect had served to eclipse the more important issue of how and *whether* something would be built at the Topography of Terror. (See "'Seht ihr, ich habe recht gehabt': Der Schweizer Architekt Peter Zumthor über die Proteste gegen Neubauten in Deutschland, sein Selbstverständnis als Künstler und seinen Ruf, der Schrecken aller Bauherren zu sein," *Der Spiegel* (50) 2010, pp.144-148).

<sup>113</sup> Heidi Wessely, "'Ich baue aus der Erfahrung der Welt' – ein Gespräch mit Peter Zumthor," *Detail*, Heft 1, 2001, p.21.

<sup>114</sup> Wessely, p.22. This resounds all the more absurdly given that the Willms pavillion opened in 2010 was built with the *remainder* of this 47 million DM, and clocked in around 19 million euros.

<sup>115</sup> Wessely, p.23.

<sup>116</sup> "Erklärung des Internationalen Beirats der Stiftung Topographie des Terrors Berlin," 5 May 2003, in *Aktives Museum Mitgliederrundbrief* (49), 2003, p.21.

Zumthor design could not be modified into a more buildable variation, then “it would be a sensible option to consider other, more simply realizable proposals.”<sup>117</sup>

When even this failed to have the desired effect, Reinhard Rürup, whose name had become virtually synonymous with the Topography of Terror,<sup>118</sup> announced his resignation as research director in early 2004. The main reason for this drastic step was the ‘unending history’ of the long-planned yet seemingly impossible-to-realize documentation and visitor center. Like many other commentators over the course of the 1990s, Rürup, too, made direct mention of the relative lack of interest shown by both the federal and civic governments in comparison with their preference for other ‘grand projects’ trading in a specific variety of ‘capital city memory culture’ (*hauptstädtische Erinnerungskultur*) – despite the conspicuous national and international interest demonstrated by the roughly 300,000 visitors to the site in 2003. “Under difficult conditions, the foundation has rendered an indisputably beneficial service. It does not deserve this kind of treatment,”<sup>119</sup> declared a frustrated Rürup.

Rürup’s resignation touched off yet another firestorm of protest in the media. But what set this most recent round of protest apart from others in the repetitive cycle of protest and postponement was the reaction of institutions and individuals comprising not only the German memorial network, but also those representing international museums, memorial sites and their related research institutions. Many directors of these facilities sent their protests directly to Chancellor Gerhard Schröder (SPD) and to Berlin Mayor Klaus Wowereit (SPD).<sup>120</sup> Adding further emphasis to this ongoing protest was an action organized on the anniversary of the end of

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<sup>117</sup> Ibid., p.21.

<sup>118</sup> As Paul Passauer noted, Rürup had embodied the Topography of Terror like no other through his spirited defense of it. (See Paul Passauer, “Ein Zeichen gesetzt: Rürup resigniert,” *Tribüne* (43), Heft 170, 2004, p.19).

<sup>119</sup> “Pressemitteilung: Rücktritt des Wissenschaftlichen Direktors der Stiftung Topographie des Terrors,” 25 March 2004, in Stiftung Topographie des Terrors, *Bericht April 2003 bis März 2006*, Berlin, 2006, p.14.

<sup>120</sup> Stiftung Topographie des Terrors, *Bericht April 2003 bis März 2006*, Berlin, 2006, p.12.

the war (7-8 May 2004) by one of the perennial activist groups involved with the Topography of Terror, the *Aktives Museum*. During their twenty four-hour occupation of the site, they conducted tours and screened films of the Topography of Terror past and present, nailed ‘theses’ to the fence of the building site, and, importantly, collected several hundred signatures for a petition delivered the next day to the Federal Chancellery.

The combined effect of Rürup’s resignation and the *Aktives Museum*’s protest action finally brought the federal government around to the realization of how important the Topography of Terror was. The federal Minister for Culture and Media, Christina Weiss, met with the Berlin senators Thomas Flierl (Science, Research, and Culture) and Ingeborg Junge-Reyer (Urban Development) and reached an agreement to cancel the Zumthor project, and to author a new call for proposals – this time under the auspices of the federal government.<sup>121</sup>

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Perhaps Zumthor’s recent 2010 defense of architecture’s right to add its voice to the chorus of commemorative practice signals his belated awareness that his proposal was not capable of fading into the background after all, as he had originally claimed it would.<sup>122</sup> His recent reflections suggest that a challenging design cannot help but enter into a mutually constitutive dialogue with an ‘authentic site’ – defined as it was by the existence of traces bearing witness both to a particular era of German history and also to its subsequent repression. Though we may still moot the efficacy of Zumthor’s attempt to ‘express history spatially’ and without the aid of textual commentary, nonetheless Zumthor’s belated recognition nicely encapsulates the anxieties that many felt in response to his design. To wit, no matter how significant the questions his design posed to a contemporary audience about the relationship

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<sup>121</sup> See Stiftung Topographie des Terrors, *Bericht April 2003 bis März 2006*, Berlin, 2006, p.10.

<sup>122</sup> See “‘Seht ihr, ich habe recht gehabt,’” pp.147-148.

between an affectively charged historical site and its built environment, a bold contemporary architectural statement would hold too much power in the constitutive relationship between the past of this particular authentic site, and contemporary attempts to formulate on this site a response to the past that had unfolded there.

And so, in December 2004, the three stairway towers – all that there was to show for 13 million euros – were ignominiously torn down. The authenticity of place had trumped architectural gestures.<sup>123</sup> Yet as *Bauwelt* claimed in its 2006 feature article detailing what was selected to replace the Zumthor project, “the result might well be a disillusionment for some, since the only thing of consequence about the proposal is its inconsequence.”<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> Ten years on, Zumthor claimed that the historians – in particular, those, such as Rürup, involved with the Topography of Terror – trained as they were to understand history as ‘narration,’ failed to grasp his ‘spatial-objective’ approach. See “‘Seht ihr, ich habe recht gehabt.’”

<sup>124</sup> Lead article, *Bauwelt* (97), 24 February 2006.

## CHAPTER 10

### THE AESTHETICS OF SOBRIETY: MUSEAL REPRESENTATION AT BERLIN'S TOPOGRAPHY OF TERROR

About half a year after the completed Willms pavilion on the Topography of Terror opened its doors to the public in May 2010, the German Historical Museum inaugurated the first ever exhibition in Germany that dealt explicitly with the relationship between Hitler and the German people.<sup>1</sup> It is not as if the Topography of Terror since its inception had not been making painstaking efforts to understand what gave rise to the National Socialist system and to confront Germans with their complicity in this system of terror. But what sets the German Historical Museum's "Hitler and the Germans: Nation and Crime" exhibition apart from a whole host of exhibitions and memorial sites that have taken up the theme of the Third Reich, the Shoah, forced labour and concentration camps, and other aspects of the Nazi terror<sup>2</sup> is its focus: the fascination exerted by Hitler on the masses. Displaying everyday objects such as Hitler playing cards and Nazi board games alongside hand puppets for kids in the shape of grotesque

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout the chapter, I will use the term 'Topography of Terror' to refer, interchangeably, to the exhibition, its trustees (the Topography of Terror Foundation), its curatorial and academic staff, and, of course, to the memorial site itself. I will use the terms Gestapo-Gelände (Gestapo-terrain) and Topography of Terror interchangeably to refer to what is also sometimes known as the Prinz-Albrecht-Gelände.

I base my account of the exhibition, "Hitler and the Germans: Nation and Crime" (Hitler und die Deutschen: Volksgemeinschaft und Verbrechen) and its initial reception on the following media sources: Deutsches Historisches Museum, "Hitler und die Deutschen: Volksgemeinschaft und Verbrechen – Eine Ausstellung des Deutschen Historischen Museums Kuratoren: Prof. Dr. Hans-Ulrich Thamer, Dr. Simone Erpel, Klaus-Jürgen Sembach." <http://dhm.de/ausstellungen/hitler-und-die-deutschen/ausstellungen.html> (accessed 17 October 2010); Frank Hornig and Michael Sontheimer, "'Führer' im Kleinformat," *Spiegel Online*, 13 October 2010. [http://einestages.spiegel.de/static/topicalalbumbackground/16101/1/fueher\\_im\\_kleinformat.html](http://einestages.spiegel.de/static/topicalalbumbackground/16101/1/fueher_im_kleinformat.html) (accessed 5 April 2011); Eric Westervelt, "German Exhibition Shows Mass Appeal of Nazi Ideology," transcript of audio report from NPR's *Morning Edition*, aired on 8 November 2010; Michael Slackman, "Hitler Exhibit Explores a Wider Circle of Guilt," *New York Times*, 15 October 2010; Geir Moulson, "Berlin exhibition focuses on Hitler's hold on Germans," *The Globe and Mail*, 14 October 2010; Sven Felix Kellerhof, "Adolf Hitler und die Deutschen," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 14 October 2010. The exhibition ran from 15 October 2010 until 27 February 2011.

<sup>2</sup> We have come across a number of these memorial sites and exhibitions in the previous pages: the Wannsee Conference Villa Memorial Center, the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, the Bendlerblock memorial to German resistance, and the Jewish Museum, which hosts an ongoing repertoire of temporary exhibitions ranging from justice and medicine under the Nazis to forced labour camps in Berlin.

caricatures of Jews and other groups targeted by the Nazis, the curators sought to portray how ubiquitously racist ideology had permeated everyday life. But this is no apotheosis of the dictator, for the curators also took pains to show Hitler embedded in his social, political, and military contexts.<sup>3</sup> Rather, through its 1000-odd items ranging from photographs, posters and film footage to everyday relics, the exhibition seeks to account for the paradox of Nazi oppression and enthusiastic popular acceptance, together with the appeal of Hitler and his party that offered pride and a sense of purpose. As the curators note in their German Historical Museum website statement about the exhibition, Hitler “mobilized the social anxieties and hopes [of the people], and the Nazi reign supported itself on mass enthusiasm and support.”<sup>4</sup> Pride, anxieties, hopes, appeal, enthusiasm – all volatile affectively and emotionally charged dynamics that escape what many see as a measured, reserved approach to representing the past at the Topography of Terror.

In defense of the sober, minimalist approach to documenting the past on the Topography of Terror, Klaus Hesse, curator of the Topography of Terror’s photography division, states categorically that one will find “neither Nazi flags nor typewriters with runic SS keys” on this site or in this exhibition.<sup>5</sup> Rather than relying on the types of everyday artifacts selected for display by the German Historical Museum curators, the exhibition seeks to comment on what transpired at the site of the Topography of Terror which would otherwise, without the sober documentation, remain mute. “We aim to irritate in a positive way while breaking open commonplace clichés,” relates Hesse, adding that the hundreds of black-and-white photographs

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<sup>3</sup> Hornig and Sontheimer note, however, that the curators seem to fear their own courage in mounting such a bold exhibition: bitter protests on the one hand, and the jubilation of neo-Nazis on the other. As NPR’s Eric Westervelt observes in his “Morning Edition” report about the exhibition, “a fear of Hitler seems to hang over the show.”

<sup>4</sup> Deutsches Historisches Museum, “Hitler und die Deutschen.”

<sup>5</sup> Cited in Tobias Kühn, “Wer sie waren, was sie taten,” *Jüdische Allgemeine*, Special Edition on the Topography of Terror, 6 May 2010.



confronting visitors act as “citations of witnesses who were often themselves perpetrators.”<sup>6</sup> But this positive irritation steers clear of the non-rational elements of National Socialism and Hitler’s appeal. Not so at the German Historical Museum’s exhibition. As one visitor to the “Hitler and the Germans” exhibition stated, “We didn’t learn a lot about the Hitler cult in school in the ’70s. Of course we saw a lot about concentration camps [...]. But I think people were still a bit afraid to talk about the Hitler worship, and this is why I find this important now.”<sup>7</sup>

This stark contrast between the competing representational strategies of the German Historical Museum’s “Hitler and the Germans” exhibition and the Topography of Terror’s curatorial approach raises a salient question with regards to reception; that is, what kinds of effects do different museal poetics have on those generations born well after the events of the Second World War? What can this contrast between the German Historical Museum and the Topography of Terror tell us about the relationship between museal poetics, authenticity in its many guises, and the role of aesthetics or affect in achieving certain pedagogical aims? On the one hand, the Topography of Terror prides itself on its dispassionate, objective, scholarly approach to understanding how Germans became perpetrators, relying heavily on documentary realism to convey its pedagogical effect.<sup>8</sup> On the other hand, the German Historical Museum exhibition explores, through vibrant colour and textures, the fascination with Hitler as sublime object. The Topography of Terror’s resolute rejection of ‘aesthetics’ notwithstanding, both

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<sup>6</sup> Responding to criticism that the focus on perpetrators denies a voice for victims, Hesse argues that the approach adopted by the Topography of Terror gives voice to the victims indirectly precisely *by* documenting the crimes and offenses of the perpetrators. (Cited in Tobias Kühn, “Wer sie waren, was sie taten”). As we will explore below, this kind of ‘mimetic intimation’ that gestures toward the graphic violence haunting the margins of the exhibition constitutes an important element of what I discern as the ‘durational affective charge’ delivered by the Topography of Terror exhibition in contrast to a more immediate ‘shock effect’ of certain other exhibitions and museums.

<sup>7</sup> Exhibition visitor, Sabine Hornisher, quoted in Eric Westervelt, “German Exhibition Shows Mass Appeal of Nazi Ideology.”

<sup>8</sup> In addition to the presentation of documents, a distinguishing feature of the Topography of Terror exhibition continues to be black-and-white photographs. We will consider below how black-and-white photographs might themselves be ‘colour-coded’ in terms of a particular historiographical approach weighted heavily in favour of positivism.

approaches carry distinct affective charges, as I will attempt to show – one acting more immediately, the other releasing a slower-acting ‘depth charge,’ so to speak.

Though the German Historical Museum exhibition will soon fade into the background of this chapter, nonetheless its having been undertaken serves as a conduit through which to pose questions about the Topography of Terror’s exhibitionary strategies. Before proceeding with my argument, I would like to state that there is plenty to recommend the approach adopted by curators, activists, and foundation members, both to the site itself and to the exhibition at the Topography of Terror. But this should not prevent us from asking questions about the ways in which a resolutely ‘documentary approach’ manifesting a decided aversion to anything that bears the ‘taint of aesthetics’ serves, at times, to hamper a more expansive exploration not only of the structural dynamics that brought Hitler and the Nazis to power, but also of the affective forces undergirding mass support for the Nazi regime.

In order to advance this argument, I examine, first of all, the development of the template for what I am calling an ‘aesthetics of sobriety.’ In order to do this, I recap the contentious debates of the 1980s culminating in the recommendations handed down in 1990 by an expert commission convened to make recommendations about the future use of the Topography of Terror. Following this, I put the recently completed Willms design for the site into dialogue with Peter Zumthor’s failed project as a means of disentangling the competing positions with regard to the ‘aestheticization’ of the site through architectural expression, and the role of aesthetics in the exhibition. The controversy touched off by the 1993 adoption of the Zumthor design provided a useful counterpoint against which advocates of restraint articulated the kind of aesthetic that has come to define the Topography of Terror. To round out the discussion, I evaluate the merits and limitations of the unique approach to museal poetics adopted by the

Topography of Terror's academic and curatorial staff in order to pose questions germane to a critical historiography, about the relationship between the affective dimensions of aesthetic experience, and the aesthetic dimensions of the representation of past experience, especially as these questions relate to authenticity.<sup>9</sup>

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Rejecting the aesthetic visions of its interlocutors in the Berliner memory district – Daniel Libeskind's Jewish Museum and Peter Eisenman's Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe – the compact Willms pavilion which opened to the public in May 2010 maintains a low profile on the Gestapo-Gelände. With this latest iteration of the relationship between building and 'authentic site,' Willms' decidedly unostentatious architectural approach deferred to the primacy of the material trace, eschewing statements of its own. The building was designed, rather, as a container for the documentary-realist exhibition it was to house.<sup>10</sup> In the wake of the Zumthor debacle, the directors and curators attached to the Topography of Terror Foundation were pleased to have gotten what they had long desired: a functional building (*Zwecksgebäude*) that would not overshadow their pedagogical mission.

As we have seen in previous chapters, though, the debate about the Topography of Terror was characterized by anything but consensus. Rather, the debate mobilized competing desires and interests driving the politics of memory performed on this site of contestation. The expert commission, which delivered its recommendations in 1990, was heir to the debates of the 1980s,

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<sup>9</sup> Issues such as these have as much critical purchase in relation to the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe as they do to the Yûshûkan and the Shôwakan. Indeed, the current configuration of the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe – an abstract monument in conjunction with a dedicated subterranean information center that serves as a kind of 'meta-caption' for the monument above – owes much to what I am figuring here as a new museal approach based on an 'aesthetics of sobriety.'

<sup>10</sup> Some commentators felt that the provisional solutions remained preferable to this latest edition of the Topography of Terror saga. For example, Nils Ballhausen maintains that the interim projects belong to the most sensible approaches to the site, constituting a salient expression of an 'alternative history' of memory issues in postwar Germany. See Nils Ballhausen, "Kein Grund zur Zufriedenheit," *Bauwelt*, 101:16, 23 April 2010, p.23.

crafting and codifying a novel museal approach that placed a premium on the pedagogical capacity of the authentic trace, an interpretation that has proved quite durable in spite of the acrimonious debates surrounding the Zumthor design.<sup>11</sup> The contours of this new approach began to emerge in the 1980s out of the effervescence of grassroots citizen engagements with the Topography of Terror. As Gerhard Schoenberner outlined the position of the *Aktives Museum Faschismus und Widerstand* during the Academy of the Arts symposia and hearings convened in 1986 to debate the future of the Gestapo-Gelände, such a place would not be one of perpetual atonement; nor would it offer a ready-made didactic narrative.<sup>12</sup> Rather, what proponents of such a space envisioned was an information center where people could come together in an *active* attempt to comprehend what went wrong through ready access to documentation. According to Schoenberner, the ideal condition sought was one in which the visitor was also a ‘co-worker’ in the acquisition of her or his knowledge. The space would provide the logistical framework and resources for such an endeavour – the technical apparatus of an exhibition and library, along with academic support – “in order to give [the younger generation] the possibility to find answers on their own.”<sup>13</sup>

This version of a ‘counter-monumental ethos’ informing the *Aktives Museum’s* new approach to the cultural role of the museum was part of a broader shift in collective memory that occurred against the backdrop of the generational upheavals of the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>14</sup> Jennifer Jordan characterizes this era as the ‘dawn of the authentic trace’ on both sides of the Berlin

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<sup>11</sup> While critics saw the abstraction of the Zumthor design as a complete violation of the precepts set forth in the expert commission’s recommendations, Zumthor’s advocates saw his proposed design as fulfilling the brief of the 1993 call for proposals in a challenging way.

<sup>12</sup> For a transcript of Schoenberner’s comments, see Akademie der Künste (ed.), *Diskussion zum Umgang mit dem ‘Gestapo-Gelände’: Dokumentation*, Berlin, 1986, pp.27-29.

<sup>13</sup> Schoenberner transcript, *Diskussion zum Umgang mit dem ‘Gestapo-Gelände’*, 1986, p.29.

<sup>14</sup> I discuss in an earlier chapter the ‘counter-monumental’ impulse discerned and elaborated upon by James Young. See James Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1993.

Wall.<sup>15</sup> The ‘Spurensuche’<sup>16</sup> animating grassroots citizens’ initiatives dovetailed with the proliferation of local history workshops, resulting in the emergence of the notion of the ‘Lernort’ (place of learning) whose pedagogical power derived from and was augmented by its perceived authenticity. At the same time, Jordan’s observations hint at the solemnly officious memorial sites of the 1950s and 1960s against which the citizens’ initiatives of the 1980s were reacting. The increasing importance of the authentic trace was accompanied by an increasingly urgent insistence on the perceived cultural need for ‘authentic sites’ that countered ‘abstraction.’<sup>17</sup>

In some ways, the authentic site’s rise to prominence echoes the trajectory of which Pierre Nora speaks, whereby memory transmitted orally among and between social groupings (what he calls ‘milieux de mémoire’) gives way to concrete sites as the repositories and transmitters of memory (‘lieux de mémoire,’ in Nora’s parlance).<sup>18</sup> But whereas Nora sees in this transformation an inherent tendency to shift the burden of remembrance onto the monument or memorial itself – what Nora calls prosthetic memory – proponents who embraced the authenticity of the concrete site saw in these kinds of sites a pedagogical potential that was becoming all the more urgent as those with immediate experience of the Third Reich and the terror of the Nazi past were beginning to pass on. Increasingly mediated forms of memory have emerged to fill the void left by the dwindling number of people who have had any direct recollection of National Socialism, one of which was the ‘authentic site’ whose concrete

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<sup>15</sup> Jennifer A. Jordan, *Structures of Memory: Understanding Urban Change in Berlin and Beyond*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006, p.39.

<sup>16</sup> ‘Spurensuche’ is one of the many compact terms reappearing in debates about memorials, and translates roughly as ‘the search for traces of the past.’

<sup>17</sup> See Andreas Huyssen, *Twilight Memories: Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia*, London and New York: Routledge, 1995.

<sup>18</sup> See Pierre Nora, “Between Memory and History,” in Volume One of his three volume edited collection, *Realms of Memory: The Construction of the French Past*, English language ed. Laurence D. Kritzman, trans. Arthur Goldhammer, New York: Columbia University Press, 1996.

existence served as a conduit joining current and future generations to the events that had occurred there in the past.

The embrace of authenticity, as important as it has been for saving particular sites such as the Topography of Terror from the oblivion of willful neglect, is not without its problems. Matthias Hass discusses the ways in which a focus on ‘authenticity’ above all else blinds us to the ways in which certain important memorial institutions, such as Yad Vashem and the U.S. Holocaust Museum, legitimate themselves as significant ‘lieux de mémoire,’ despite not being located on ‘authentic sites’ charged with historical significance.<sup>19</sup> We are justified in asking whether one can have an ‘authentic experience’ at such a memorial site, and if so what the nature of this experience might be. Regardless of whether we answer this question in the affirmative or negative, by posing the question, we have gone a certain distance toward destabilizing a particular view that sees ‘authenticity’ as inextricably bound up with concrete and verifiable ‘historical significance.’ This issue crops up time and again in the conflict between proponents of a particular interpretation of the Topography of Terror as ‘authentic site,’ and those who wanted to erect a monument to Jewish victims at the site.

That the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe was eventually built elsewhere is significant. On the one hand, some critics continue to charge that the Memorial to the Murdered Jews is somehow an ‘inauthentic’ surrogate for misguided mnemonic desires directed at healing a vexed national identity. On the other hand, others entertain the possibility that if the site itself not be hallowed ‘authentic ground,’ nonetheless the configuration of the memorial – a combination of Eisenman’s abstract and disorienting sculptural monument and its ‘caption’ in the form of the adjacent subterranean Information Center – generates an experience of the past

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<sup>19</sup> See Matthias Hass, *Gestaltetes Gedenken. Yad Vashem, Das U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, und die Stiftung Topographie des Terrors*, Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 2002, pgs. 16-20, and pp.329-332 for a discussion of the ‘staging’ of authenticity at the U.S. Holocaust Museum.

that forces one to re-evaluate his or her relationship to that past. Questions immediately arise, though. What is being experienced ‘authentically’? The past? The memorial? A version of the past filtered through the symbolism of the memorial and transmitted by way of its particular affective charge?

Related to these questions is the significance of a memorial site like the Topography of Terror, which for a generation coming of age in the 2000s and 2010s is not quite the same as it was for the generation that ‘re-discovered’ the Topography of Terror in the 1970s and 1980s. That museums and memorial sites exist in time is by no means an original observation. However, since they are eminently visual and spatial, museums and memorials are thus a product both of the moment in which they were created and in which they are encountered. The questions and issues just raised played themselves out differently on the Topography of Terror than they did on the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe. As we shall explore below, the insistence on the affective relationship between authenticity and the transmission of experience to visitors of a younger generation resulted in the development of a critically self-reflexive pedagogy that was a crucial component of the new exhibition strategies bound up with the ‘aesthetics of sobriety.’

## **AESTHETICS REVISITED**

To recap briefly, I understand aesthetics in a broad sense to incorporate elements both of ‘poiesis’ (or representation) and ‘aesthesis’ (or reception). If it appears over the remainder of this chapter that I am, on occasion, guilty of ‘term slippage’ in my usage of aesthetics, it is because I do not reject out of hand the more conventional understanding of aesthetics as something that deals with beauty and the formal dimensions of art. I am not trying to posit some sort of generalized ‘all is aesthetics,’ but rather to dislodge the term as it seems to exist for trustees and

curators of the Topography of Terror (and not only them) from its close association with plastic form, beauty, and beautification. In addition, I try to counter the automatic association of aesthetics with aestheticization. Though the tendency to do so is wholly justified among those involved with the Topography of Terror, associating a protean category like aesthetics so closely with a fascist aestheticization of politics conceived as beautiful Aryan bodies, order, and torchlight processions forecloses on the pedagogical possibilities of a critical aesthetics that does not flee from but rather takes seriously the importance of the senses in our experience of the past. Instead, by opening our discussion of aesthetics to aesthesis, I aim to incorporate a sensuous and corporeal element into our understanding of the affective dynamics of experience – in a word, how we come to experience the past. As such, the way I am deploying the category ‘aesthetics’ links up to the affective dynamics of memorial sites: that is, how a sensating subject experiences a memorial site, or, if you will, how subjectivity is constituted by the memorial site through interpellation. Indeed, our historical consciousness and understanding is intimately bound up with affect and embodied experience.

It is important to bear in mind that my broadened understanding of aesthetics is at odds with the more restricted sense that attaches to the term when used by proponents of a particular view of the Topography of Terror as ‘authentic site.’ This kind of juxtaposition of aesthetics and authenticity is, in the first instance, underwritten by an understanding of authenticity heavily overlaid with notions of ‘realism’ and concrete materiality, which in turn sees symbolism and ‘artistic approaches’ figured as aesthetics as inimical to an appropriate engagement with an ‘authentic site’ such as the Topography of Terror. What is more, aesthetics in this more restricted reading claims an intellectual affinity to critiques of the dubious aestheticization of life and politics favoured by fascists and the Nazis. This is a valid objection to ‘aesthetic solutions’ to the



development of the Topography of Terror, and not one which I am inclined to dismiss casually. That said, the restricted deployment of aesthetics forecloses on alternative approaches to the Topography of Terror, a site whose meaning and significance is constantly changing from one generation to the next.

Over the course of this chapter, I will attempt to build a case that sees authenticity as a labile discourse animated by aesthetics, experience, and affective dynamics in which the aesthetic dimensions of sensation and perception that shape the visitor/viewer's experience of the past on offer at such sites. I will isolate the architectural expression of the site as a whole from the exhibition housed within the Willms pavilion, even though the boundaries between architecture and exhibition are, in practice, more akin to a virtually indistinguishable threshold. My main focus is the Willms building – although the Zumthor design serves as a useful counterpoint – as a means of considering the interplay between the poetics both of space 'outside' the information center and of a (spatialized) narrative 'inside.' In addition, I take up the aesthetic effects of the relationship between built environment and historically significant site as an 'affective contact zone,' and the effect of documentary realism as a defining facet of the exhibitionary strategy deployed by the curators of the Topography of Terror exhibition. The Topography of Terror's situatedness within the urban fabric of contemporary Berlin extends the reach of poesis and aesthesis well beyond the physical site of the Topography of Terror. Along with Berlin's plethora of other memorial sites, the Topography of Terror contributes to the poesis of a shared experience of the past. As many commentators on the interplay between commemoration and collective identity have noted, memorial sites are spaces onto which groups project their desires, and where groups gather to negotiate or contest narratives of a common past. In cases of extreme collective trauma, memorial sites may provide the space for ritualistic

and repetitive acting out of the trauma, or a means for critical engagement with the trauma.

Whatever the case may be, the process contributes to a sense of collective memory and – sometimes inadvertently – forges a sense of national purpose or destiny.<sup>20</sup>

The title of this chapter describes an approach to representing the past that calls forth a sense of minimalism and reserve that, ideally, facilitates reflection. It also gestures toward that to which it contrasts: if not inebriation, then at least an intensity of sorts, that of immediate experience. This kind of exhibition strategy, which I will call ‘the aesthetics of plenitude,’ is most clearly evidenced by the galleries of the Shôwakan, and to a lesser extent the Yûshûkan, both of which focus on the ‘authentic object,’ sometimes to the point of fetishization. The key similarity between an ‘aesthetics of sobriety’ and an ‘aesthetics of plenitude’ is that both are a variety of realism. However, where the one revolves around the realism of the document or black-and-white documentary photograph, the other is a variety of mimesis that seeks to evoke the ‘reality-effect’ of immediate experience. The former representational strategy strives to short-circuit the affective dimensions of a questionable identification on the part of the visitor with the documents on display or with the immediate surroundings (as is the case with the terrain surrounding the various iterations of the exhibition halls and pavilions on the Topography of Terror since 1987).<sup>21</sup> The latter attempts to present itself to the visitor ‘as if’ the past it represents were really there in all its plenitude.

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<sup>20</sup> In addition to the works of Young and Jordan already referenced, see, for example, John R. Gillis (ed.), *Commemorations: The National Politics of Identity*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994; Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995; and Karen Till, *The New Berlin: Memory, Politics, Place*, Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2005.

<sup>21</sup> See Dominick LaCapra, *History in Transit: Experience, Identity, Critical Theory*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004, p.65, for a succinct formulation of empathy as “a virtual but not vicarious experience [in which] the historian puts him- or herself in the other’s position without taking the other’s place.” This distinction between empathy and identity maps onto the different representational strategies discussed here insofar as the visual narratives on display affect the visitor and invite responses ranging from self-reflexivity to uncritical acceptance.

Ethan Kleinberg cogently critiques this notion of presence and the valourization of a particular understanding of experience in recent theory. This manifestly anti-discursive tendency to reconnect ‘meaning’ with something ‘real’ represents a “return to a relationship with the past predicated on our unmediated access to actual things that we can feel and touch and that bring us into contact with the past.”<sup>22</sup> What is more, this position cedes the ground of temporal investigation “in favour of a spatial one that [exposes] the ways that the past is contiguous to the present.”<sup>23</sup> Consequently, concrete places and things in the here and now become “metonymical markers for other things or events that are temporarily absent.”<sup>24</sup> To be sure, Kleinberg’s formulation applies to the museal poetics of the Shôwakan and Yûshûkan. In qualified ways, Kleinberg’s critique of presence also applies to the trustees of the Topography of Terror in more unchecked moments when valourization of the authentic trace borders on fetishization. That said, in contrast to the Shôwakan and the Yûshûkan, the curatorial staff of the Topography of Terror maintains a strict position against the excesses of the kinds of staged ‘presence’ that marks the exhibits of the Shôwakan and Yûshûkan.

The members of the expert commission recognized the complex emotional impact of the site on contemporary visitors. The interim report delivered by the expert commission to the Berlin Parliament states not only that the site should initiate reflection about the past, but that “the emotional quality of the site should not be sacrificed to other functions.”<sup>25</sup> The framers of both the interim and final reports settled upon an interpretation of the site characterized by a

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See also LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma*, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001, especially pp.38-42 for a further elaboration of what he terms empathic unsettlement.

<sup>22</sup> Ethan Kleinberg, “Presence in absentia,” *Storia della Storiografia* (55), 2009, p.46.

<sup>23</sup> Kleinberg, p.49.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p.49.

<sup>25</sup> “Zwischenbericht der Fachkommission zur Erarbeitung von Vorschlägen für die künftige Nutzung des „Prinz-Albrecht-Geländes“ („Gestapo-Geländes“),” p.3, contained in “Abschlussbericht der Fachkommission zur Erarbeitung von Vorschlägen für die künftige Nutzung des „Prinz-Albrecht-Geländes“ („Gestapo-Geländes“) in Berlin-Kreuzberg,” March 1990.

reserved, clear-eyed sobriety that would nonetheless act as an irritating disturbance that broke the everyday routine of urban existence.<sup>26</sup> In their words, “it has to be a place that stimulates reflection about dictatorship, racism and the contempt for humanity, that does not diminish the inconceivable quality of National Socialist crimes and genocide, yet makes the transmission of information about these things possible.”<sup>27</sup> What was important was the processual aspect of acquiring historical experience in the present: the evidence linking the site to these crimes necessitated the visitor to develop an image of the past out of the available traces.<sup>28</sup>

If this new approach to museal representation and exhibitionary techniques bore more than a little resemblance to the critical thrust of the counter-monumental impulse prevalent in the 1980s, it eschewed the more abstract elements of these intellectualized gestures. With a strong emphasis on the Topography of Terror’s situatedness within the urban fabric of Berlin, the members of the expert commission envisioned a fashioning of the terrain in which the expressiveness of the site would predominate over any ‘aesthetic’ reworking of the terrain, be it in the form of a monument, or in the form of a symbolic architectural gesture. As Sibylle Wirsing put it, the terrain itself as ‘open wound’ is, at one and the same time, document and memorial.<sup>29</sup> Rather than producing a temple-like museum in which visitors ought to conduct themselves with the appropriate pious comportment, the expert commission envisioned a site that was open to the city, one that would alleviate the ‘Schwellenangst’<sup>30</sup> that might prevent certain

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<sup>26</sup> Fachkommission, “Abschlussbericht der Fachkommission zur Erarbeitung von Vorschlägen für die künftige Nutzung des „Prinz-Albrecht-Geländes“ („Gestapo-Geländes“) in Berlin-Kreuzberg,” March 1990, p.19, pp.14-15.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p.14.

<sup>28</sup> See *ibid.*, pp.13-18 for a fuller elaboration. It goes without saying that this deliberately cautious and self-reflexive approach to the transmission of historical experience sets the Topography of Terror apart from the Shôwakan.

<sup>29</sup> Sibylle Wirsing, “Die offene Wunde in Berlin. Mühen mit dem Unfaßbaren,” *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 2 June 1990.

<sup>30</sup> ‘Schwellenangst’ is a word that comes up often in the debates, and means something like ‘anxiety at the prospect of crossing the threshold,’ or, more simply, ‘aversion.’

groups of people from visiting museums, or serve as an obstacle to the kind of experience of the past that those involved with the expert commission hoped to achieve.

Despite the legitimate anxiety evinced by the members of the expert commission, as well as those who advocated tirelessly in favour of its recommendations, toward anything they perceived as an inappropriately dramatic ‘aestheticization’ of the Topography of Terror, this antipathy to ‘aesthetic solutions’ is, itself, an aesthetic position.<sup>31</sup> Moreover, it is an aesthetic that carries a distinctive affective charge, albeit one that is less volatile than one delivered by exhibits that trade in emotional shock effects. For example, regardless of what detractors of the Willms building say about its inconsequentiality, nevertheless its unassuming profile, subdued colour, spare straight lines, and absence of decorative elements has an aesthetic effect – even one that might be construed as eminently ‘appropriate,’ if we allow ourselves to subscribe to the interpretation of the site as put forward by those associated with the Topography of Terror foundation through the years. We could just as well re-direct the thrust of Stefanie Endlich’s cynical critique of ‘avant-garde’ artistic expressions both as attempts for artists to profile themselves and as inappropriate metaphorizations of a historical site (expressions that anyway become quickly dated) as follows: whereas a building more ‘lustrous’ than the Willms pavilion might indeed divert attention away from the historical significance of the site, the Willms building recedes into the background, but nonetheless unfolds an aesthetic effect – one of reserve – appropriate to the pedagogical mission of the Topography of Terror.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> I am aware of the cognitive dissonance arising from my attempt to delineate the contours of what I have called an ‘aesthetics of sobriety’ out of positions that evince a suspicion – if not outright opposition to – ‘aesthetic’ or ‘artistic’ approaches to developing the Topography of Terror as both memorial site and exhibition.

<sup>32</sup> Stefanie Endlich, “Über die Schwierigkeit, sich den NS-Geschichte durch Kunst zu nähern,” in Jörg Huber, Martin Heller, and Hans Ulrich Beck (eds.), *Imitationen – Nachahmung und Modell: Von der Lust am Falschen*, Basel: Stroemfeld/Roter Stern, 1989, pp.246-247.

James Young takes up the clash between the ‘needs of art’ and those of public memory as well, but in a manner different from Endlich. For artists working in an era of abstract expressionism, ‘happenings,’ earthworks, installation, and conceptual art, and for architects addressing postmodernism and deconstructivist design, “the needs of art [...] come first.”<sup>33</sup> But might this self-referentiality of art, compelling as the motivations and theories behind the art may be, potentially alienate an audience not familiar with the codes of contemporary art? As Young writes: “While contemporary designs are welcomed by the artists and architects, critics and curators, however, they often run up against a wall not only of public bewilderment but also of survivor outrage. For many survivors believe that the searing reality of their experiences demands as literal a memorial expression as possible.”<sup>34</sup> Whereas Young is sympathetic to experimental and conceptual memorial designs as posing questions that a more ‘literalist’ or ‘realist’ expression might be incapable of raising, Endlich takes a dim view of abstract, ‘artistic’ expressions, considering them as an affront to the seriousness – even sanctity – of historically-charged public memorial space.

In this light, it might make more sense to call this aversion to aestheticization manifest in the writings and comments of Endlich and others involved with the *Topography of Terror* an ‘anti-sublime’ aesthetics that sets itself apart from exhibitionary approaches that aim at producing an immediate emotional effect.<sup>35</sup> This anti-sublime aesthetics counters the emotional ‘blurring of vision’ to which a representation given over to the rush and fascination of the

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<sup>33</sup> James E. Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1993, p.9.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p.9.

<sup>35</sup> A list of such museums and memorials would include the Shôwakan and the Yûshûkan discussed above; it would also include museums such as the Warsaw Uprising Museum, which, through ominous sounds, dramatic lighting, even vibrating floors, aims to ‘reproduce the experience of having been there,’ even the Peace Museum of Saitama, an otherwise sensitively produced exhibition that includes a replica of a classroom that shakes and creaks with the exploding bombs – fortunately, not real – in which the visitor can ‘experience what it was like’ during aerial bombardment.

sublime might give rise: either a dubious identification with the victim, or a dangerous identification with the perpetrator.<sup>36</sup> What Klaus Hesse dubs a ‘terror pedagogy of bodies in heaps’ has the negative effect of making some visitors feel accused.<sup>37</sup> At best, ‘visual terrorism’ serves only to short-circuit empathy through its numbing effect. Paradoxically, the numbing effect dampens any inchoate stirrings of historical responsibility that a viewer or visitor might feel in connection with the violent acts and deeds represented.

Insofar as the Topography of Terror’s novel exhibition strategy resists the manipulation of emotion, however, this aversion to the non-rational becomes, at times, an obstacle to the transmission of that which defies ready representation through documentation. It goes without saying that documents, too, can saturate with their overwhelming repetition. The sheer force of this repetition runs the risk of anaesthetization. Where once an image had the power to shock, now it emerges and disappears in the steady stream of media images of graphic violence. In the same way, with regard to the Topography of Terror exhibition, we might consider the ways in which the affective force of a few judiciously-selected photographs or documents dissipates with repetition. In addition, the Topography of Terror’s invitation to empathy via rational self-reflexivity and the conscious placing of limits on emotional responses might also be read as a defensive reaction, a repression effected by ‘rationality’ of the non-rational element of fascination. Indeed the enduring hold that the extremely successful ‘provisional’ exhibition inaugurated in 1987 – and effectively ratified by the expert commission’s recommendations handed down in 1990 – has limited attempts to engage with modes of representation beyond the

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<sup>36</sup> Andreas Sanders, academic staff member of the Topography of Terror Foundation, cited in Karen Till, *The New Berlin*, p.145.

<sup>37</sup> Klaus Hesse, curator of the Topography of Terror Foundation’s photography division, cited in Karen Till, p.145. Dagmar Barnouw also probes the failed attempts of Allied forces to ‘make the Germans see’ the crimes that they had committed, or were complicit in committing by virtue of their silence. See Dagmar Barnouw, *Germany 1945: Views of Violence and War*, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996, pp.1-41.

narrow documentary realism favoured by the curatorial staff. The ‘rational’ attempt to understand the structures, agents, and institutions of National Socialism effectively banishes the ‘ghosts’ of non-rationality to the margins of the black-and-white exhibition.<sup>38</sup>

## THE ‘ANTI-AESTHETIC’ CONSENSUS AND ITS CRITICS

The 2010 edition of the *Topography of Terror* presents a unique opportunity to examine the intersection of two related discourses of authenticity. The first is the authentic trace (the site itself). The second is documentary authenticity (the photographs and archival sources that comprise the exhibition) presumed to have an indexical relation to the trace or site. Given the nature of the site as, in the first instance, a ‘place of perpetrators,’ the future custodians of the site were, in essence, groping toward their new concept of museality in the absence of a viable precedent.<sup>39</sup> The expert commission’s final report is riddled with instances of this awareness that no model existed for the development of the *Topography of Terror*. It was both more and other than a typical history museum; in turn, its avowed status as a ‘site of perpetration’ set it apart from other memorial sites such as Dachau, Sachsenhausen, or Auschwitz, where the mnemonic

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<sup>38</sup> Of course, sober documentary realism (coded ‘rational’) and a disorienting, terrifying sublime (coded ‘non-rational’) are not the only alternatives that present themselves to curators. Indeed, the thrust of my arguments developed here and earlier in this study opens out onto the productive role that a more ‘shocking’ empathic unsettling and defamiliarization can play in keeping the memory of traumatic events as a salient concern in the present. One would have to be wary of two tendencies, however. The first is gratuitous shock that borders on schlock. (This links up with an ethics of seeing and viewing that exceeds the bounds of the current project). The second is the potential to transfigure past trauma into a kind of sacred witnessing in the present via the auraticization and fetishization of the authentic relic.

<sup>39</sup> A press release from the Berlin Department of Cultural Affairs (*Senatsverwaltung für Kulturelle Angelegenheiten*) sheds light on the difficulties faced by the expert commission: “Because [the *Topography of Terror*] sees itself as a ‘place of perpetrators,’ suggestions for the future usage of the site cannot orient themselves to the models of existing memorial centers. In the opinion of the commission, the site should be maintained in its current character, and the visible material traces of its history should be conserved for the long term.” See “Presseerklärung der Senatsverwaltung für Kulturelle Angelegenheiten,” 30 May 1990, collected in Stefanie Endlich, “Die Zukunft des Berliner „Prinz-Albrecht-Geländes“ („Gestapo-Geländes“) zum Abschlussbericht der Fachkommission zur Erarbeitung von Vorschlägen für die künftige Nutzung des „Prinz-Albrecht-Geländes“ („Gestapo-Geländes“) in Berlin-Kreuzberg,” Berlin (1990-1991), p.41.



accent fell on the victims.<sup>40</sup> It is worth quoting the expert commission's final report at length in order to convey the sense in which the framers of the report were moving toward the linked concepts of 'Denkort' (an environment conducive to thinking) and 'Lernort' (a place conducive to learning) a new kind of space that sought to engage its visitors and urge them to ask questions about their relationship to the past:

Although a 'place of perpetrators' still has to concern itself with the memory of victims, nonetheless the examination and analysis of political and social conditions under which crimes became possible must remain explicitly in the foreground; so, too, must a discussion about the people who conceived of, organized, and carried out the crimes. In the opinion of the commission, anything other would be an evasion of the specific challenges of this site. A memorial site that orients itself toward the existing monuments and memorial sites at concentration and extermination camps, or at sites of execution and places of mass shootings is therefore not possible at the Topography of Terror. Rather, the commission deems it necessary to produce an insightful 'Denkort' or 'Lernort' where knowledge is transmitted. [...] There exist hardly any precursors for such an endeavour, neither in Germany nor elsewhere. It will thus be necessary to set out upon new paths in order to do this challenge justice.<sup>41</sup>

In addition to sending a strong signal to a concerned international community regarding recently re-unified Germany's intent to engage critically with its past, the report represented an increasingly widely agreed upon point of departure in terms of the cultural role of memorial sites: the linkage between recollection and learning, and the notion that commemorative practices at a site as unique as the Topography of Terror stimulated a desire to learn more about the influence of the past on the present.<sup>42</sup> Of import is the 'active' component of such plans, insofar as they diverged from more traditional forms of museal presentation: "The visitor center

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<sup>40</sup> See "Abschlussbericht, March 1990," pgs. 14, 49-50, 52 and *passim*. The "Zwischenbericht der Fachkommission zur Erarbeitung von Vorschlägen für die künftige Nutzung des „Prinz-Albrecht-Geländes“ („Gestapo-Geländes“)" contained in the final report forcibly articulates reasons for why the 'monumental solution' posited by Lea Rosh's Perspektive Berlin was flawed: it excluded other victim groups at best, and contributed to an inadvertent hierarchalization of victimhood at worst. See especially pgs.2 and 4 of this interim report. See also Dariusz Zifonun, *Gedenken und Identität: Der deutsche Erinnerungsdiskurs*, Frankfurt/New York: Campus Verlag, 2004, pp.68-70 for a discussion of the daunting task facing the commission.

<sup>41</sup> Fachkommission, "Abschlussbericht," p.14.

<sup>42</sup> See the "Presseerklärung der Senatsverwaltung für Kulturelle Angelegenheiten," 5 June 1989, in Stefanie Endlich, "Die Zukunft," p.41, commenting on the first of the two public consultations held during the summer of 1989.

is also conceived of as a drop-in center, and as a place of consultation and support for citizens' initiatives, youth groups, history workshops, and the like, groups that concern themselves of their own initiative with the history of National Socialism and its crimes."<sup>43</sup> In this respect, the members of the expert commission could be said to be partaking of the ethos of counter-monumentalism discussed above, insofar as they rejected out of hand the transmission of dogmatic positions crafted for easy consumption. As a consequence, the members of the expert commission attempted to rethink the museum in relation to a visitor who potentially had no immediate experience with the Third Reich, treating these visitors less as passive receptacles of pre-distilled knowledge, and more as active co-facilitators of their museal experience.

In other ways, however, the expert commission resisted the more experimental impulses of counter-monumentalism consisting of conceptual approaches that challenged the very essence of the memorial site, and foregrounded the limits to knowing and understanding the past unproblematically assumed by the conventional memorial. With a nod to the success of the ongoing Topography of Terror exhibition inaugurated in 1987, the commission report confirmed, in a very literal sense, that the significance of the site in the present would be determined, in the first instance, by the authentic archaeological traces – ‘ghosts’ – of its past appearance and layout.<sup>44</sup> In place of ‘aesthetic solutions,’ committee members suggested tapping “the expressive power of the historical place in its present form.”<sup>45</sup> These recommendations effectively ratified the realist-documentary exhibitionary approach adopted by the curators of the 1987 provisional exhibition while at the same time signaling disapproval of traditional ‘monumental’ commemorative expressions and avant-gardist conceptual challenges alike.

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<sup>43</sup> “Abschlussbericht,” p.72.

<sup>44</sup> “Abschlussbericht,” p.71. See also Matthias Hass, *op.cit.*, pp.204-210, where he delineates at least eight ways in which the expert commission’s final report expressed fidelity to and continuity with the 1987 provisional exhibition.

<sup>45</sup> “Abschlussbericht,” p.49.

What motivated this attachment to the authentic traces available at the site is a profound awareness among those attempting to trace a future course for the Topography of Terror that they stood on the threshold of a seismic generational shift.<sup>46</sup> According to Bernhard Schneider, architect and then-spokesperson for the Department of Culture (*Kulturverwaltung*) of the Berlin government, a troubling sentiment was repeatedly invoked during the summer 1989 public consultations: how to confront a future generation with the deeds of the Nazi regime, a generation with no personal experiences or even familially transmitted memories of this time period, and “for whom Hitler is but a name like Napoleon.”<sup>47</sup> The place itself thus figured increasingly as material witness, standing in for those who could no longer render testimony about Nazi tyranny.

### **Blueprint for 2010**

Mediating as it did between the various viewpoints and interpretations circulating around the Topography of Terror in the late 1980s, the expert commission had a profound impact on the subsequent development of the Topography of Terror. In defending the integrity of the site against conceptual reconfigurations, the writers of the report asserted that “as a general rule, the sober character of the terrain is to be preserved; it is not to be altered through extravagant reconstruction measures and moves to protect [the archaeological traces], measures that advance

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<sup>46</sup> As imbued with the unexamined belief in the immediacy of experience offered by the ‘authentic trace’ as these sentiments may be, one can fault neither the members of the expert commission, nor those subsequently tasked with implementing their recommendations, for grappling with the cultural challenge posed to historical representation by a rapidly dwindling number of those who had some sort of ‘direct experience’ of the past.

<sup>47</sup> *Der Tagesspiegel*, 16 August 1989 (collected in Endlich, “Die Zukunft,” p.41). Reuven Dafni of Yad Vashem also pins his support of the notion of the Topography of Terror as ‘a place of learning through reflection’ on the generational shift, underscoring the pedagogical potential of the site to pose questions to and subsequently aid a German youth with suspect knowledge about the past in coming to a deeper awareness of the site’s significance. Similar sentiments were also expressed by, among others, Barbara Distel, director of the Dachau Concentration Camp Memorial Center, Sybil Milton of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington DC, and Reinhard Rürup, eventual research director of the Topography of Terror Foundation. See Endlich, *Zukunft*, pp.13-15, and pp.19-20 for further elaborations of position statements highlighting the linkage between the site and the transmission of historical experience figuring the Topography of Terror as a ‘place of learning through reflection.’

their own particular aesthetic claims.”<sup>48</sup> We catch a glimpse here of how the language of the report itself is laden with aesthetic and affective projections of particular meanings. In this sense, the expert commission’s recommendations pre-determine the landscape discursively with the positing of the terrain as somehow already ‘sober.’ The act of designating the site as ‘sober’ is a powerful one, thereby foreclosing on other possibilities in its characterization of the space as a particular kind of place. With reference to the design competition of 1983-1984 that resulted in the cancellation of the Wenzel-Lang proposal to seal the site with cast-iron plates, the expert commission opposed any artificial transformation of the site. Instead, the commission “sets store in the expressive power of the historical site in its current form. [...] In its skepticism, so too in its misgivings vis-à-vis the possibility of an adequate depiction of the terror and its victims, the commission is of the opinion that in this case memorials could be more of a hindrance than they would be conducive to concrete remembrance.”<sup>49</sup>

These recommendations reveal the extent to which the expert commission (and the trustees of the site who came after) gave credence to the ability of the ‘authentic trace’ to ‘return’ the visitor to the past – or, conversely, the power of the trace ‘return’ to the present in uncanny ways, thereby defamiliarizing the visitor with his or her relationship to the present. But what is more, these recommendations betray a desire to fix the appearance of the site at a particular time. The ‘expressive power of the historical site’ referred to is the site as it appeared to visitors circa 1987. As such, the recommendation inadvertently renders commemorative practice immune both to change, and to the exigencies of commemoration as they shift from one generation to the next.

At times, the expert commission seemed to realize that the point was to ‘move’ contemporary visitors toward a critical engagement with the past – in short, to have an aesthetic

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<sup>48</sup> “Abschlussbericht,” p.22.

<sup>49</sup> “Abschlussbericht,” p.49.

effect that would give rise to reflection.<sup>50</sup> Thus, so the report continues, “the commission sets great value in the fact that the permanent exhibition stimulates the visitors to formulate their own questions and to engage actively with the history of the ‘SS state’ and its crimes. For this purpose the gradual onset and progression of irritation through the ‘disturbing’ character of the site is especially suitable.”<sup>51</sup> For the most part, though, the drive to disseminate information in a dispassionate way tends to eclipse this crucial realization. As the commission recommendations note elsewhere, “this also means that the objectively sober form of presentation – without any staging or artificial dramatization – shall be maintained. The exhibition should consist of panels containing photographs and documents accompanied by brief and concise captions explicating the panels.”<sup>52</sup> The expert commission’s prescriptions for the permanent exhibition thus introduce an unresolved tension that oscillates between a rejection of ‘aesthetic and artistic solutions’ bordering on the phobic, and the realization that the sober presentation of information is not inert – that exhibitions and memorial sites have a strong aesthetic effect upon visitors. Indeed, visitors fashion their experience of the past out of their aesthetic encounter with the site and the exhibition, forming an image of the past out of both the available traces *and* the affective dynamics circulating at a particular site.

The ‘aesthetics of sobriety’ articulated by the expert commission posed a dilemma for trustees of the Topography of Terror, one that revolved around the affective dynamics of the site: namely, how to fashion “a terrible place in pleasant form.”<sup>53</sup> The pages of the expert

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<sup>50</sup> ‘Aesthetic effect’ is figured here in its corporeal sense.

<sup>51</sup> “Abschlussbericht,” p.35. It is important to note that despite the tension inherent in their approach between sober objectivity on the one hand, and an irritant effect stimulating thought on the other, the curators of the Topography of Terror have consistently resisted the types of celebrations of German identity and nationhood on view at places such as the German Historical Museum and the *Haus der Geschichte* in Bonn. Foremost has been the focus on providing the materials with which visitors can form their own judgments, rather than simply being informed.

<sup>52</sup> “Abschlussbericht,” p.35.

<sup>53</sup> Akademie der Künste (ed.), *Diskussion zum Umgang mit dem ‘Gestapo-Gelände’: Dokumentation*, Berlin, 1986, Höynck transcript, p.38.

commission's recommendations bespeak this concern about attracting contemporary visitors to an unsettling place perceived by the inhabitants as a disturbing 'wound' disfiguring both the city of Berlin and the history of Germany.<sup>54</sup> Before that, during the 1986 Academy of the Arts symposium convened to discuss the future of the Topography of Terror beyond Berlin's 750<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations of 1987, interlocutors acknowledged that any future formation of the site walked a tightrope that threatened to compromise the emerging pedagogical mission of the site. Was the memorial site to be an 'inviting' place, or one that had an uncanny, defamiliarizing, even alienating effect on visitors? How should those responsible for the future development of the site preserve the gravity of the site while still assuring that visitors would take an interest in the historical questions posed by the site?<sup>55</sup> These questions go to the heart of the issue of the relationship between aesthetics and affective dynamics as I have construed it in the introductory segment to this study. On the one hand, some envisioned the need of a space that would be integrated into the urban fabric, albeit tentatively and only ever problematically. The over-riding consideration, though, was the provision of a space in which people felt inclined to gather in order to engage with the past. As Stefanie Endlich puts it, "what was desired were decentralized units and a transparent, direct correlation between building and historical site that would serve to alleviate aversion to visiting the site and invite [passers-by] to visit the relatively small-scale permanent exhibition while awakening further curiosity in the site and exhibition."<sup>56</sup> Others were less sanguine about the prospects of developing this kind of space.

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<sup>54</sup> "Abschlussbericht," pp.14-15 and *passim*.

<sup>55</sup> *Diskussion zum Umgang mit dem 'Gestapo-Gelände': Dokumentation*, Berlin, 1986, Grass, Hämer, Eckhardt, Höynck, and Schoenberger transcripts, pp.33-39.

<sup>56</sup> Stefanie Endlich, "Die 'offene Wunde' in der Stadtbrache: Zum Wettbewerb 'Topographie des Terrors'" in Architektenkammer Berlin (ed.), *Architektur in Berlin: Jahrbuch 1993/1994*, Hamburg: Junius Verlag, 1994, pp.60-61.

## Dissent from the Consensus

This tension between those who wanted to develop the site in order to counteract the foreboding reputation of the site in qualified ways so as to attract visitors, and those who viewed these moves with suspicion, underscores the broader lack of consensus surrounding aesthetic approaches among those who shared a commitment to the site's continued existence. In commenting on the call for proposals that set the 1993 design competition in motion, Dieter Hoffmann-Axthelm extended his continued support to interpretations favouring modesty as the most appropriate approach to developing the site.<sup>57</sup> But for him, even an undecorated shed is not a categorical rejection of aesthetics, but rather allows room for aesthetic effects to be sought beyond the materiality of the building structure. Aesthetics is a production of the sensible that emerges out of events and occurrences such as confrontations with the materiality of the site.<sup>58</sup> Nonetheless, the aesthetic experience is something that exceeds the materiality of the site – or, rather, arises out of the materiality of the site to show time, decay, and traces of memory.<sup>59</sup> Aesthetics is not about the fixing of a particular symbolic interpretation, but rather the opening outwards toward 'das Spätere.' Refusing the closure implicit in the consensus forged by the expert commission and the subsequent trustees of the Topography of Terror, Hoffmann-Axthelm concludes that the aesthetic debate surrounding the Topography of Terror concerns "the most

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<sup>57</sup> See Dieter Hoffmann-Axthelm, "Diskussionsbeitrag," in Senatsverwaltung für Bau- und Wohnungswesen, *Beschränkter, kooperativer Realisierung und Ideenwettbewerb: Ausstellungshalle, Besucher- und Dokumentationszentrum, Internationales Begegnungszentrum, Topographie des Terrors: Ausschreibung*, Berlin, 1993, pp.69-73, for his understanding of the relationship between architecture and aesthetics, and what this relationship contributes to the experiencing of the Topography of Terror.

<sup>58</sup> This notion of a production of the sensible dovetails with my emphasis on the affective dynamics of aesthesis as a means of rethinking Kant's 'subjective but non-sensuous aesthetics' (*pace* Terry Eagleton).

<sup>59</sup> Insofar as aesthetic experience is something that exceeds the materiality of the site, Hoffmann-Axthelm's formulation bears a resemblance to how I have been construing immaterial dynamics throughout this study.

open, the most radical point in this city. In a hundred years, it should still be the most open point.”<sup>60</sup>

In the description accompanying their entry into the 1993 design competition, Axel Schultes and Charlotte Frank also challenged the prevailing consensus emerging around the Topography of Terror.<sup>61</sup> At stake was what constituted the Topography of Terror as authentic, and how that authenticity should be expressed (or left, as it were, ‘as is’). Apropos of the rubble heaps of Kreuzberg building detritus left by the scrap company that had occupied the site well into the 1980s, Schultes and Frank wrote in defiance of the call for proposals that “the all too tidy piles of disposed bricks are an all too harmless instance of the Berliner ‘art of repression’ – as if the demolition of the buildings was not already repression enough.”<sup>62</sup> It is worth recalling from previous chapters that these rubble heaps were to be preserved as a symbol of Germany’s postwar repression of the painful memories of the Second World War. In an ironic twist that casts aspersions on the concept of ‘authentic trace’ deployed by the expert commission and those who subscribed to and disseminated their interpretation of the site, these rubble heaps do not even date back to 1945 – the site was razed and leveled in the 1950s – but were generated after the fact by scrap company that occupied the northern end of the site during the 1970s and 1980s. Given that those who contributed to the interpretation of the Topography of Terror as embodied by the expert commission’s recommendations maintained such an antipathy to ‘aesthetic solutions,’ it is curious that they clung so tenaciously to this one rather spurious symbol of postwar mnemonic repression.

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<sup>60</sup> Dieter Hoffmann-Axthelm, “Diskussionsbeitrag,” 1993, p.73.

<sup>61</sup> Axel Schultes is perhaps best-known for his overseeing of the redesign of Berlin’s government district, and for his contribution to that redevelopment, the Federal Chancellery along the Spree River.

<sup>62</sup> *Beschränkter, kooperativer Realisierung und Ideenwettbewerb*, p.47.



Schultes and Frank's statement defying the call for proposals goes to the heart of what constitutes the Topography of Terror as an authentic site. Upon what does a site base its claims to authenticity? Is it the traces? The site itself? Is it the material remains of the building foundations, of the 'in-house' jail? Is it what transpired here? Is it the scrap heaps dating from the 1970s and 1980s, retroactively metaphorized and called to attest to the postwar repression of wartime memory? To my reading, it is, to some extent, all of these. The difficulty arises when one or several aspects of authenticity are thrust to the fore at the expense and to the elision of others. In passing, it is worth noting that Schultes and Frank's proposal – a long, angular, imposing wall-like structure with few windows – is as 'authentic' a response to the exigencies of developing the Topography of Terror as the prize-winning design of Zumthor and, later, Willms, given its threatening affective charge reminiscent of what the address, Prinz-Albrecht-Straße 8, would have conveyed to anyone who feared Gestapo and SS persecution or worse in the years up to 1945. In short, one might ask whether the antipathy to challenging conceptual approaches belies the 'authenticity' of the Topography of Terror as an erstwhile place of *terror*.

As we move into a discussion of the Topography of Terror's current iteration's merits and limitations, it is worth bearing in mind a few questions arising out of the challenge posed to the aesthetics of sobriety. To what extent have those involved with the expert commission and subsequently with the Topography of Terror Foundation remained captive to an articulation of the role and function of the site that bespoke concerns relevant during the 1980s, but which have shifted as the Topography of Terror's audience becomes ever further removed from any direct connection to what is commemorated at the site? Of course, the trustees of the Topography of Terror had and have valid reasons for adhering to the principles of reserve and sobriety.<sup>63</sup> But as

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<sup>63</sup> In one of the cruel ironies of the Zumthor debacle referenced in the previous chapter, some interlocutors misinterpreted the desire to retain a low profile on the site and vis-à-vis the 'trophy architecture' rounding out the

institutions such as the German Historical Museum attempt – however tentatively – to come to grips with the fascination exerted by Hitler and the Nazis, are the affective dynamics of a documentary realism that rely on black-and-white photographs and reproductions of archived documents from the period adequate to the exigencies of forging a critical awareness of the past among a generation reared in the internet age of immediate gratification and diminished attention spans?<sup>64</sup> Recalling the discussion from the previous chapter, the ‘Sach’ and ‘Fach’ judges of the prize jury for the 1993 competition were bitterly divided over the selection of the Zumthor design. It is worth noting that those in favour of Zumthor’s design did, in fact, see it as a contemplative space that did not overwhelm the site.<sup>65</sup> In condemning the Zumthor design, were those who associated themselves with the position of the ‘Sach’ jury members too militant in what they feared to be the repercussions of the ‘aestheticization’ represented by the Zumthor design? Or were the ‘Fach’ jury members tone-deaf to the historical significance of the site, perhaps placing too much credence in Zumthor’s own pronouncements about how his design interacted with the site?

## **ARCHITECTURE, SITE, AESTHETICS**

At any rate, the call for proposals accompanying the 2005-2006 design competition left little room for doubt as to where aesthetics fit into the design concept. The successful submission

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emerging memory quarter as signaling an evasion of historical responsibility. For these critics, the Topography of Terror demanded an architectural response at least as bold and challenging as what was being erected by Libeskind (the Jewish Museum) and Eisenman (the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe). Anything less was but another example of Germany’s alleged inability to confront its perpetrator past.

<sup>64</sup> The German Historical Museum is not the only institution to grapple with this phenomenon, but is perhaps the most high-profile. Significantly, the Dokumentationszentrum Reichsparteitagsgelände Nürnberg, which opened its revamped exhibition in the Congress Hall on the site of the Nuremberg Nazi party rallies, named its permanent exhibition ‘Faszination und Gewalt.’ ‘Gewalt’ can mean, alternately, power, violence, force.

<sup>65</sup> See the previous chapter for a discussion of the various positions taken on the Zumthor proposal by jury members and other interlocutors. Briefly again, ‘Fach’ jury members had professional competence in architecture, engineering, or urban planning, while ‘Sach’ jury members were usually historians, art and architectural historians, journalists, and the like.

should not seal itself off from its urban surroundings, but should rather “forge a vital interrelationship between building, excavations, and objective information.”<sup>66</sup> The building itself should be functional yet appropriately dignified.<sup>67</sup> Most importantly, it should not overshadow the expressive power of the historical site, the “sober character of the terrain” of which was to be preserved.<sup>68</sup> So far, the broad contours of the 2005-2006 design competition did not vary significantly from that of 1993. Both calls for proposals had, after all, taken their cue from the expert commission recommendations.<sup>69</sup> A few important exceptions, however, stand out. Entrants were cautioned against making “grand urban design gestures,” succumbing to the “suggestive symbolism inherent to the theme” of the Gestapo-Gelände, or presenting proposals of a “pretentious museum character.”<sup>70</sup> Most significantly, absent was the short clause that bore the stamp of an early 1990s Berlin in the midst of a rebuilding boom, a clause that called on contestants to produce a design that set for itself the task of “a complex architecture that in its construction, form, and expression spoke a reserved yet clearly articulated language.”<sup>71</sup> Instead, the rejection of conceptual approaches to developing the site was unequivocal: “In the future development of the site, an (architectural)-artistic exaggeration of design considerations should be rejected in favour of a high regard for the site as well as the remaining historical testimonials on this ‘place of perpetration.’”<sup>72</sup> Reserved, dignified sobriety was the watchword. Ambitious, challenging, or provocative proposals were discouraged right off the mark.

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<sup>66</sup> Stiftung Topographie des Terrors, *Topographie des Terrors. Realisierungswettbewerb Topographie des Terrors: 309 Entwürfe – Katalog zur Ausstellung der Wettbewerbsarbeiten*, Berlin, 2006, pp.24-25. This catalogue contains a mildly redacted version of the call for proposals, shorn mainly of its technical details, such as zoning and infrastructure details that comprise design competition calls for proposals.

<sup>67</sup> *Topographie des Terrors. Realisierungswettbewerb Topographie des Terrors*, p.20.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p.15.

<sup>69</sup> See *Topographie des Terrors. Realisierungswettbewerb*, p.15, where the connection is stated explicitly.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, p.19.

<sup>71</sup> *Beschränkter, kooperativer Realisierung und Ideenwettbewerb*, 1993, p.35.

<sup>72</sup> *Topographie des Terrors. Realisierungswettbewerb*, 2006, p.20. This is not the only thinly veiled reference to the failed Zumthor design dotting the various sections of the catalogue. The cover overleaf, penned by Florian

As Dieter Hoffmann-Axthelm pointed out wryly, the call for proposals not only constrained the creative possibilities of entrants; it also left the jury members with very narrow parameters that virtually predetermined the outcome.<sup>73</sup> In addition to a family resemblance between the twenty-three designs selected to advance to the second round of judging, the first and second prize designs corresponded so clearly with the brief of the design competition that Hoffmann-Axthelm felt compelled to dismiss the selections as “buildings that do not present themselves as autonomous entities, but rather understand themselves as a shell for the activities of the foundation.”<sup>74</sup> In a striking example of generational change, most of the proposals that advanced to the second round of judging came from younger architects who had very little connection to the debates of the 1980s. As Hoffmann-Axthelm notes, these architects approached the design brief not only more calmly and composedly, but also more impersonally. One thing that Hoffmann-Axthelm does not note is the preponderance of Berlin-based architects that advanced, which suggests that given the media exposure surrounding the ignominious fate of the Zumthor design, architects based in Berlin were in a more advantageous position in terms of divining what the jury sought.<sup>75</sup>

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Mausbach (president of the Federal Office for Construction and Regional Planning) noted that Willms’ design proposal was one that rejected ‘misunderstood architectural interpretations’ and ‘symbolic exaggeration.’

<sup>73</sup> See Dieter Hoffmann-Axthelm, “Die Topographen sind am Ziel, der Ort geht unter,” in *Bauwelt*, 97:6, 24 February 2006, pp.14-17. Hoffmann-Axthelm put it even more bluntly: “The entire process was [...] devoid of thought” (p.14). As we saw in the previous chapter, in the wake of the massive cost overruns of the Zumthor project, the federal government – which had stepped in to replace the State of Berlin as the main sponsor of the design competition – was in no mood for another protracted and expensive debate. In place of jury members who might be sympathetic to more conceptual or experimental designs, the federal government appointed seasoned ‘professionals’ of Berlin memorial design competitions from the ranks of politics, administration, and journalism to act as judges alongside returning Topography of Terror Foundation members.

<sup>74</sup> Dieter Hoffmann-Axthelm, *op.cit.*, 2006, p.16. See also Nikolaus Bernau, “Keine Experimente,” *Berliner Zeitung*, 27 January 2006, for similar observations.

<sup>75</sup> To me it is no coincidence that seven of the top ten designs came from Berlin architectural firms (with only one entry in the top ten coming from outside of Germany). Members of these architectural and landscape design firms would surely have been attuned to both to the debates about the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, which had just been dedicated in the same year as the third call for proposals, and to the Zumthor debacle that had unfolded in the Berlin press.

Other reactions were equally caustic. Writing on the eve of the inauguration of the Willms building housing the newly installed permanent Topography of Terror exhibition, Nils Ballhausen decried its simplification of a multi-faceted situation. What greeted the visitor was an ‘architecture of negation’ that was not a monument, that served no interpretive purpose, and which strove to not draw attention to itself.<sup>76</sup> Ballhausen likened the design – a square comprised of nine equal-sized quadrants – both to ‘graph paper’ and to a series of containers that could be recombined at will.<sup>77</sup> Even its most praiseworthy design merit – its architectural ‘skin’ that provided a view onto the site beyond the walls of the permanent exhibition – failed insofar as its ‘flickering fine-meshed netting’ was a hindrance to an unobstructed view.<sup>78</sup>

Unsurprisingly, matters were different for the champions of the design, in particular the Topography of Terror trustees who had to make use of the building as a home for their permanent exhibition. Managing Director Andreas Nachama’s appraisal of Willms’ design is worth citing at length, hitting as it does all the notes of aesthetics, affective dynamics, experience, and authenticity:

An architecture has arisen that gives an unencumbered view onto the sparse terrain of the site from the inside of the building; that makes of the one-storied building a visible and prominent visitor center; and that, through its metallic mesh façade, radiates the dignity appropriate to a place of contemplative learning. With this architecture along with the preservation of the material traces, something has been achieved that the curators of the exhibition have always wanted: a site that is, in the first instance, the premier exhibit that brings in visitors who then seek out historical connections among the banal bricks of the site.<sup>79</sup>

Though the recently opened Willms pavilion might not be an obvious candidate for prestigious architectural prizes, and though many would disagree, in some ways, the design

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<sup>76</sup> Nils Ballhausen, “Kein Grund zur Zufriedenheit,” p.23.

<sup>77</sup> Ballhausen, p.25.

<sup>78</sup> Ballhausen, p.27. Ballhausen never conveys why an unobstructed view is more desirable or effective than what he criticizes.

<sup>79</sup> *Topographie des Terrors. Realisierungswettbewerb*, 2006, p.7.

yielded a cheaper and more functional version of Zumthor's unrealizable design. What I would like to do here is offer a reading that differs from that of critics and advocates alike, one that points to the fluidity of architectural discourse and suggests ways in which the Willms design is a 'counter-monument' despite itself.<sup>80</sup> In fact, its very sobriety advances an aesthetic argument. My alternative interpretation carves out a path between those who evaluate the site positively as minimalist and emptied of the taint of aestheticism, and those who condemn the building and the entire project for its emphasis on simplicity and anti-aestheticism.

While the Zumthor and Willms designs diverge in fundamental ways, nonetheless one can discern continuities between the two designs.<sup>81</sup> Both were 'minimal' in their approach, favouring clean sight-lines, and aiming at a certain permeability in relationship to the site.<sup>82</sup> After reading the disparaging appraisals of the Willms design in architectural journals and in the media at large, however, one cannot help but wonder whether a broad segment of the public sphere would have preferred a more 'high-profile' memorial site design such as Zumthor's, one that could engage in dialogue with the completed projects of Libeskind and Eisenman – if only the exorbitant costs had not been so pressing a concern. An editorial from a Potsdam newspaper illustrates the point: "No example will be set on the central, authentic site place of memory of the perpetrators to go along with the particular and unique architecture of the Holocaust Monument

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<sup>80</sup> I do not mean to suggest that the Willms design partakes consciously of a 'counter-monumental ethos,' or that Willms herself set out to produce a conceptual statement along the lines of Hoheisel or Stih and Schnock (see James Young's works referenced above for in-depth descriptions), but rather that given the faint echoes of continuity between the Zumthor proposal and Willms' clearly articulated design, the effect of Willms' building as it situates itself on the site produces the kind of environment conducive to contemplative reflexivity that so many commentators praised about the Zumthor proposal.

<sup>81</sup> Foremost among the differences were the building materials used, the unique shape of the components (many of which had to be designed especially for Zumthor's building), and the technical-architectural challenges posed by Zumthor's design that did not arise for Willms' more straightforward design. It should also be mentioned that Zumthor chose to site his building – a rectilinear structure as opposed to Willms' quadrangle – in such a way that it traversed the site in a slightly diagonal trajectory. On the other hand, Willms sited her building perpendicular to Niederkirchnerstrasse.

<sup>82</sup> Zumthor aimed to achieve this with a slightly opaque milk-coloured glass skin, while Willms sheathed her building in a grey metal mesh.

and the Jewish Museum. No sign that reverberates through the city with the proclamation: here was Himmler's desk, and from here monstrous crimes were organized that continue to elude comprehension and conciliation."<sup>83</sup> The author of the article speculates that Berlin's satisfaction with a functional building hints at a deeper discomfort with its history. While provocative, this statement overlooks the very public advocacy on the part of the Topography of Terror Foundation for a functional building.

With a slight shift in discursive emphasis, the Willms design emerges in a more favourable light. In the first instance, instead of the suggestion that Willms' design is derivative with respect to design proposals of the preceding design competitions, one might instead evaluate this as a citation of previous proposals. What this demonstrates is how the Willms' proposal self-reflexively condenses the history of memorial design competition in Berlin, which itself reflects broader shifts in commemorative practice and the politics of memory. On another level, as noted above, Ballhausen critiques the metal mesh façade for hindering an unimpeded view out onto the site beyond. Might we not, instead, term this an 'opaque optics,' one that refuses to open a 'transparent' window onto the past as represented by the authentic site? The contours of the site beyond the exhibition hall are vaguely discernible, as if a palimpsest were covering the physical terrain and the past concealed therein. On this reading, the slightly obscured view of the terrain beyond the museum pavilion serves as an acknowledgment of the difficulty inherent in accessing traumatic pasts. Conceived in such a way, this design element helps to achieve a critical-historiographical awareness that questions assumptions about a transparent relationship between contemporary viewer and the past, and rejects notions of a completely knowable and explainable past.

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<sup>83</sup> "Topographie des Terrors: Zeichen und Zweck," *Potsdamer Neueste Nachrichten*, 26 January 2006.

In response to the oft-posed rhetorical question asking what a building that avoids making overt statements signifies, we might answer ‘much more than what is claimed by the design’s critics.’ (The question itself is a rather disingenuous swipe at the Willms design, insofar as Zumthor himself claimed – initially – that his design proposal spoke no other language than that of ‘pure structure.’)<sup>84</sup> My own reading of the Willms design does two things: first, it highlights the multiple ways in which we might interpret architectural design. More importantly, the very gesture of putting forward an alternative reading of the relationship between site and building design underscores the ways in which something like critical-historiographical awareness presumes a greater complexity than what we can discern from design elements alone. What I mean is that the critical dimensions of the building design’s engagement with the past must be articulated in more registers and on more analytic levels than merely through the building itself, thereby saving the interpretive enterprise of architectural expression from becoming a hall of mirrors.

Rather than presenting itself as a loquacious self-referential gesture, the Willms building emerges out of the site, mediating an uneasy, permeable-yet-opaque relationship between the past referenced by the authentic site, and an exhibition deploying authentic documents that aims to resuscitate the site as witness. The result is a symmetry between two kinds of authenticity indexed by the Topography of Terror as site and exhibition: the ‘here-then’ and ‘here-now’ of the site itself, and the ‘that-has-been,’ to which the photographs and documents of the exhibition bear witness. The unassuming demeanour of the Willms building and its tentative and retreating relationship to the site prevent it from drawing too much attention to the ‘here-now,’ as a more bold architectural statement reacting to contemporary artistic concerns might be inclined to do. At the same time, the Willms building does not present itself as direct access to and unmediated

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<sup>84</sup> See the previous chapter for a more detailed discussion of Zumthor’s proposed design.



experience of the past. As Aleida Assmann asserts in her discussion of the resonance of place, “the illusion of an immediate experience must be destroyed in order for a site to not become a place of falsified experience.”<sup>85</sup> The difference between an experience *then* on a given site from the experience of a contemporary visitor *now* is absolute. Only in remaining attentive to the horizon between the ‘here-then’ and the ‘here-now’ is the affective potential of an authentic place to be realized. Willms’ conduit-like pavilion goes some distance in striking this delicate balance between an authentic site, and structures erected on the site after the fact.

### **THE NEW MUSEALITY 2010**

Despite my conciliatory reading of the recently inaugurated exhibition hall and information center, the point of the various critiques of the Willm design is well-taken. A different design might well have posed more challenging questions to its visitors, while not sacrificing subtlety. But as I have been arguing throughout this chapter, the trustees of the Topography of Terror have remained beholden to an interpretation of the site that addressed and codified debates of the 1990s – and the trustees wielded enormous influence in the end regarding the restricted wording of the 2005-2006 call for proposals. That said, the curators of the exhibitions housed by the Willms pavilion henceforth still have plenty of margin to go beyond the mould cast by the expert commission by making creative use of their permanent and temporary exhibition spaces.

Before considering this possibility, however, I will consider how the permanent exhibition installed in the Topography of Terror posits and makes use of museal concepts at variance with more conventional exhibition spaces dedicated to the display of the history of a

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<sup>85</sup> Aleida Assmann, *Erinnerungsräume: Formen und Wandlungen des kulturellen Gedächtnisses*, München: C.H. Beck, 1999, p.334.

particular socio-cultural grouping such as the nation-state. Since the Topography of Terror straddles different affective registers, the challenge presents itself in crafting an exhibition that appeals to the masses while satisfying and stimulating an audience familiar with the intersection of historiographical debates and aesthetic debates surrounding the relative desirability of conceptual, abstract approaches as opposed to representational, realistic approaches to architecture and museal display.<sup>86</sup> A straightforward design may improve the ‘legibility’ of the architecture and exhibition, but perhaps to the detriment of posing challenging questions about the relationship between the site, the building, the exhibition, and the past. The mediated communicative possibilities offered by art might effectively convey the immaterial dynamics of traumatic experience that resist archivalization, but the added layer of interpretation required might impede the ‘direct’ communicative power of photographs understood as documents. Taking into account the diverse class, educational, and generational backgrounds informing the viewing habits and museum experience of its audience, the task confronting the curators of the Topography of Terror is thus whether to ‘defamiliarize’ its audience, to strike a familiar emotional chord, or do both. In the remainder of this section, I hope to illuminate in this section is how the critical-reflexive pedagogical commitment of the Topography of Terror’s curatorial staff contributes to a distinct approach to museal representation, one oriented toward transforming the way contemporary visitors with little direct experience of National Socialism engage with the museum and memorial.

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<sup>86</sup> Here, ‘aesthetic debates’ refers to art-historical debates about the nature of art and architecture in general, and to the debates about counter-monuments in particular. Of course, in terms of the relationship between historical and aesthetic questions, ‘conceptual’ responses to the past do not present a strict dichotomy with ‘representational’ depictions of the past. In relation to these questions and my construal of aesthetics as corporeal, some might be inclined to ask how aesthetics as the ‘production of the sensible’ relates to the conceptual. Recalling both Spinoza’s refusal to posit a distinction between mind and body and his notion that affect lies at the heart of the human condition, I would answer that conceptual art, too, can induce unease, attraction, repulsion, and empathy.

## Mediated Distance and the Productive Recognition of the Non-Familiar as Pedagogical Strategies<sup>87</sup>

The chapter on belated memory traced the trajectory of the Topography of Terror against the shift in the 1970s and 1980s away from the traditional monument and straightforwardly representational museum toward the more conceptually driven counter-monumental impulse. Many of the memorial sites completed or revamped from the 1980s onward bear the stamp of this effervescence. In Berlin there is no shortage of conceptually-driven memorial sites, ranging from the prominent (Eisenman's Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe; Daniel Libeskind's Jewish Museum) to the more subtle or concealed (Micha Ullmann's Bebelplatz memorial to the Nazi book-burning of 1933; Renate Stih and Frieder Schnock's Bayrische Platz street-sign installation). As suggested above, although the Topography of Terror as a memorial site combining site and exhibition partakes, to a certain extent, of the counter-monumental ethos, nevertheless given its preference for the empirical document and reference to the concrete materiality of the authentic trace, it would be a misnomer to place it in the same conceptual category as the memorial sites just listed. That said, though, the Topography of Terror exhibition establishes a different experiential relationship to the past than does, say, the Shôwakan or Yûshûkan. The intent of these memorial sites' exhibition spaces is to (re)fashion some sort of 'authentic experience' that powerfully links the visitor to the events of the Asia-Pacific War. The exhibits are emotional in tone; the immediate experience (*Erlebnis*) valorized. In contradistinction to this curatorial strategy, I would like to suggest that the Topography of Terror

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<sup>87</sup> Ivan Karp makes use of the term 'productive non-recognition' in his essay, "Culture and Representation" (in Ivan Karp and Steven D. Lavine (eds.), *Exhibiting Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*, Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991), in which he discusses the process of how museum visitors align their assumptions with their expectations. Though he is discussing cross-cultural exhibitions, his observation that "the experience of contrast or shock can lead to a reorganization of knowledge and experience" (p.22) is germane to our discussion of critical-reflexive pedagogy at the Topography of Terror. I have opted, however, to drop the prefix 'non-' from Karp's formulation as a means of underscoring the extent to which the Topography of Terror's curators aim to engender an awareness among visitors of their distance from a kind of 'you-are-there' immediacy.

involves the visitor in a ‘poesis of experience’ relevant to present concerns, a mediated experience<sup>88</sup> that aims at a productive recognition of the uncanny elements of the past (‘here-then’) given voice by the exhibition. The Topography of Terror exhibition short-circuits the transmission of an illusory ‘immediate, authentic experience.’ As opposed to *replicating* ‘the’ past, often in questionable ways, the critical-reflexive pedagogical thrust of the Topography of Terror *activates* the ‘past.’<sup>89</sup> Authentic as the traces may be on the Topography of Terror, in place of didactic displays that make claims about ‘the’ past, the curatorship presents a mode of display that constantly opens up the ‘past’ to questioning.

The key contrast between the production of the unmediated ‘Erlebnis-effect’ and the productive recognition of mediated distance inhering in a critical-reflexive pedagogy is the *processual* dynamic inherent to this realignment. The permanent exhibition at the Topography of Terror produces an environment in which the visitor is confronted with the ‘non-familiar’ of a time period in German history governed by radically different rules. The process of ‘translating’ this encounter into the contemporary moment of the museum experience results in a realignment of assumptions and horizons of expectation with the experience of the contrastive setting. But in contrast to other German cultural institutions such as the *Haus der Geschichte* in Bonn, which portrays the Nazis as an almost exotic ‘cultural other’ to the contemporary Federal Republic’s liberal democracy, or even the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, which more than one critic has chastised as an attempt to expiate German guilt for the Holocaust, the Topography of Terror contextualizes the different subject-positions unfolding in time between ‘us’ and ‘them.’<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> The quality of this kind of experience has more in common than the German *Erfahrung*, a word for experience that enfolds duration, thereby contrasting with the immediate experience of *Erlebnis*.

<sup>89</sup> The Shōwakan’s mode of display could be read as an attempt to ‘replicate’ the past.

<sup>90</sup> It is not difficult to understand what motivated such critiques in light of the surprisingly bitter and sometimes downright puerile exchanges between the various camps. See Bürgerinitiative Perspektive Berlin e.V. (ed.), *Ein Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas: Dokumentation 1988-1995*, Berlin, 1995, pp.90-93 for the transcript of a letter dated 6 November 1989 from the *Initiative zum Umgang mit dem Gestapo-Gelände* to *Perspektive Berlin*

What this circumvents is a twofold tendency: first, the depiction of the Nazis as ‘absolute evil other’ so as to better identify with the morally superior position of resistance to Nazism,<sup>91</sup> and second, the displacement of historical responsibility for engaging with National Socialism onto a problematic identification with the victim, an identification that obscures other subject-positions such as perpetrator, collaborator, or even bystander.<sup>92</sup> At the same time the Topography of Terror aims to understand the structures that made ‘us’ back ‘then’ perpetrate such heinous crimes – all the while remaining attuned to the possibility that fascism could happen again.

To achieve their pedagogical aim of facilitating this recognition of the non-familiar among visitors, the curatorial staff of the Topography of Terror consciously and conscientiously rejects any kind of staging. The mediated distance between us-now and us-then that structures the exhibition is not merely an accidental effect among many effects, such as that of the building design or siting, but rather an effect cultivated by members of the curatorial staff actively involved in the organization of the museum’s content. According to Andreas Nachama, the objective depiction of the Third Reich contrasts with the emotional tone of Sachsenhausen, the former concentration camp and recently revamped memorial site on the outskirts of Berlin.<sup>93</sup> But insofar as Nachama’s remarks constitute a particular ideology of historiographical

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critiquing *Perspektive’s* tendency to tar any individual or group who problematized the need for a monument to Jewish persecution on the Topography of Terror with the brush of revisionism à la Ernst Nolte at best, or as ‘intellectual enablers’ of fascism at worst.

<sup>91</sup> As we saw in the chapter on belated memory, the myth of widespread resistance to Nazism arose during the Adenauer era and endured down through the generational upheavals of the late 1960s and 1970s.

<sup>92</sup> In what might be read as an answer to Daniel Goldhagen’s thesis elaborated in *Hitler’s Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust*, New York: Vintage Books, 1996, of a near universally-pervasive eliminationist anti-Semitic streak running through German culture, Reinhard Rürup encapsulates the various subject-positions in an interview with Karen Till. Germany is neither a ‘nation’ or ‘people’ of perpetrators, but rather a society with internal variation: “When you say that Germany is a society of perpetrators, you have to differentiate. It is not a society of Himmlers and Heydrichs. But they belong to it, and others belong to it; those who tried to make things better were very few, but they also existed. [... What is more], not all the victims were Jews, but also non-Jewish Germans, and the majority were non-Germans, residents of other European countries.” (Cited in Till, *The New Berlin*, p.131).

<sup>93</sup> Andreas Nachama, cited in Christian Böhme, “Wir sind ein Lernort,” *Jüdische Allgemeine*, Special Edition on the Topography of Terror, 6 May 2010.

representation, they also point in the direction of a distinct curatorial approach that eschews ‘visual terrorism’ and the manipulative effects of shock to achieve productive defamiliarization. As Christel Dormagen colourfully relates, the images and caption-plaques of the Topography of Terror are not launched at the visitor like so many ‘experience rockets.’<sup>94</sup>

While neither the Shôwakan nor Yûshûkan engages in ‘visual terrorism,’ nonetheless both might be guilty of launching the occasional ‘experience rocket.’ The different roles accorded to authenticity and the ‘authentic experience’ illuminate the differential affective dynamics operative at the Topography of Terror when compared to the Shôwakan or Yûshûkan. The Yûshûkan deploys the inflated rhetoric of its narrative captioning in conjunction with the display of military relics ranging from traditional swords to the torpedo-submarines of the ‘special attack’ suicide squadrons to buttress its evocation of the sublime aesthetic of selfless, heroic sacrifice of one’s life in the service of the emperor. Where the Topography of Terror relies on the authenticity of documentation, the Yûshûkan (in general) and the Shôwakan (in particular) rely on the authenticity of (re)creation, with the Shôwakan producing diorama-like dramatic aural and visual recreations of particular home-front settings. It goes without saying that these different valances of the discourse of authenticity generate different affective qualities of experience in the viewer or museum visitor, ranging from uncontrolled feelings of sublime wonder and the intoxicating effect of heroic sacrifice in the service of nationhood, to a more controlled, contextualized, mediated experience.

To generalize for a moment, the one approach valorizes the nation as absolute object of allegiance, and tends toward an emotional blurring of the temporal distance and distinction

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<sup>94</sup> Christel Dormagen, *taz*, 2 September 1989, excerpt reprinted in Stefanie Endlich (ed.), *Denkort Gestapo-Gelände*, Berlin: Aktives Museum Faschismus und Widerstand in Berlin E.V., 1990, p.73. In a Baudrillardian vein, Dormagen argues that the real-time simulation of staged experience stifles the capability of the available images to communicate their message.

between ‘us’ now and ‘them’ back then. In so doing, this curatorial approach converts the museum visit into a ritual of national citizenship that honours and venerates the heroes of warfare. As a museal poetics, this strategy makes no appeal to the audience to engage in mutual acts of interpretation of the past being represented. In the moment of the ‘Erlebnis-effect,’ there is not much margin for a dialogic engagement with the exhibitions.<sup>95</sup> The other approach to the aesthetic dimensions of the museum experience incorporates contestation or critical engagement with the memory politics of postwar Germany as a key component of its museal poetics. Avoiding the redemptive aesthetics of more conventional monuments or museum displays wherein the monument or exhibition does the work of mourning or remembering, this curatorial strategy nonetheless activates the authenticity of the site for ends at variance with the production of an immediate experience. Its critical-reflexive pedagogical strategy resists the crystallization of official memory, and incorporates the contemporary audience into the project of articulating the historical responsibility borne by those who come after for the deeds of perpetration represented by the Topography of Terror.

### **Grammars of Display**

The exhibition strategy at the Topography of Terror is decidedly ‘low-tech’ so as to better defend against manipulative effects, real or perceived.<sup>96</sup> There is no aural component to the permanent exhibition, nor are there large screens to distract the viewer’s attention away from the documents. Rather, the exhibition relies heavily on the document or photograph to index the past

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<sup>95</sup> It is worth noting in passing that *Mahnmal* of the conventional mould – especially but not limited to those of the GDR – along with many concentration camp memorials sought to move the visitor, to produce an experience of discomfort bordering on personal anguish over the fate endured by victims of Nazi persecution. This ‘metonymic sensation’ creates empathy via the (ersatz) experience of suffering.

<sup>96</sup> As is well known, it is a common tactic of Holocaust deniers to seize on any hint of the staging of historical facts or events, even renovations of concentration camp memorials, as evidence that the Holocaust did not happen. As Karen Till relates, Holocaust denial – or the less extreme variant, denial of German responsibility – is an occupational hazard confronted all too often by educators and tour guides in Germany. (See Till, *The New Berlin*, pp.138-139).

it represents. Hundreds of large-scale black-and-white reproductions of photographs and archival documents ranging from Nazi proclamations, decrees, arrest warrants, to figures for the deportation of Jews from diverse regions and reports on *Einsatzgruppen* executions greet the visitor to the permanent exhibition. Documents speak largely for themselves, with caption placards to round out the historical significance of each segment of the exhibition.<sup>97</sup> The selected photographs confront the violence of the Nazi regime squarely while steering clear of an inappropriate voyeurism.<sup>98</sup>

A range of cultural anxieties spanning the fear of Holocaust denial and a sensitivity toward the ways the Nazi state mobilized certain affective dynamics and sublime sentiments to gain support undergirds the proclivity for a dispassionate documentary realism evinced by the curatorial staff of the Topography of Terror. Though one can well appreciate the fears and anxieties that have motivated the curators to adopt such a strong approach to the representation of the past ‘as it was,’ we might still question the excessive credence placed in the historiographical claims to objectivity and an exclusive reliance on conventional archival sources. For example, with regard to the deployment of the black-and-white photograph as an index of a past reality, the assumption dating back to the time of the provisional exhibition of 1987 is that photographs are a transparent representation of reality. Matthias Hass, whose critical

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<sup>97</sup> The permanent exhibition is divided into five major sections, each containing between two and seven sub-sections, plus a prologue situating the site in Berlin, and an epilogue chronicling the history of the site after 1945. Section One is entitled “The National Socialist Takeover of Power”; Section Two is entitled “Institutions of Terror”; Section Three, “Terror, Persecution and Extermination on Reich Territory”; Section Four, “The SS and the Reich Security Main Office in the Occupied Countries”; and Section Five, “The End of the War and the Postwar Era.”

<sup>98</sup> The ethics of viewing atrocity photographs comes in for problematic yet provocative treatment in Susan Crane’s essay, “Choosing Not to Look,” *History and Theory* (47), October 2008, pp.309-330. After asking at the outset whether Holocaust photographs “have reached the limits of their usefulness as testimony” (p.310), she contends that Holocaust photographs suffer from a diminished effect due to the repetitive circulation of certain iconic images. As opposed to ‘defamiliarization,’ we are left with a casual familiarity with the images of violence and death. While her critique of the transference of the objectifying gaze from perpetrator to viewer is to be commended, her startling proposition to limit access to Holocaust photographs discounts how seeing, or being made to see, can also be a political and ethical act akin to bearing witness in the present to past atrocity. She also overlooks how re-witnessing from generation to generation can serve a pedagogical purpose along the lines of the one I have been discussing and developing in this chapter.



acumen lies elsewhere in his informative work, merely lists photographs along with maps and written documents as some of the available documents to the curators of the 1987 provisional exhibition.<sup>99</sup>

The exhibition catalogues from 1987 through to 2010 demonstrate the extent to which photography is a key element of the Topography of Terror's exhibition strategy, albeit one that surprisingly goes unexamined, given its prominence in both catalogue and exhibition.<sup>100</sup>

Photography is assumed to be documentary photography. In this documentary conception of photography, photographs stand in unproblematically as fact and evidence. We can bracket a discussion about the nature of the photographic referent for the purposes of this chapter and still consider what escapes these assumptions about the nature of the photograph as document.<sup>101</sup>

Namely, what is not addressed explicitly is the extent to which the layout of a visual narrative in space hinges on the selection of a particular photograph either from a series, or from a set of available themes. These photographs are selected at least to some extent according to aesthetic criteria (whether consciously or unconsciously), wrested from the context of their production, and then used to 'frame' a particular section of the exhibition's narrative. The point is that even if photographs may well be chosen for their historical significance, this is not a purely autonomous consideration. Rather, it is a choice into which enters resonance as much as any rational selection criteria. What is more, while the curators at the Topography of Terror

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<sup>99</sup> Hass, p.189.

<sup>100</sup> Incidentally, the exhibition catalogue for the Topography of Terror is one place where essays might legitimate the reliance on the photograph conceived of black-and-white document at the expense of other genres of photography. Such essays might even acknowledge the problematic dimensions of documentary photography, the porous distinction between the photograph as 'document' or 'art,' as well as the creative ways to which this tenuous distinction might be put to work in a historical exhibition.

<sup>101</sup> For the sake of argument, let us accept with reservations that the indexicality of the photographic referent works in conjunction with the material traces on the Topography of Terror to guarantee the authenticity of a past reality, the 'that-has-been' in Roland Barthes' parlance.

judiciously caption the photographs, nonetheless a captioned photograph versus an uncaptioned one can carry subtly different affective charges that exceed the intentions of the curators.

What is more, the credence placed in documentation passes over the extent to which a ‘fact’ might be influenced or distorted by social context, or by the aesthetics of representation. What I mean is that the spatial poetics of a visual narrative unfolds according to a grammar of museal display linking each image, object, and caption as an element in a spatially unfolded ‘utterance.’ Each document – be it a photograph (of a person, object, or event), report, list of statistics, newspaper clipping, arrest warrant – attains additional meaning and significance in relation to other ‘signifiers’ at the same time that it influences their respective meanings in the various syntagmatic or paradigmatic chains that comprise an exhibition’s narrative.<sup>102</sup> In addition, the grammar of the exhibition inside the containing structure of the Willms pavilion is in dialogue both with the spatial dynamics of the building itself, and with the building as part of the terrain beyond its walls. That these interlocking grammars also insert themselves into Berlin’s mnemonic fabric also subtly nuances the significance of ostensibly inert ‘facts’ that are the building blocks of the permanent exhibition.

We might also be tempted to ask whether the distanced, dispassionate documentary realism dissipates the potential force of the museum experience even as it resists the more dubious aspects of the ‘Erlebnis-effect.’ But has this approach perhaps accorded too little a role to aspects of National Socialism – and the response to these on the part of the contemporary visitor – that are extremely volatile and difficult to manage in a museal setting? Can a factual, objective, reserved, archive- and document-based exhibition contain the more volatile of the

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<sup>102</sup> Here we can think of the syntagmatic chain as the series of images, objects, and text that constitute the ‘utterance’ of a particular section of an exhibition – a gallery, for example – while the paradigmatic chain is the set of issues addressed either by the larger thematic divisions of the exhibition, or by the exhibition taken as a whole. I base this conceptualization of visual narratives in space on a reading of Roland Barthes, “The Rhetoric of the Image” (1964), in *Image-Music-Text*, trans. Stephen Heath, New York: Hill and Wang, 1977.

affects successfully? To what extent is it desirable to contain this affective charge? We are back to some of the issues posed at the beginning of this chapter about the divergent approaches taken to the representation of the Nazi past by the German Historical Exhibition in its recent temporary exhibition, and the Topography of Terror in its permanent exhibition. Instead of Nazi flags or Hitler playing cards, the visitor is confronted with a rational, fact-based dissecting of the National Socialist period in all its brutality. As Klaus Hesse notes, some of the pictures selected by the curators were of SS members participating in everyday activities such as family outings to the beach. Challenging the cliché of the sadistic SS member was the intent, for as Hesse relates, “many of the Gestapo henchmen were conventional (*bieder*) men, even petit-bourgeois.”<sup>103</sup>

What is important here is that any ‘shock’ of illumination that results from this encounter with photographs of the everyday existence of SS members and their families is not immediate, but rather unfolds more slowly, arising from a reorganization of knowledge and experience that is a hallmark of critical-reflexive pedagogy. As Andreas Nachama responded to an interviewer’s query asking where was the emotion in so much sobriety, “not in the foreground.”<sup>104</sup> For Nachama as for Hesse, the calm transmission of documentary knowledge compels the visitor to ask more questions. This circumspect and conscientious approach to the pitfalls of manipulated affective dynamics is commendable, especially in light of the curatorial practices of other memorial sites we have considered. But we should not let matters rest here concerning the location of emotion in so much sobriety. Sure enough, these new forms and modes of commemoration seek to critique the manipulative manufacture of affect that effectively imposes a standardized narrative through sometimes barely visible means.<sup>105</sup> However, as I have

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<sup>103</sup> Cited in Tobias Kühn, “Wer sie waren, was sie taten,” p.5.

<sup>104</sup> Christian Böhme, “Wir sind ein Lernort,” p.4.

<sup>105</sup> And sometimes ‘invisible,’ by way of sound, lighting, layout. One need only think of the exhibition strategy deployed at the *Haus der Geschichte* in Bonn to reflect upon how much of the GDR history is confined to

endeavoured to argue here, these new forms of commemoration are *no less* invested with (and in) affective potentialities than are the more conventional modalities and forms of commemoration. Arguably, these new modes of commemoration also manipulate affect in the service of the production of a new kind of German (or otherwise) citizen, albeit one of a decidedly less nationalistic disposition.

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Up until this point, I have considered a few of the merits and limitations of a representational poetics that leans heavily on empirically observable documentary evidence at the expense of the affective potentialities of, say, art, photography, or literature beyond the documentary. Ostensibly, the large number of visitors that continue to visit the Topography of Terror from year to year speaks for itself. The exhibition style has been a success, so the rationale goes, and therefore not in any urgent need of a stylistic overhaul. But though the exhibition itself has altered slightly as a result of the move indoors, nonetheless the choice of sources is still largely the same in its ‘objective, realist’ purview: weighty tomes of documents that visitors can consult; newsreel footage; audio portions of speeches. After his resignation, even Rürup, the progenitor of this style of exhibition in 1987, expressed his reservations about the continued validity of an overly-realist aesthetic. Presumably he had in mind the exigencies of conveying the urgency of the National Socialist past to an ever-younger generation for whom the events of the last century are very much ‘history.’ With this critique of the Topography of Terror, I do not intend to invalidate the important contributions that the Topography of Terror as an institution has made to the memoryscape of contemporary Berlin, especially insofar as the Topography of Terror acts as a check on more unqualified acts of national expiation of guilt.

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suffocating spaces, often in darker recesses of the building, in contrast to the natural light filtering in through skylights bathing the FRG narrative in an aura of ‘enlightened’ legitimacy.

Granted that the curators and academic staff of the Topography of Terror were wary of the potential dangers of affective frisson, kitsch, and schlock, we might still legitimately ask how a deliberately reserved and sober representational poetics (and politics) aimed at initiating self-reflection registers among a generation possibly anesthetized by the constant flow and circulation of media images.

That said, for those who were middle-aged and older and confronting these documents and photographs during the 1980s and 1990s, such an empirically-driven exhibitionary strategy may well have been an effective means of kindling the associative connections this generation had with individual and collective experiences of the National Socialist era and its aftermath. To this much, the reception of the Topography of Terror in the media and public sphere bears ample testimony. Yet as we approach the threshold of another generational rotation, it is time to entertain the possibility that the power and the effectiveness of these images has become attenuated. Many of these now-iconic documentary photographs that were once so successful in compelling a particular generation of Germans to confront and engage with Germany's role – and sometimes their own individual role – as perpetrators may not have the same effectiveness in convincing a generation that has come of age in the 2000s and 2010s to shoulder their burden of responsibility toward the past.

More bluntly put, does the sheer volume, the blizzard of authentic facts, no matter how authentic, run the risk of anaesthetizing its audience precisely at the moment that it short-circuits the 'Erlebnis-effect,' however dubious the latter may be? The problem lies in finding a way to avoid simply acceding to the attractions of the 'Erlebnis-effect' or unmediated shock while not relying on the predictable and sometimes ineffective strategies of documentary realism. Might it be precisely this antipathy to, and anxiety toward, the emotional volatility of the 'Erlebnis-effect'

that could hamper the future relevance of the Topography of Terror within Berlin and beyond? Does the resolute adherence to documentary realism result in a narrative fetishism that obscures the more horrific, unrepresentable aspects of traumatic pasts, aspects that resist confinement within the bounds of the conventional approach to historical narrative adopted by the curatorial staff of the Topography of Terror?<sup>106</sup> In rounding out this discussion of the aesthetic and affective dimensions of the self-reflexive approach to museal poetics adopted by the Topography of Terror's curatorial staff, what I would like to consider briefly is the possibility of a critical-reflexive pedagogy that circulates in the affective force field of shock, emotion, and a sober, intellectually engaged reflexivity. This would go some distance in addressing one of the problems arising out of arising out of the Topography of Terror's resolutely documentary approach: namely, the assumption that 'authentic site' and 'authentic documents' provide a transparent window onto the past. As I have suggested, this approach ignores the affective potentiality that inheres in sources other than documents, sources that serve as a means of engendering a 'productive encounter with non-recognition' in those with no immediate experience with the events represented. The curatorial approach of the Topography of Terror relies heavily on the cumulative 'authenticity' of site, trace, object, and document to enhance its authority to transmit an experience of the past; but so much escapes the empirically observable or exceeds the narratable according to even the most expansive codes of historical discourse.

If an exhibition such as the one presented by the Topography of Terror is bound by the 'good faith' injunction to represent its 'facts' accurately, nonetheless an exhibition space is not

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<sup>106</sup> See Eric Santner's elaboration of narrative fetishism in his essay, "History beyond the Pleasure Principle: Some Thoughts on the Representation of Trauma," in Saul Friedlander (ed.), *Probing the Limits of Representation: Nazism and the 'Final Solution'*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992, especially pp.144-145. At the Topography of Terror, trauma is contained by and dissolved in the rational approach to conveying factual information. It should be noted, however, that the critique of narrative fetishism at the Topography of Terror becomes more muted when considered alongside Klaus Hesse's objections to 'visual terrorism' referenced above.

history book, even if its subject matter is the past. As such, it has much more freedom to pose questions to its audience about the representation of history. To my reading of the history of the Topography of Terror, its early emphasis on the concept of an ‘active museum’ still holds that very possibility of historiographical self-reflexivity in its pedagogical ethos of visitor participation. Might, then, a museal poetics rethought yet again be a more effective means of understanding precisely those irrational dynamics (such as fascination with the sublime spectacle, power, and fascism) that induced people to carry the Nazis to power? This rethought museal poetics need not relinquish its awareness of the fraught nature of the effects of preconscious or unconscious visual, aural, and spatial cues. Nor should it yield to the cheap effects of manipulation, even as it does not shun or flee from the less-than-rational. – Might a rethought museal poetics be a more effective means of defamiliarizing a contemporary spectator familiar with iconic textual or visual representations of the past, but who has no immediate associative connections with the documentary photographs on display?

What such a curatorial approach would demonstrate is a meta-historical awareness on the part of the curators of the kind of narrative they seek to emplot at the Topography of Terror, as well as the methods by which they do so. Using the temporary exhibition space in the new exhibition hall to mount exhibitions that pose questions about the representation of the past and its limits would create more of a ‘dialogic’ environment within the exhibition hall. For example, an exhibition could pose questions regarding the ‘documentary realism’ of the main exhibition through the exhibition of contemporary photographic works. Shimon Attie’s 1991 photo-projection installation reflects on traumatic loss in Berlin’s Scheunenviertel (a vibrant Jewish neighbourhood before the Nazi rise to power), and Christian Herrnbeck’s 2009 photo installation at Sachsenhausen attempts a new representation of the sites of the Shoah.

Buried among the many pages of his controversial novelistic depiction of SS masochistic violence, *The Kindly Ones*, Jonathan Littell throws out a provocation to historians. In a word, historians have essentially run up against the limiting wall of the exigencies of disciplinary protocols of representation. A temporary exhibition within the confines of the Topography of Terror might explore how controversial literary representations cast a different light on the representation of ethically and emotionally fraught aspects of the past alluded to in the permanent exhibition.<sup>107</sup> Recent examples such as Littell's own work, or Bernhard Schlink's *The Reader*, or the works by W.G. Sebald readily come to mind along with many others as candidates. Cinematic representations (even the classic '*Schindler's List* versus *Shoah* still raises extremely important questions), artistic representations (such as the controversial installations and artworks exhibited by the Jewish Museum of New York as part of their probing exhibition, "Mirroring Evil"), or even 'hybrid genres' (such as Spiegelman's *Maus*) that run counter to the representational poetics of the main exhibition could – through their use of allusion, free or indirect style, image, symbolism, or allegory in a manner avoided by the permanent exhibition – illuminate the limits of historical representation that the permanent exhibition is loathe to explore.

An even more tantalizing prospect would be to run the "Hitler and the Germans" exhibition in the temporary exhibition spaces of the Topography of Terror as a means of inviting dialogue about the side-by-side contrast presented by the two radically different approaches to representing the National Socialist era. In the process, the curators could proceed to make the

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<sup>107</sup> In a recent essay, "Historical and Literary Approaches to the 'Final Solution': Saul Friedländer and Jonathan Littell," in *History and Theory* (50), February 2011, pp.71-97, Dominick LaCapra confronts the challenges that Littell's unrelenting attempt to thrust the reader into the subject-position of the perpetrator poses for an ethical historical examination of perpetration. See also Kate Horning, "Literary Eroticism and the Historical Task: The Politics and Reception of *The Reader* and *The Kindly Ones*," unpublished paper presented to the European History Colloquium, Cornell University, September 2009.



case as to why a documentary realist approach that focused on the dispassionate conveying of information, the stimulation of critical self-reflection, and the eschewing of theatrics is indeed of continuing value amidst the increasingly shrill anti-immigrant rhetoric in contemporary Germany. Most importantly, a dialogic approach to exhibiting its *own* understanding of how best to convey an understanding of how the Nazis came to power, how they mobilized the populace in support of their genocidal aims, and how so-called ‘normal men’ became ‘desktop perpetrators’ in Berlin and cold-blooded killers as part of *Einsatzgruppen* or concentration camp personnel abroad would, at the very least, explicitly signal the curatorial staff’s awareness of the interesting challenges posed by more immediately ‘Erlebnis-oriented’ exhibition strategies to their notion of a ‘plain’ style of rational, objective documentation.

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Now that the tripartite edifice of Berlin’s memory-quarter has been completed, the question remains as to whether the contestation, controversy, debates, and disputes have now ‘crystallized’ in these sites, invisible to all but those who remember the history of how these sites emerged in their current form as significant. Will the debate find other outlets, such as the promising turn toward exploring Germany’s orchestration of a vast system of forced labour, and marking the sites in Berlin and beyond where forced labourers from all over Europe were incarcerated and forced into production for the benefit of the Third Reich? Or has Germany’s postwar engagement with its wartime role now become ‘normalized’ into sites that do the prosthetic work of recalling the suffering of the victims and the deeds of the perpetrator? With the May 2010 opening of the permanent exhibition hall on the Topography of Terror, is the question finally settled, the page finally turned? The possible answers to these questions depend, I think, on whether curators at sites such as the Topography of Terror, the German Resistance

Memorial Center, and the Wannsee Conference Villa Memorial Center can re-vision their museal strategies without losing sight of what inspired those strategies in the first place.

## CONCLUSION

Commenting on Jochen Gerz's cobblestone counter-memorial project in Saarbrücken, James Young notes that visitors wondered 'where they stood' vis-à-vis the memorial: on it? in it? "Was it really there at all?" some wondered.<sup>1</sup> The chapters of this study have attempted to argue that memorial sites embody collective memory by making direct or indirect reference to traces of the past. But the ways in which this 'embodied' collective memory affects those of us who come after cannot be discussed solely with reference to the materiality of a given place, or the materiality of the objects housed and displayed thereon or therein.

I have concerned myself in this study primarily with how those generations born after an intense and traumatic event such as the Second World War come to know about a particular past, how they '*experience*' that past through representation. This introduces an immaterial dynamic into how memorial sites function at a given place and time. I have framed this in terms of the affective dimensions of experience. Linked to the affective dimensions of experience is the 'aura' of a memorial site, or of the objects and relics on display in a museum.

The 'aura' is a fraught notion for any responsible inquiry that resists the authority of the aura. What I have tried to do here is to acknowledge the validity of an affective encounter with the past while at the same time resisting a kind of experience that privileges the immediacy of the Erlebnis. In negotiating these shoals, I have been led to think about how documentary sources of both a textual and visual nature *record* experience at the same time that they elide

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<sup>1</sup> James Young, *At Memory's Edge: After-Images of the Holocaust in Contemporary Art and Architecture*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000, p.142. Young dedicates an entire chapter of *At Memory's Edge* to Jochen Gerz's work. Gerz chose to focus on the intangibility, immateriality, and ephemerality of memory. In 'assembling' the memorial on Saarbrücken's Schlossplatz – the Schloss was the local Gestapo headquarters – Gerz had his students dislodge paving stones in the Schlossplatz and engrave the names of seventy Jewish cemeteries on the bottom of the stones. The paving stones were then returned to their original location, but face-down, rendering the trace 'present' but invisible.

critical *aspects* of the ‘experience of the past.’ It goes without saying that the *perceived* authenticity of a place or object influences who or what gets to speak on behalf of the past *this* particular object or place represents.<sup>2</sup> Whatever their shortcomings, these recordings and representations of the past shape the transmission of collective memory.

Memorial sites – whether museum or monument, or some configuration of site, exhibition, library, archive, and information center encompassed by the German term, *Gedenkstätte* – present us with power systems made legible. At the same time, they play a crucial role in the transmission of collective memory. All of the memorial sites I have considered here participate in this attempt to represent the past so as to shape identity in the present. The difference between the sites lies in the degree to which this process is consciously and transparently inscribed within the exhibition space and content itself. Some of the museums I have dealt with interpellate visitors, ‘hail’ them in the name of a particular conception of identity yoked to a particular conception of the past. The most extreme version of what might be termed an ‘interpellative exhibitionary regime’ (the term is not very elegant, I am well aware) is the Yūshūkan. Other memorial sites – such as the Topography of Terror, which is, by now, clearly the ‘hero’ of my narrative, problematic as this anti-hero may be – resist the formulation of the memorial site/museum as just another instance of an Althusserian ‘ideological state apparatus.’ But what is clear from both instances of museal representation – interpellative or reflective – is that to the extent we can ‘read’ the manifest content of a given memorial site, a remainder escapes us. This ‘latent content,’ if you will, is legible only in the interstices of the memorial site.

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<sup>2</sup> It also goes without saying that on an ethical level, the historian or inquirer must defer, in the first instance, to an ‘authentic witness’ such as a Holocaust survivor or *hibakusha*. The tension between ‘witness’ (those with immediate experience) and remembrance at a remove (figured as ‘testimony’ – rendered either by a survivor or by someone reasonably informed about the conditions or predicament of survivors and their experience – or ‘historical responsibility’) electrifies what is at stake in the interstices between ‘history’ and ‘memory.’

If we accept the proposition that memorial sites are cultural frameworks through which contemporary visitors ‘experience’ history, we put ourselves in a better position from which to understand how memorial sites are privileged sites of power that both suggest a particular identity to a museum-visiting public and reflect that suggested representation back at the visitor. The memorial site models identity by drawing on objects, relics, traces, and narratives that resonate with a given public at a particular time. (Again, as is the case with the Topography of Terror, some memorial sites resist certain valences of these kinds of affective resonances). Key here is the linkage between material culture and identity-formation, where the tangible object operates as a touchstone for the past: making history into matter.

Broadly speaking, then, we can begin to put together a composite sense of how memorial sites make history (into) matter. According to Christine Kreamer, museums and memorial sites perform some or all of the following functions: forge a sense of national identity; celebrate diverse identities; and/or consolidate a community through a sense of commonality or shared experience.<sup>3</sup> Museums, monuments, and memorial sites are also instrumental politically in the ritual of citizenship, whether in a narrowly national community, or in a cosmopolitan or post-national community. Moreover, as Carol Duncan points out, these rituals contain no small element of displaced religiosity. All of the memorial sites I have considered here emulate, consciously or unconsciously, other sacred or ceremonial sites such as shrines, crypts, cemeteries, and churches that demand a certain comportment from visitors.<sup>4</sup> The museum presents itself to the visitor as “a complex experience involving architecture, programmed

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<sup>3</sup> Christine Mullen Kreamer, “Defining Communities through Exhibiting and Collecting,” in Ivan Karp, Christine Mullen Kreamer and Steven D. Lavine (eds.), *Museums and Communities: the Politics of Public Culture*, Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992, p.380.

<sup>4</sup> See Carol Duncan, “Art Museums and the Ritual of Citizenship,” in Ivan Karp and Steven D. Lavine (eds.), *Exhibiting Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*, Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991, p.90, where she links the architecture of art museums explicitly to classical temples, medieval cathedrals, and Renaissance palaces.

displays of art objects, and highly rationalized installation practices.”<sup>5</sup> Related to this formulation is my suggestion in the chapter on affect and aesthetics that memorial sites are ‘affective machines’ that convert distance into proximity by generating empathy with and for others across space and time. At times, this collapsing of distance is suspect, especially when a memorial site appropriates a past in the service of identification with contemporary political agendas. But memorial sites also serve the purpose of translating ideas about the past into material realities that an individual can experience in social space.

The museum’s powerful ‘identity-mirror’ function, together with its role as a socio-cultural institution, looms large for the curatorship and trusteeship of any memorial site interested in challenging a dominant narrative or hegemonic collective memory. The affective strength of the connection between an authentic relic or place and a visitor’s experience of the past highlights how important it is for curators and trustees to anticipate the target audience’s preconceptions, all the better to challenge preconceptions – or even ‘reorganize’ a visitor’s experience. At the same time that memorial sites transform history into matter to be experienced by a museum public, they also make history matter. But this is never entirely a one-way flow of information bestowed upon a passive audience, even in the case of museums such as the Yûshûkan that go to great lengths to control their message.

How visitors experience the past at the museum sets in motion a complex *pas de deux* that brings a particular visitor’s *own* sense of identity into contact with the exhibition’s sense of identity.<sup>6</sup> This is especially important to bear in mind in the case where a memorial site – such as

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<sup>5</sup> Duncan, p.90.

<sup>6</sup> Not to be overlooked is the extent to which a visitor’s experience of a memorial site is influenced by those around him or her. It is worth recalling here Sara Ahmed’s thoughts on the sociality of affect, which I discussed briefly in the Introduction. Though Ahmed does not discuss memorial sites, but rather social space in general, her theorizing on the sociality of emotion adds a different dimension to the complex experience described by Carol Duncan. Ahmed notes how emotion ‘takes place’ in a ‘contact zone of impressions’ in order to posit that emotions mediate

a Holocaust memorial like Auschwitz or Treblinka – might be geared as much toward recovering and transmitting a morally-inflected warning and emotional story of survival as it is toward conveying the sober and somber facts of the Holocaust.<sup>7</sup> Setting is key to what in film theory would be called the establishing shot. In the memorial site’s metaphorical establishing shot, the visitor’s expectations come into contact with the narrative of a given memorial site. Visitors bring a degree of historical consciousness – or a lack thereof – to a memorial site such as the Topography of Terror or the Yûshûkan, but are subsequently shaped by (or resist) the museum experience staged by any given memorial site. Prior experience – determined by one’s previous level of education, which is itself determined by the familiar categories of class, gender, ethnicity – has a bearing on one’s experience of the past. At the same time, visitors emerge from memorial sites and museum exhibits potentially ‘transformed’ – or, at the very least, influenced by their museum experience.

Put simply, visitors bring a perspective to the museum that is either confirmed, contested, or shaped by the museum experience. This perspective owes much to a person’s embeddedness within a particular cultural or temporal context. Over the remainder of these pages, I will present a few reflections on the usefulness of memorial sites in the study of collective memory in Germany and Japan more generally.

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between the psychic and the social. See Sara Ahmed, “Collective Feelings: Or, the Impressions Left by Others,” in *Theory, Culture and Society*, 21:2, 2004, pp.26-33.

<sup>7</sup> See Jack Kugelmass’s essay, “The Rites of the Tribe: American Jewish Tourism in Poland,” (in Karp, Kremer, and Levine (eds.), *Museums and Communities*), on what he sees as Jewish-American attempts to evoke the Holocaust dramaturgically through ritualistic tourism in Poland. The aim of this performative creation of meaning is to lay claim to their forebears’ martyrdom, “reconstitut[e] the reality of time and place” (p.411), and retrieve, reclaim and reassemble the icons of the past that exist in “deafening silence” in Poland (p.415). For an informative historicization of the shifting focus of victimhood at Auschwitz – Polish or Jewish? – see Stanislaw Krajewski, *Poland and the Jews: Reflections of a Polish Jew*, Krakow: Wydawnictwo Austeria, 2005, especially Ch.1 “Auschwitz as a Challenge.”

## THE UNFOLDING CONTRAST BETWEEN GERMANY AND JAPAN

In 1998, major film studio Tôhō released *Pride: The Fateful Moment*, which, under the pretext of a critique of the International Military Tribunal of the Far East (responsible for conducting the Tokyo Trials), presented a favourable portrayal of Class-A war criminal, General Tôjô Hideki, at the same time that it offered a scathing rejection of the Tokyo Trail. This points toward a striking difference in contemporary Germany and Japan, for it is difficult to imagine a film sympathetic to Joseph Goebbels or Herman Goering enjoying even a modicum of popular success, let alone being produced and released in the first place. This attests to the relative harmony in contemporary Germany with regards to perceptions of National Socialist Germany's role in the Second World War. In contrast, what I would like to suggest as being one of the most significant differences that continues to figure recent memory politics in Germany and Japan is the relative fragmentation in Japan with regard to Japan's role as aggressor and perpetrator of atrocities in the Asia-Pacific War. This difference is traceable to how the Tokyo and Nuremberg war crimes trials held during the Allied Occupation of Japan and Germany shaped postwar master narratives in both countries. As Sebastian Conrad points out in an article comparing versions of the past in Germany and Japan, while in both cases the political and military leadership was severed, as it were, from the general population and held juridically accountable for the wars of expansion and atrocity, here the similarity ends.<sup>8</sup> Most significantly, the emperor, who arguably bore one of the largest burdens of responsibility for Japan's aggressive war, was

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<sup>8</sup> See Sebastian Conrad, "Entangled Memories: Versions of the Past in Germany and Japan, 1945-2001," *Journal of Contemporary History*, 38:1 (January 2003), especially pp.87-89 for a discussion of the differential effects of the Occupation on Japan and Germany, and pp.95-97 for an account of the intensification of the discourse on memory in the 1980s and 1990s.



exempted from prosecution during the Tokyo Trials.<sup>9</sup> Given that the emperor was viewed as the ‘divinity-father’ of the Japanese nation until forced to relinquish that lofty honour in 1946, it is not surprising that an ambiguity set in regarding the level of guilt and responsibility borne by the individual soldier who had, after all, fought in the name of the emperor. Coupled with this, over the course of the immediate postwar years, no analogue to the denazification of the German population took place in Japan. In addition, absent in Japan were the series of highly-publicized trials conducted by German officials of the immediate postwar decades (such as the Frankfurt Auschwitz Trials of 1963-1965) that attempted to try perpetrators who were not manifestly part of the elite political and military apparatus.

Against this backdrop of the fragmentation attributable to dynamics set in motion during the immediate postwar years on subsequent commemorative practice Japan, the recurrent issue of prime-ministerial visits on the anniversary of Japan’s 15 August defeat in order to worship at Yasukuni Shrine, which enshrines the spirits of Class-A war criminals, becomes more legible, as do other incidents that bear the mark of this fragmentation. This is not to portray Germany in a more favourable light, however. The *Historikerstreit* of 1986, the controversy surrounding Helmut Kohl’s desire for a national monument to victims of violence which resulted in the installation of a replica on Käthe Kollwitz’s *Pietà* in the Neue Wache in 1993,<sup>10</sup> and the 1998 Walser-Bubis Debate,<sup>11</sup> which erupted in conjunction with the discussions surrounding the

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<sup>9</sup> See Herbert P. Bix, *Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan*, New York: HarperCollins, 2000, for a far-reaching discussion of Hirohito’s role in the Asia-Pacific War.

<sup>10</sup> See Robert Halbach (ed.), *Nationaler Totenkult – Die Neue Wache: Eine Streitschrift zur zentralen deutschen Gedenkstätte*, Berlin: Karen Kramer Verlag, 1995; see also Aleida Assmann and Ute Frevert, *Geschichtsvergessenheit, Geschichtsversessenheit: Vom Umgang mit der deutschen Vergangenheit nach 1945*, Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1999, for a discussion of the Neue Wache.

<sup>11</sup> See Frank Schirrmacher (ed.), *Die Walser-Bubis-Debatte: Eine Dokumentation*, Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1999, for a comprehensive collection of articles ranging from denunciation of Walser as a latent anti-Semite (Ignatz Bubis), to qualified appreciation of his stance against the intensifying ‘cult of commemoration’ (*Gedenkenskult*) of the 1990s. Matthias N. Lorenz, “Auschwitz drängt uns auf einen Fleck”: *Judendarstellung und Auschwitzdiskurs bei Martin Walser*, Stuttgart and Weimar: Verlag J.B. Metzler, 2005, also deals with the controversy.

Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe – all provide ample testament to the contested nature of commemorative practice in Germany. But what still marks the debate as different in Germany is that a significantly smaller number of individuals will voice public support for Germany's actions during the Second World War. In this sense, the contemporary German memoryscape is marked by a relative degree of consensus with respect to a particular point: the assumption of the burdens of historical responsibility for atrocities perpetrated during the Second World War. This consensus has intensified since the fall of the Berlin Wall.

The memorial sites in Berlin and Tokyo that I have taken up here shed light on the larger issue of the relationship between historical responsibility and a relative openness or resistance to the transnational dynamics that shape collective memory and upset its more nationalistic pretensions. Taking up the memorial sites in question as lenses through which to view broader issues in collective memory reveals the extent to which contemporary Japanese collective memory is less porous to transnational influence than German collective memory. Noteworthy about the consensus that has tentatively taken hold in Germany is that it has emerged, partially, out of dialogue with constituencies beyond Germany's borders.<sup>12</sup> In contrast to Germany, where the consensus is bound up with a certain level of material and symbolic commitment with respect to its former victims, the forces shaping contemporary Japanese collective memory – especially at the state level, and increasingly in the public sphere – have attempted to insulate 'national memory' from outside forces that have a stake in challenging the exclusion of certain voices from the dominant narrative of Japanese collective memory.

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<sup>12</sup> The debates surrounding the Topography of Terror and the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe are a case in point. Representatives from a vast array of groups were invited to participate in the many public consultations and symposia, including curators and directors of museums and memorial sites in Poland (Auschwitz), Israel (Yad Vashem), and the United States (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC).

In short, the contentious politics surrounding the planning and development of memorial sites such as the Topography of Terror and the Shôwakan, along with their current iterations both within the urban fabric and as visually narrativized exhibition space, reveals the extent to which the memroyscape of Germany and Japan has diverged since the mid-1990s. That is to say, neo-nationalist and conservative socio-cultural configurations in Japan have reinforced the hand of the conservative state, and currently hold the advantage in Japan in what cultural commentator, Kang Sang-jung, has dubbed ‘a kind of civil war of memory.’<sup>13</sup> German collective memory, too, witnessed a moment in which the forces espousing the adoption of a ‘positive’ history with which Germans could identify aligned themselves in disputes against those who favoured critical engagement with the past. Opposed to those who wanted to overcome the past by turning the page so as to ‘normalize’ the National Socialist interlude stood those wedded to the notion of what Aleida Assmann and Ute Frevert call ‘*Vergangenheitsbewahrung*,’ a view of history that kept its focus squarely on how the past informed the present by ‘preserving’ the traces of the past, no matter how problematic.<sup>14</sup>

In the wake of the demise of the Cold War system, progressive socio-cultural configurations were given an immense fillip by the international attention focused on a newly reunified Germany that was then contemplating moving its capital from Bonn to Berlin. The fluid geo-political situation thereby contributed some of the impetus toward the kinds of complex

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<sup>13</sup> As a participant in a roundtable discussion with Narita Ryûichi, Komori Yôichi, and Satô Manabu on the context behind the JSHTR’s rise to prominence, Kang remarks that “a kind of civil war” was brewing over the re-definition of what it meant to be a citizen. In the aftermath of the collapse of the Japan Socialist Party, the clear-cut shorthand of the ‘1955 system’ dividing supporters of the peace constitution from advocates of revision, and pacifists from advocates of re-armament, had become blurred. In this vacuum, Kang notes that the contest over the re-definition of citizenship and responsibilities in a post-Cold War era entailed the re-drawing of lines that defined the ‘non-citizen’ (*hikokumin*). See “Taiwa no kairo wo tozashita rekishikan wo dô kokufuku suru ka?” in *Sekai*, (635), May 1997, p.188.

<sup>14</sup> See Aleida Assmann’s contribution to her book co-authored with Ute Frevert, *op.cit.*, pp.144-147. The most famous exposition of this view of history was given by former CDU mayor of Berlin and newly-minted President of the Federal Republic, Richard von Weizsäcker, in his Bundestag address of May 1985 on the occasion of the fortieth anniversary of the end of the war.

symbolic gestures nonetheless ‘cast in stone,’ so to speak. Inasmuch as some of these memorial sites represented acts of atonement (sometimes bordering on dubious attempts to ‘redeem’ the German nation), many of the sites that came into being in Berlin and across Germany took an active role in transmitting not only the facts about the Holocaust to future generations, but also dedicated considerable resources to studying and then teaching about how this system came into existence with the connivance, and often willing participation, of ordinary German citizens. In Japan, conversely, the time period following the death of the Shōwa emperor witnessed the burst of the bubble economy, preparing the ground for, and contributing to, the context of malaise for what was an ideal climate for neo-nationalist purveyance of ersatz pride and the rush of sublime nationalistic sentiment.

But still, it is no wonder that Germany and Japan appeared to commentators who were writing in the mid-2000s such as Franziska Seraphim and Sebastian Conrad to be travelling similar paths towards a convergence throughout the 1980s and into the 1990s.<sup>15</sup> The effervescence of critique, debate, introspection, and re-evaluation that set in during the 1970s and dominated the 1980s in the Federal Republic of Germany dovetailed with a similar shift in historical consciousness in Japan. From the early 1970s onward, commentators and journalists such as Honda Katsuichi relentlessly countered the ‘reverse course’ trend that had resulted in the atrocities committed at Nanjing being written out of history textbooks, with his efforts

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<sup>15</sup> See Franziska Seraphim, *War Memory and Social Politics in Japan, 1945-2005*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006, p.322. Conrad argues that “beginning in the 1980s, but particularly in the course of the 1990s, the landscape of Japanese memory changed dramatically” (94). He bases his assumption of a shift on a combination of two phenomena: “a massive increase in discussions about the wartime past, and the emergence of new actors in these debates” (p.94), the most important of whom were the voices of other Asian nations whose interventions were no longer marginalized. In this sense, his argument contributes to my notion that collective memory issues had ‘dovetailed’ in Germany and Japan through the 1980s and into the early 1990s. But his analysis, published in 2003, comes up short insofar as he focuses predominantly on the positive benefits of transnational entanglements of memory. He considers only the diversification of these voices (pp.96-97) at the expense of taking into account the effects of the neo-nationalist resurgence on these voices just then beginning to make an impact.

culminating his widely read 1987, *The Road to Nanking*.<sup>16</sup> A few years later, Yoshiaki Yoshimi was uncovering state and military complicity in the perpetration of the system of sexual slavery just as the first ‘comfort women’ were building up the courage to bear witness to their traumas.<sup>17</sup> By 1993, a travelling exhibition featuring documents and testimonies exposing the atrocities of Unit 731, the clandestine biological warfare experimentation unit operating in Harbin, China, was presented to receptive audiences in some sixty-one locales throughout Japan.<sup>18</sup> And of course, the sedulous travails of Ienaga Saburô from 1965 onwards finally bore fruit in a liberalization of what the Ministry of Education textbook-vetting process would include for publication. As in Germany, the vexed issue of perpetration was a marked characteristic of collective memory through the 1980s and into the mid-1990s in Japan.<sup>19</sup>

But then something shifted in Japan in response to events surrounding 1989 and after, manifesting itself in different responses to 1989 than in Germany. Initially, the death of the Shôwa emperor along with the end of the Cold War resulted in the collapse of Cold War dichotomies framing traditional debates. In this new discursive space, Conrad suggests that the increasingly insistent critical voices issuing forth from non-Japanese constituencies undermined what he sees as a government monopoly on memory.<sup>20</sup> In this context, I read the rear-guard action on the part of the JSHTR (Japan Society for History Textbook Reform) and its allies as an

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<sup>16</sup> An English translation of *Nankin e no michi* appeared in 1999. See Honda Katsuichi, *The Nanjing Massacre: A Japanese Journalist Confronts Japan's National Shame*, trans. Karen Sandness, Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1999.

<sup>17</sup> Yoshimi Yoshiaki's *Comfort Women: Sexual Slavery in the Japanese Military During World War II*, trans. Suzanne O'Brien, New York, Columbia University Press, 2000, was first published in Japan in 1995.

<sup>18</sup> See Part II of Hal Gold's *Unit 731: Testimony*, Tokyo: Yenbooks, 1996, for a selection of testimonies from those who had participated in some capacity. Included are testimonies from a virologist and several nurses, soldiers and military officers attached to Unit 731, *kenpeitai* officers, and pharmacists and researchers whose own work came in contact with Unit 731.

<sup>19</sup> For an example of the ways in which collective memory in 1980s Germany and Japan was running on parallel tracks, see Laura Hein and Akiko Takenaka's discussion in "Exhibiting World War II in Japan and the United States since 1995," *Pacific Historical Review*, 76:1, 2007, p.69, of Peace Osaka's initially successful attempts to address issues of perpetration in its exhibits from the time of its inception in 1987.

<sup>20</sup> Conrad, "Entangled Memories," pp.95-97.

attempt to shore up this crumbling monopoly by spinning a ‘unified’ singular narrative that rejected any criticism of its position outright. Partially as a backlash against the very success of left-progressive socio-cultural configurations in Japan in shaping the agenda of collective memory by incorporating the multiple and varied voices of Asian victims of Japanese aggressive actions before and during the Asia-Pacific War into the narrative,<sup>21</sup> neo-nationalists trained their vitriol on what they disparagingly referred to as the ‘masochistic’ ‘Tokyo Trials view of history.’<sup>22</sup> This backlash manifested itself in concerted attacks in the mid-1990s against institutions such as Peace Osaka and the Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum, both of which were among the institutions that adopted a critical stance toward Japanese wartime aggression.

Laura Hein and Akiko Takenaka paint a particularly discouraging portrait of the way in which Peace Osaka buckled under the pressure of right-wing attacks. Around the time that the JSHTTR formed in Tokyo, the Group to Correct the Biased Exhibits of War-Related Material (*Sensô shiryô no henkô wo tadasu kai*, or *Tadasu-kai* for short) formed in Osaka to challenge the exhibits of Peace Osaka. In a move similar to many other rightist groups, they trumpeted their commitment to ‘historical accuracy,’ and charged that Peace Osaka had obtained some of their photographs documenting Japanese atrocities committed in China from questionable sources. Even worse, they charged, the museum had captioned the images erroneously. As Hein and Takenaka relate, due to inexperience with historiographical matters, the curators and directorship missed an opportunity to engage with the larger historiographical issue of why Japan was in

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<sup>21</sup> See Yamabe Masahiko, “Yasukuni jinja Yûshûkan no jôsetsu tenji to tokubetsuten ‘furusato no bokoku jinja’ ni tsuite,” in *Nihonshi Kenkyû*, 533:1, 2007, p.61. In the form of controversial themes incorporated into textbooks, together with government acknowledgments that Japan had, in fact, invaded China, the liberalization of historical consciousness had effected a shift in public consciousness in the direction of increased reflection upon and awareness of Japan’s aggressive role in the Asia-Pacific War. In parallel with Hein and Takenaka, Yamabe makes an explicit link between the liberalization of historical consciousness and the neo-nationalist backlash that gained momentum from the mid-1990s.

<sup>22</sup> See Fujioka Nobukatsu, *Bujoku no kingendaishi: ima, kokufuku no toki*, Tokyo: Tokuma Shoten, 1996, especially pp.51-69 for his polemic against the Tokyo Trial, and pp.70-80 for his suggestions on how to ‘break the spell’ of masochistic (*jigyakuteki*) history.

China in the first place, and were, instead, drawn into a narrow debate about ‘factual accuracy.’<sup>23</sup> Conceding the point, Peace Osaka withdrew the photos. But in a surprising move to meet rather than counter the growing criticisms of the *Tadasu-kai*, Peace Osaka made more concessions, including an agreement in 1999 to let the *Tadasu-kai* hold two events, one a screening of the film, *Pride*, and another entitled “The Biggest Lie of the Twentieth Century: A Thorough Investigation of the Nanjing Massacre.” The curatorial and directorial strategy of controversy avoidance contributed both to a dilution of their original message and to an alienation of former supporters, domestically and internationally. In a comparison of Peace Osaka’s capitulation with that of the Smithsonian Air and Space Museum curators surrounding the Enola Gay exhibition of 1995, Hein and Takenaka conclude that the comprehensiveness of the exhibitions foundered due to the “failure to address the widespread belief that objective history is possible.”<sup>24</sup>

Against this backdrop, Katô Norihiro’s polemic, which was not nearly as virulently neo-nationalist as some of the other textual or visual representations from around the same time period, nonetheless touched off a debate on what it meant to mourn collectively for the fallen in war. The implications of Katô’s essay and subsequent book were clear: the parameters of the Debate on Historical Subjectivity (*rekishi shutaisei ron*) centered on what it meant to be ‘Japanese,’ and what constituted the ‘national community.’ Into what they saw as a consumerist-oriented Japanese identity increasingly devoid of any authentic content, and increasingly listless in the wake of the recession, the neo-nationalist purveyors of the ‘Yasukuni view of history’ poured a cocktail of heroic, glorious, and proud ersatz masculinity to dull the effects of decreasing future prospects. This ‘authentic’ identity rooted in tradition was concocted to replace the ‘sameness’ of advanced capitalism that threatened to flatten the differences that made Japan

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<sup>23</sup> We have seen in the chapter above how this common right-wing move to discredit a critically reflexive exhibition on the basis of narrow factual infidelities has affected the curatorial options available to Topography of Terror staff.

<sup>24</sup> Hein and Takenaka, p.74.

‘unique,’ thereby servicing the affective needs of an emasculated generation (of males in particular). For proponents of this perspective on the past, history provided a window onto a proud, masculine, martial tradition obscured by the effeminacy of postmodern consumerism and global fashion.

For the proponents of the ‘Yasukuni view of history,’ nationality is, first and foremost, what determines identity. Put differently, identity is, *a priori*, nationality, and the ‘Yasukuni view of history’ offered a ‘rooted, authentic’ view of history as an antidote to the perceived rootlessness of globalization. Although I find Mark Driscoll’s optimism at the coming ultra-nationalist collapse overly sanguine, he puts his finger on a striking irony: the linkage between neo-nationalism and neo-liberalism. The rise to prominence of the likes of Kobayashi and his allies such as Nishio Kanji and Fujioaka Nobukazu (both of JSHTTR) has been made possible by the globalizing thrust of neo-liberalism. The result of globalization has been increasing unemployment in Japan, the remarkable rise of sociological population categories such as ‘Freeta’ and ‘NEETs,’ and a widening gap between rich and poor. The irony exists insofar as the neo-nationalists support (and often have formal and informal ties with) the government that has introduced neo-liberal policies resulting in the social dislocation and discontent that fuels support for neo-nationalist rhetoric.<sup>25</sup>

With the 1995 publication of Katô Norihiro’s *Haisengoron*, followed by the formation of the JSHTTR in 1997 and the publication of Kobayashi Yoshinori’s *Sensôron* in 1998, the contours of what we could easily call Japan’s ‘second reverse course’ were beginning to take shape. The 2002 refurbishment of the Yûshûkan on the grounds of Yasukuni Shrine gave visual, tactile, and

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<sup>25</sup> See Mark Driscoll, “Kobayashi is Dead: Imperial War/Sick Liberal Peace/Neoliberal Class War,” in *Mechademia* (4), 2009, p.301. ‘Freeta’ refers to free-lancers or generally underemployed people, and ‘NEET’ is an acronym for Not in Education, Employment, or Training.



affective expression to this view of history.<sup>26</sup> If it would be an exaggeration indeed to speak of ‘repression’ or ‘cultural amnesia’ in contemporary Japan given the high profile that memory issues occupy in bookstores and on celluloid, nonetheless it is evident that the content of the debate has shifted from the mid-1990s through the first decade of the twenty-first century, to the extent that certain aspects of Japan’s wartime past find less of an echo in the broader reaches of the public sphere than others.<sup>27</sup> And though ‘silencing’ would be too strong a term, the current ascendancy of the neo-nationalist discourse has contributed to a situation in which many of the voices that threaten to upset the harmony of the national community have become muted in the broader public sphere. While memory issues remain contentious and fractious among a certain segment of the population – scholars, intellectuals, journalists, and activists continue to vigorously resist ‘the Yasukuni view of history’ – the muting of certain voices in the public sphere more generally may yet have a profoundly negative effect on the historical consciousness of younger generations.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> While the system of textbook screening (*kentei*) employed by the Ministry of Education comes in for routine disparagement at the hands of critics, Yamabe notes that this system of screening played a small role in modulating what I have been calling ‘the Yasukuni view of history.’ The middle school textbook produced by the JSHTR was required to conform to basic guidelines laid down by the Ministry, one of which was Japan’s role in starting the war. As Yamabe puts it, the fact of Japanese perpetration had, at the very least, to be mentioned. Similar constraints do not apply to the *Yūshūkan*, which is free “to force upon young visitors its version of history justifying the war.” (See Yamabe, *op.cit.*, p.61).

<sup>27</sup> The recent spate of feature films celebrating the heroic exploits of the Japanese military services in the face of impossible odds during the latter phases of the Asia-Pacific War has assured that the memory of battle camaraderie and sacrifice has remained firmly lodged in the collective social imaginary. One example that enjoyed box office success is *Otokotachi no Yamato* (directed by Satō Junya, and released in 2005), which tells the story of the Battleship Yamato’s ill-fated final voyage during the Battle of Okinawa through the recollections of the captain of a fishing vessel who agreed to take a descendant of the Yamato crew out to where it was sunk. Another is *Ore wa kimi no tame ni koso shini ni iku* (directed by Shinjō Taku, released in 2007, and produced by right-wing Tokyo governor, Ishihara Shintarō), a feature film about the *tokkōtai* (special units) involved in kamikaze attacks.

<sup>28</sup> The series of crises in relations between Japan and its Chinese and Korean neighbours in the early 2000s revolving around high school textbooks and the politics of official visits to Yasukuni increased the public profile of the politics of memory somewhat. But as Julian Dierkes observes, “broader themes of historiographical questions remain practically invisible in public discourse.” (Julian Dierkes, *Postwar History Education in Japan and the Germans: Guilty Lessons*, London: Routledge, 2010, p.5). His observation is suggestive, for while memory politics were, indeed, prominent in the domestic and international press, the broader implications of Japan’s colonial domination and imperial aggression remained a debate confined to a more restricted cross-section of Japanese society.

What I have just proposed in terms of ‘dovetail and subsequent divergence’ does not mean that Japan became radically more fragmented from the mid-1990s, while the tentative consensus arrived at in Germany over the course of the 1990s erased all traces of fragmentation. Rather, what I understand as collective memory – a ‘collective socio-cultural imaginary’ in which the collective store of material and affective images circulating in the public sphere overlaps with but maintains its distinctness from official memory sanctioned by the state – is necessarily fragmented, in Japan as in Germany. The ongoing differences that mark self-understandings of the respective roles of the Topography of Terror and the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe – memorial sites whose administration brings together individuals and groups who would likely self-identity as ‘progressive’ – serve to dispel any notion of a monolithic consensus having emerged in Germany. And to be sure, the current vogue of ‘German suffering’ that focuses on the trials and tribulations of aerial bombardment and on the plight of the *Vertriebene* (ethnic German expellees from eastern Europe), in conjunction with newly assertive patriotism celebrating German unity and the success of the Federal Republic as it triumphed over the German Democratic Republic, underscores just how variegated are the groups that nominally subscribe to any consensus about the centrality of the memory of perpetration as a fixture of contemporary German national identity. But where, vis-à-vis historical responsibility, a ‘progressive consensus’ began to take shape in 1990s Germany that ‘institutionalized’ a collective memory characterized by an acceptance of Germany’s National Socialist legacy, in post-mid-1990s Japan, conversely, the various constituencies could not be further apart in their attitude toward the acceptance of Japan’s aggressive role in the Asia-Pacific War.

## TOWARD 1989 AND BEYOND

If we were to cast a quick glance back to the early years of the immediate postwar years, we could trace a series of events and factors that help account for the unfolding of the contrast I just outlined. In both Germany and Japan, the defeat, the surrender, and the beginning of several years of occupation have been figured as an experiential and epistemic rupture. For many in Japan, the dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki was an unprecedented trauma that wiped away all the previous sins committed by the imperial Japanese nation at war. Similarly, in Germany, '1945' is commonly referred to as 'Stunde Null' (hour zero). The shared legacy of occupation during the immediate postwar period looms large in the unfolding of postwar memory in Germany and Japan. Of the myriad variety of complex factors that have conditioned and overdetermined collective memory in both places, five issues that have had a bearing upon debates about historical responsibility bear mentioning: the occupations of Japan and Germany; the Tokyo and Nuremberg Trials as factors over time; the newly adopted constitutions and their differential resonances; the differential statuses accorded to Hitler and Hirohito; and the relative importance of U.S. global hegemony. Though extremely interesting, the more detailed aspects of this comparison falls beyond the purview of my study. In what follows, I will, however, touch on a few of these issues very briefly.

As mentioned above, 1980s Japan did indeed witness an increase in historical awareness of atrocities committed during the Asia-Pacific War, ranging from the Nanjing Massacre and the experiments of Unit 731, to the system of sexual slavery and the forced suicides of Okinawans at the hands of Japanese troops. This bears out my contention that the 1980s witnessed a 'dovetailing' of memory issues in Germany and Japan. But nevertheless, these similarities were marked by significant differences. The radical reconfiguration of memory in Germany in the late

1960s and 1970s bore as its hallmark the calling to account of entire generations with experience of the Third Reich for their silence about their role as perpetrator, collaborator, or bystander as National Socialism embarked upon its murderous policies. Due to this reconfiguration, a tenuous consensus subsequently emerged by the 1990s riveted on the centrality of perpetration to contemporary German identity. In Germany the acceptance of collective (historical) responsibility for representing perpetrator pasts had become much more widespread over the course of the 1990s and 2000s than in Japan, obviating the need to re-open the debate about war responsibility as it was construed by the trials of the immediate postwar. The difference in tenor of the centrally-located memorial sites erected in Berlin and Tokyo in the 1990s and 2000s provide visual and visible evidence of the contrast between the differential effects of the trials of the immediate postwar period.

Suffice it to say, though, the way these events and factors reflect temporally and culturally inflected contingencies functions to erode ‘spatialized,’ synchronic comparisons that posit nations, cultures, and groups as timeless essences. Significant memory events and issues (such as the occupations or the representations of the Holocaust or Hiroshima), even significant dates (such as 1968 or 1989), may have a different valence in a different place. While many of the forces shaping German and Japanese collective memory from the defeat down through the post-war period continued to frame debates, and although both Germany and Japan witnessed a rekindling of historical consciousness vis-à-vis past crimes perpetrated during the 1980s, the differential impact of the events and repercussions of 1989 on German and Japanese collective memory contributed to a divergence in the terms through which perpetrator and victim pasts were addressed and assessed.

A vexing question remains to be considered, however, before moving on to the repercussions of 1989. As we have seen, many Japanese felt themselves to be less implicated in the system of wartime fascism than their opposite number in Germany.<sup>29</sup> Japanese fascism was an outgrowth of the state; in contrast, Germans not only voted for and supported Hitler and the Nazis, but many of them were deeply implicated in the system of National Socialism itself. Why, then, the persistent outrage expressed in 1990s and 2000s Japan against the legacy of the Occupation, encapsulated in the code word ‘the Tokyo Trial view of history’? Is the answer to be found merely in a rightist/neo-nationalist resuscitation of heroism, valour, pride, and national honour? If so, what accounts for the affective strength of this discourse? Does it reduce down to resentment that the Allies had gone after a leadership that was (in the eyes of nationalists) waging a noble war, and who had not committed anywhere near the atrocities that the Nazis had? Part of the answer lies in an issue I began to tackle above: the decline in antipathy toward the Nuremberg trial and the occupation in general in the Federal Republic of Germany against the concomitant resurgence of interest in the occupation period in post-1980s Japan. This striking contrast in the shifts in resonance of the trials in particular and the occupations more generally over time links together attitudes toward the constitution, and the differential status of Hitler and Hirohito in postwar Germany and Japan, shedding light on comparative engagements with historical responsibility in both places.

What I would like to suggest here is that Germany, at any rate, witnessed a shift over the ‘longue durée’ of the postwar period, from a sense of guilt and anxiety giving rise to repression, even ‘amnesia’ on the cultural level, to an increasing acknowledgment of the role that Germans

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<sup>29</sup> In his essay, “Sensô sekinin, sengô sekinin ni miru doitsu to nihon,” in *Kikan Sensô Sekinin Kenkyû* (6), Winter 1994, Mochida Yukio makes mention of his father’s reminiscences about how his father and many of his acquaintances did not feel entirely swept up and implicated in the militarism and fascism that had swept Japan. This sentiment contrasts with Konrad Adenauer’s anxiety regarding the extent of Nazi entanglements in immediate postwar Germany that I discussed at the outset of this study.

played in perpetrating some of the worst crimes of the twentieth century. The sense of guilt stemmed from anxiety at the extent to which ordinary Germans (to borrow Daniel Goldhagen's phrase) were implicated in the National Socialist system that gave rise to the eliminationist anti-Semitism resulting in the Holocaust.<sup>30</sup> In a time when the circle of perpetrators was being extended by denazification and the post-Nuremberg trials, the anxiety of personal guilt and the threat of being caught up in the dragnet of denazification created conditions in which it was less troublesome to try to forget, and definitely prudent to remain silent. But any rancour at 'victors' justice' that marked the immediate postwar period gave way over the decades, in no small part due to the insistence of generations born after the war, to a dawning awareness of the historical responsibility borne by Germans of all generations toward their shared past. The period from the late 1960s through the early 1990s saw the relative silence of the previous generations punctured. The subsequent debate expressed itself first in a desire to overcome the past (*Vergangenheitsbewältigung*), and then transformed itself into an awareness of the importance of working through the past (*Aufarbeitung*). The effervescence of this period resulted in Germany's perpetrator past becoming part of contemporary German identity, or what Harald Schmid sees as the arrival of *Erinnerungskultur* (memory culture) as a defining characteristic of identity.<sup>31</sup> Remembrance became the by-word of German identity. The so-called 'memory district' in Berlin that sprung up in the 1990s and 2000s encompassing the Jewish Museum, the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, and the Topography of Terror is but the most visible expression of

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<sup>30</sup> In putting forward this argument, I do not intend to subscribe to Daniel Goldhagen's thesis that an eliminationist anti-Semitism pervaded Germany more so than other European ethnicities and nations from medieval times down to the present. Nor, of course, do I intend to imply that if the Germans felt guilt, the Japanese felt shame.

<sup>31</sup> See Harald Schmid, "Immer wieder 'Nie wieder!': Begründungsprobleme, Mythen und Perspektiven der deutschen Erinnerungskultur," in *Dachauer Hefte* (25), November 2009. The term *Erinnerungskultur* suggests a culture permeated by memory.

this emerging collective identity that sees the enormity of the Holocaust – and Germany’s central role in it – as central to that identity.

In Japan, however, the Tokyo Trial never hewed as close to home as the combined trials and denazification did in Germany.<sup>32</sup> Mobilized by a militarist-fascist state for total war to defend the homeland, ‘ordinary Japanese’ did not have to contend with the stigma of having been part of a party apparatus and bureaucracy that sent millions to their industrialized deaths. And though Japanese servicemen were themselves guilty of having perpetrated atrocities, the accounts of the Holocaust that began to circulate internationally were surely re-assuring to many who perceived that they had merely done their duty to the emperor.<sup>33</sup> Where any rancour toward ‘victors’ justice’ subsided in Germany, the notion gained traction in Japan that the Allies had high-handedly tried a Japanese leadership that was, for the most part, doing what any leadership would do in times of war. To charges of treachery for the invasion of Pearl Harbor, the Japanese had a *tu quoque* ready at hand: the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, themselves seen by many as crimes against humanity. The attraction of the ‘victors’ justice’ discourse is thus hardly surprising; the effect on collective memory and collective identity has resulted in a persistence of the fragmentation of collective memory that has marked the postwar period profoundly in Japan.

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<sup>32</sup> Not to be forgotten, however, is the deep impact of the trials of B/C-class war criminals in the Pacific theatre. Richard Minear states that some 5,700 Japanese were tried on conventional war crimes charges. Of these, approximately 920 were executed. In addition, the administrative purges of the Occupation relieved some 200,000 Japanese of their posts, if only temporarily in many cases. See Richard Minear, *Victor’s Justice: The Tokyo War Crimes Trials*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1971, p.6.

<sup>33</sup> Of course, this does not preclude the repressed memories, traumatic or otherwise, that many Japanese soldiers took with them to their graves. It has taken rare courage for ex-servicemen to speak out about their roles in the Asia-Pacific War. For an example of such testimony, especially pertaining to the rampant sexual violence accompanying the Nanjing Massacre, see Christine Choy and Nancy Tong’s 1997 film, *In the Name of the Emperor*.

## ANOTHER PASSING OF THE GENERATIONS

That the prominent memorial sites in Tokyo avoid reflection on perpetration while smaller memorial sites and museums nestled away in side streets in Tokyo (such as the Women's Active Museum) and less centrally located museums (such as the Saitama Peace Museum) pick up the threads of historical representation that the Yûshûkan and the Shôwakan let fall is testament to the ongoing fragmentation of Japanese collective memory. Many groups and individuals in Japanese society differ on how to approach the responsibility of ordinary citizens for the war, and the degree of historical responsibility borne by subsequent generations. Overlapping with these differences is the extent to which some people then and now feel that wartime suffering was the fault of reckless government policies. Against this view are ranged those, such as the JSHTR, Kobayashi Yoshinori, and other elements of the neo-nationalist right who advocate on behalf of a more 'positive' historical legacy.

Faced with this fragmentation, some memorial sites, such as Peace Osaka and the Nagasaki Atom Bomb Museum, have attempted to incorporate various perspectives, remaining sensitive to the legitimate needs of victim consciousness and to the exigencies of perpetrator histories, as well as the moral ambiguities in between. Others, such as the Shôwakan, have chosen to ignore the productive dimensions of this fragmentation and push ahead with decontextualized portrayals of the past that displace the problems of fragmented collective memory onto the everyday, where most could agree that Japanese citizens had suffered immense hardships over the course of the Asia-Pacific War.<sup>34</sup> This sleight of hand dissolves Japanese

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<sup>34</sup> Tellingly, the Shôwakan's curatorial division manager, Watanabe Kazuhiko, stressed that one of the initial objectives of the exhibit was not peace education at all. Rather, the logic motivating the display of everyday artifacts was the ostensible 'therapeutic effect' these mementos of a more 'benign' aspect of Japan's past would have on the now-mature war orphans and other victims of total war. See Hein and Takenaka, "Exhibiting World War II," p.87, for this interview with Watanabe.



victimhood in universal victimhood, effectively diverting attention from Japanese aggression, and masking the fragmentation of collective memory.

With regard to Jews and other victims of the Third Reich, the course of the preceding discussion highlights the contrast between contemporary Germany and Japan in the relative terms of fragmented collective memory. As Ute Frevert points out apropos of the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, the question as to *whether* there should be a monument or memorial site was not widely contested in the political realm. In addition, that various levels of German society expressed a desire and felt motivated to remember the crimes of their collective past was, as Frevert asserts, “beyond question.”<sup>35</sup> Though acrimonious debate continues over memory issues in contemporary Germany, a significant consensus has emerged surrounding a few key issues. These include the guilt and responsibility borne by Hitler and the Nazi leadership, the concomitant acceptance of the legacy of Germany’s perpetration of racially motivated genocide, and the historical responsibility that accompanies remembering it.

The events of 1989 and their repercussions have reinforced a centripetal tendency in Japanese collective memory at the same time that they have contributed to a convergence surrounding memory issues in Germany. As was the case in the immediate postwar and the decades that followed, the historical contingencies influencing geo-politics have played a role in shaping engagements with the past and in informing awareness about perpetrator pasts. Emblematic of the stakes of remembrance surrounding the fiftieth anniversaries and commemorations in and around 1995 is the three-fold generational overlap in the 1990s. Enough people with immediate experience of the war were still alive, and overlapped with an emerging generation that had its own set of concerns, not least of which was the recent onset of recession

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<sup>35</sup> Frevert, in Assmann and Frevert, *Geschichtsvergessenheit, Geschichtsversessenheit*, pp.275-276.

in Japan. Added to this generational configuration was a third generation of youth to whom some version of the past was to be transmitted. It would not be an exaggeration to claim that the 1990s loomed as a struggle over the future of the past.<sup>36</sup> I will discuss the 1990s and 2000s in terms of three factors: geo-political conditions; the relative degree of state involvement in commemorative projects; and shifting attitudes toward perpetration.

### **Geo-political factors**

The repercussions of the death of the Shōwa Emperor and the end of the Cold War fed into increased tensions over how to remember the wartime past in Japan. The politics of memory unfolded against the backdrop of a society in flux, reeling under the blows of the post-1993 economic recession, the Kobe earthquake of 1995, and the Aum Shinrikyō sarin gas attacks on the Tokyo subway system in the same year. In this climate of diminished future expectations, neo-nationalist appeals to nationhood had a particular affective resonance, especially among young males feeling emasculated by the recession and diminished future prospects relative to their parents' generation.

After the wall came down in Berlin, Germany embarked on the daunting task of mending together its disparate political and economic systems, as well as the increasingly disparate cultures of East and West Germany. But without renouncing its claims to former German territory in Eastern European countries such as Poland and the Czech Republic, Germany could neither secure the agreement of its former occupiers nor assuage the fears of the international community. The Treaty on the Final Settlement with Respect to Germany (12 September 1990) required the negotiation of the German-Polish Border Treaty (signed 14 November 1990)

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<sup>36</sup> Arguably, the memory events of 2005 were less charged than were the ones surrounding 1995 because those with immediate experience of the war had passed on in larger numbers.

recognizing the Oder-Neisse line as the frontier between Germany and Poland.<sup>37</sup> But tending to the fears of jittery neighbours also required symbolic gestures beyond the firm resolution of border questions. It was not as if Germany had not broken treaties in the past. In contrast to Japan, where there was not yet much overt pressure to fund much less promote symbolic gestures of reconciliation with its neighbours, over the course of the 1990s, the German state, driven by the altered geo-political situation in which it found itself, took a much more active role in promoting memorial culture and in funding memorial sites.

### **Relative State Involvement**

Even as transnational dynamics such as geo-political contexts and transformations affect the formation of national identity, often the nation-state sees fit to police the national boundaries of collective memory. In post-1980s Germany and Japan, engagements with memory issues on the part of the state were qualitatively different, which was, in turn, reflected in the differential levels of commitment to these memory issues. It goes without saying that these differences cannot be reduced to a monolithic collective memory that marks either place. In terms of Japanese domestic affairs, state-level action or inaction on memory issues is part and parcel of a symbiotic relationship with conservative/neo-nationalistic configurations in the public sphere. In a more overt fashion than in Germany, for example, the conservative Japanese state, along with institutions that exist in a symbiotic relationship to the state, such as the *Izokukai* and the Association of Shinto Shrines, seeks to promote the health of the nation, and instill a patriotic pride in its citizens.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> The Treaty on the Final Settlement with Respect to Germany was known colloquially as the ‘2+4 Agreement’ between the Federal Republic of Germany, the German Democratic Republic, Great Britain, France, the USSR, and the USA.

<sup>38</sup> This is not to suggest that interpellation is not also operative in Germany, but rather that it functions in less overtly nation-centric ways.

In Japan, this symbiotic relationship has produced a powerful triangulation of constituencies that has successfully countered leftist-progressive oppositional memory in recent years. Within this triangulation are, firstly, the right wing academics associated with the JSHTR such as Fujioka Nobukatsu, Hata Ikuhiko, Nishio Kanji, and Kobayashi Yoshinori, whose media prominence has kept the ‘Yasukuni view of history’ in the public sphere.<sup>39</sup> Next is the right-leaning conservative state. Some LDP lawmakers have spoken out against Li Yi’s critical 2008 documentary, *Yasukuni*, and still others have repeatedly insisted that there is no evidence for the wartime state and military’s involvement with the ‘comfort women’ system. Bearing the title, “The Facts,” Japanese politicians from both the LDP and DJP took out a full-page ad in the *Washington Post* to contest House Resolution 121 sponsored by U.S. Representative Mike Honda protesting against then-prime minister Abe Shinzô’s public retreat from previous official apologies offered to ‘comfort women.’ By way of the usual right-wing device of casting aspersions on the reliability of ‘comfort women’ testimony, signatories contended that no historical document had been found “that *positively demonstrates* that women were forced against their will into prostitution by the Japanese Army.”<sup>40</sup> Among the advertisement’s sixty-odd signatories (‘assenters’ in their parlance) were Inada Tomomi of the LDP, Nishio Kanji, and Fujioka Nobukatsu, along with the Committee for Historical Facts.

The last element in this symbiotic relationship is the personnel overlap between conservative institutions such as the *Izokukai* and the state. For example, Hashimoto Ryûtarô was head of the Ministry of Health and Welfare before heading up the *Izokukai*. After his tenure with

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<sup>39</sup> Also exerting an influence behind the scenes and on the street are neo-nationalist associations such as the *Issuikai*, and the groups and societies of the far right, often with ties to the yakuza, capable of mustering visible and intimidating displays of force through their sound trucks (*gaisensha*). For a look at the tense and uneasy interrelationship of violence and democracy that sheds light on the complicated position of these groups in contemporary society, see Eiko Maruko Siniawer, *Ruffians, Yakuza, Nationalists: The Violent Politics of Modern Japan, 1860-1960*, Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2008.

<sup>40</sup> *Washington Post*, June 14, 2007 (my emphasis – the fixation on positivistic ‘fact’ is not new).

the *Izokukai*, he went on to become prime minister. Even though civil society remains fragmented, this reciprocal influence of conservative state and conservative socio-cultural configurations finds itself mirrored in the ‘flavour’ of the more prominent memorial sites that have been built or refurbished in the 1990s and 2000s. State financing of the Shôwakan, and indirect state financing of the Yûshûkan, further a particular view of the Asia-Pacific war that leaves little room for criticism of Japan’s role.<sup>41</sup> The state also funds the Peace Memorial Prayer and Documentation Hall (*Heiwa Kinen Tenji Shiryôkan*) high up on the thirty-first floor of the Sumitomo Building in Shinjuku. Prominently advertised in the cars of the train lines heading in and out of Shinjuku, this exhibition hall documents the suffering of Japanese repatriates (*hikiage-sha*).<sup>42</sup> In addition, the ongoing issue of official Yasukuni Shrine visits on the anniversary of Japan’s surrender (15 August) – whether the visit happens or not – constitutes a ritual that defines what it means to be a sovereign Japanese nation that honours the sacrifices of its war heroes.

By contrast, since the end of the Cold War the German state has been an active participant in supporting a critical approach to Germany’s National Socialist past, as evidenced by its funding of, among other projects, the Topography of Terror and the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe. This is not to suggest that the German state has always been amenable

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<sup>41</sup> This indirect financing happens by way of transfers from the Ministry of Health and Welfare to the *Izokukai*, which in turn funnels funds toward the Association of Shinto Shrines (*Jinja honchô*) at Yasukuni. See Seraphim, *op.cit.*, pp.35-59 on the Association of Shinto Shrines. See also John Breen (ed.), *Yasukuni, the War Dead, and the Struggle for Japan’s Past*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2008, and Tanaka Nobumasa, “Ima towareru mono, kokuritsu ‘Shôwakan’ to shimin ga tsukuru heiwa myujiamu,” *Hakubutsukan Mondai Kenkyû* (26), 1999.

<sup>42</sup> If the on again, off again memorial to the *Vertriebene* (the Germans expelled from Poland and other eastern European lands during the land redistribution resulting from the Yalta Conference) gets built in Berlin (also with potential state funding), it will be interesting to compare the representational and curatorial strategies of these two memorial sites. The following press releases from the federal government give an indication of the uncertainty surrounding the project: Presse- und Informationsamt der Bundesregierung, “‘Stiftung Flucht, Vertreibung, Versöhnung’ erfolgreich auf den Weg gebracht,” Pressemitteilung Nr.152, 8 April 2009; and Presse- und Informationsamt der Bundesregierung, “Kulturstaatsminister Bernd Neumann zur Stiftung Flucht, Vertreibung, Versöhnung: Gremien werden neu formiert – inhaltliche Arbeit wird fortgesetzt und konkretisiert,” Nr.95, 22 March 2010.

to critical engagements with the Third Reich and the Shoah that invited international scrutiny and participation. Rather, the active involvement of the German state in memorial sites and monuments is a recent development, traceable, as I have argued, to the transformed geo-political context in which Germany found itself once the wall came down. This is an important point to bear in mind, lest the luster of the ‘memory district’ blind us to the struggles that the citizens’ initiatives in Berlin faced against reluctant and sometimes indifferent local and federal governments throughout the 1980s.<sup>43</sup> As we have seen, the Federal Republic’s first chancellor, Konrad Adenauer (CDU) was content to see a veil of silence cast over the recent past, so as to better project the energies of Germany’s citizens into the task of rebuilding. In the 1980s, former CDU chancellor, Helmut Kohl, was no less impatient with a Germany forever in the shadow of Hitler. Along with other conservative elements in West German society, he advocated drawing a line (*Schlußstrich*) separating the Nazi past from the German present, and from the more laudable achievements of Germany’s pre-fascist past, as a means of beginning the project of spinning a narrative with which Germans of later generations could positively identify.

What emerges from my closer scrutiny of the development of the Topography of Terror from the late 1970s into the 2010s is the sometime convergence and sometime tension between state interests and those of other groups in society, such as activists, artists, critical scholars, and preservationists as these came to embrace a greater openness to the transnational dimensions of

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<sup>43</sup> As early as the 1980s, activists began to find allies in political circles. For example, during a plenary session of the Berlin Abgeordnetenhaus (state-level parliament) debating what to do with the Gestapo-Gelände, the leftist Alternative Liste (AL) based their support for a memorial on an awareness of the transnational dimensions of memory-work, calling on the CDU-run Berlin Senate (cabinet) to sponsor an international symposium with the participation of Poland and Israel to discuss how to proceed in the wake of the failed 1983-1984 design competition for the development of the Gestapo-Gelände. See Plenarprotokoll 10/9 (Abgeordnetenhaus von Berlin), 12 September 1985, p.377.

memory-work.<sup>44</sup> But the increasing institutionalization and officialization of what was once a ‘counter-memorial’ impulse has not been without its critics, who express not-unfounded reservations that the price paid for the tenuous consensus around memory issues is a diminished critical edge. That said, the ‘officialization’ of perspectives addressing the issue of German perpetration of the Holocaust squarely can be read as a salutary development, especially when compared with the relative absence of Japanese state and elite-level political involvement in the commemoration of crimes perpetrated by the Japanese state and its military during the Asia-Pacific War. To the extent that enhanced German state involvement with memorial sites dampens the experimental thrust of alternative approaches to commemoration, in comparative perspective its participation demonstrates a much greater degree of willingness to accept the burden of historical responsibility. And for the sake of comparison with Japan, here it is crucial to emphasize the willingness to do so *at elite state levels*. At the level of official public memory, this acceptance of the burden of responsibility has translated into prominent memorial sites on centrally located tracts of land in Berlin, sites that symbolize an awareness of the historical responsibility borne by German citizens born well after the perpetrators themselves.

Aware that Berlin, given its charged and checkered history, draws international scrutiny towards it like few other places in Germany, city planners along with government officials and politicians at all levels of government and of varied ideological stripes in Germany have embraced the importance of critical engagement with the past. In the early to mid-1990s, when the reunification of Germany and the transfer of the capital from Bonn to Berlin was greeted with trepidation by many in Europe and within Germany itself, the various levels of government contributed crucial support and funds to memorial projects that sent a clear signal regarding the

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<sup>44</sup> Incidentally, this is evidence that any proclamation of ostensible German superiority in terms of official memory and memory-work must be tempered by an acknowledgment both of the recentness and historical contingency of this shift in orientation on the part of the German state.

German state's intentions to confront its obligations toward commemorating perpetrator pasts.<sup>45</sup>

At a time when the city of Berlin was enduring severe financial hardships as a result of reunification and the transfer of the capital, the CDU mayor of Berlin, Eberhard Diepgen, and his Senator for Science, Research and Culture, Peter Radunski, reiterated support for the embattled Topography of Terror project. In a memo to the Abgeordnetenhaus from the Senate of Berlin, they stated that “the Topography of Terror will remind people that the capital of a democratic Germany was once the capital of the Third Reich.”<sup>46</sup> Deflecting criticism that the government of the city of Berlin was more interested in funding memorial projects that trumpeted Germany's atonement for its past crimes by commemorating its victims, Diepgen and Radunski asserted that the Topography of Terror and the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe were not interchangeable. Without the Topography of Terror to provide the necessary critical background and reflection, the significance of the Jewish Monument would be severely diminished.<sup>47</sup>

Even if such statements have been criticized as rhetorical window-dressing by commentators and participants impatient with CDU lassitude on the Topography of Terror file, it is difficult to imagine the CDU's opposite number – the LDP – going nearly as far in acknowledging the necessity of a memorial site confronting German responsibility for past crimes perpetrated.<sup>48</sup> Members of the LDP, former prime minister Koizumi Junichirô and his coteries in particular, have failed to grasp the nature of the symbolic message sent to former

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<sup>45</sup> As illustrated by the history of the Topography of Terror's development, some projects appeared to benefit more than others from official favour, in particular, those that purveyed a *mea culpa* message of German atonement that some saw as side-stepping the more important issue of actively engaging younger generations in their acquisition of historical consciousness, and those that featured prominent architects at the helm.

<sup>46</sup> DS 13/2983 (Abgeordnetenhaus von Berlin), 20 August 1998, p.2.

<sup>47</sup> DS 13/2983, p.2.

<sup>48</sup> Indicative of the decreasing suspicions with respect to state involvement, Reinhard Rürup felt compelled to admit after his resignation from the directorship of the Topography of Terror that these kinds of political pronouncements signaled an intensifying cross-party consensus regarding both the need to enrich an already rich Berliner memoryscape, and the pedagogical importance of sites such as the Topography of Terror within this landscape. (Reinhard Rürup, “Die Berliner *Topographie des Terrors* in der deutschen NS-Gedenkstättenlandschaft,” in *vorgänge*, Heft 1, 2005, pp.77-78).



victims of Japanese aggression by official visits to Yasukuni Shrine. These differing commitments to perpetrator pasts are reflected in the level of support and funding for prominent memorial projects that shine a critical light on the history of the nation. They also reflect a deeper sensitivity on the part of the German state and its elected officials to the transnational dynamics of collective memory than do the at-times tone-deaf responses of representatives of the Japanese state. The relative commitment to historical responsibility and the attendant sensitivity to the transnational dimensions of collective memory may be only one of many determinants shaping the contours of public sphere debates over collective memory; but the influence the state exerts by way of education policy, history textbook approval and publishing, and, significantly, cultural policy (i.e., which museums and memorial sites get state funding and prominent endorsement) has an influential bearing on what kind of ‘official narrative’ gets transmitted to future generations.

### **Attitudes toward Perpetration**

Attitudes toward perpetration are a critical component of the kinds of narratives that get transmitted to future generations via state-sanctioned representations of the past (such as textbooks), or by way of representations ranging from the artistic, cinematographic, photographic, or museal that contest or reinforce the dominant narrative. The differential attitudes to perpetration expressed over the course of the 1990s and 2000s in Germany and Japan are as much an outgrowth of certain continuities set in motion by the legacy of the immediate postwar period as they are a product of the force of events and global history over the course of the latter twentieth century. Noting the anomaly of Germany’s recent memorial tradition – typically nations build monuments and memorials as ‘sustaining illusions’ of a nation’s reason for being – James Young lauds the recent turn in German commemorative expressions by

drawing the connection between deliberate acts of remembrance and the notion that “memory *must be created* for the next generation, not merely preserved.”<sup>49</sup> In connection with the centrality of the Memorial of the Murdered Jews of Europe to the urban fabric of the new Berlin Republic he writes: “No other nation has ever attempted to reunify itself on the bedrock memory of its crimes or to make the commemoration of its crimes the topographical center of gravity in its capital.”<sup>50</sup> Tellingly, he follows up this statement with the question: “Where, after all, is Japan’s national memorial to the Rape of Nanking?”<sup>51</sup>

Though many in Japan would object to this positing of a rhetorical equivalence between the Holocaust and the Nanjing Massacre, the answer to the question remains, nonetheless, the same in the early 2010s as it was in 1999. In two of the most prominent memorial sites in Tokyo – the Yûshûkan and the Shôwakan – no mention whatsoever is made of war crimes perpetrated by Japanese troops in Asia. Instead, in the broader public sphere, the Yasukuni discourse of mourning and honouring fallen heroes – reinforced in the mid-1990s by Katô Norihiro’s call for the formation of a national community of mourning as a precursor to a sincere apology to Japan’s Asian neighbours – serves in certain influential sectors as an alibi that precludes a frank engagement with the ‘crimes of the nation.’<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> James Young, “Berlin’s Holocaust Memorial: A Report to the Bundestag Committee on Media and Culture, 3 March 1999,” in *German Politics and Society*, 17:3, 1999, p.56 (emphasis in the original).

<sup>50</sup> Young, “Berlin’s Holocaust Memorial,” p.56.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p.56.

<sup>52</sup> In Germany, by contrast, the discourse of ‘mourning’ is strikingly negligible in debates about the Topography of Terror, the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, and the Jewish Museum, despite the gravity of the crimes perpetrated. What this signals in terms of the ‘turn’ that took place in German memorial politics from the 1980s is less a melancholic fixation on the mourning of the dead (though remembering the dead is by no means neglected) than it is an attempt to learn about the processes that gave rise to these millions of deaths. If anything, gestures of atonement dominate recent discussions of commemoration, especially in the case of the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe. With yet another turning of the generations, an institution like the Topography of Terror seems more invested in an affective registering of loss with respect to victims – a kind of mourning, to be sure, but rarely referenced explicitly as such in the debates – than it is with a melancholic refusal to work through the past.

## CONVENTIONAL PLATITUDES VERSUS THE CONTINGENCY OF EVENTS

While I resist arguments that conclude that Japan has done an inadequate job of facing its past, nonetheless I see the critical engagement with controversial pasts as more prominent in Germany than in Japan, especially in their respective capital cities. The number and quality of the memorial sites in Berlin alone are testament to this. Focusing on major commemorative projects in the respective capitals is important given the metaphorical ‘centrality’ of the metropole. A question arises at this juncture. Have I not stacked the deck, so to speak, by choosing such diametrically opposed memorial sites to consider? One set of memorial sites – the Topography of Terror and the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe – confronts and foregrounds historical responsibility. The Shôwakan ignores this issue at best, while the Yûshûkan actively denies it. Have I not just reproduced the framework I have worked hard to circumvent over the pages of this dissertation? That is, at the end of the day, have I not just advanced another version of the argument asserting that ‘Japan has done an inadequate job of addressing its past in comparison to Germany’? On one level, it may appear so. But as I have been at pains to elaborate, any difference as it may appear in the early 2010s is less the result of deeply ingrained ‘cultural traits’ than it is the product of historical contingency.<sup>53</sup>

Surely scholars approaching comparison are well-versed in contingency, rupture, change, just as they are sensitive to the continuities, one might counter. True enough. But the few comparisons of Germany that do exist – especially in the media – tend to reinforce conventional

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<sup>53</sup> The argument could be advanced that the *political* cultures of Germany and Japan are different, especially as reflected in the different levels state involvement with memorial sites in the 1990s and 2000s. But this, too, is not some timeless essence. If it were, it would be difficult to account for the Federal Republic of Germany’s convincing transition to liberal democracy out of a political culture in which National Socialism – and anti-Semitism – cut deeply.

platitudes.<sup>54</sup> I suspect this might have something to do with the particular method adopted by journalists and some scholars when they engage in comparison: that is, to take the situation at the moment they are writing, and extrapolate a synchronic and readily comparable entity unfolded across time – ‘spatialized,’ as it were. But this fall-back reliance on stock national or cultural clichés apparently valid across time overlooks, indeed at times willfully ignores, the complex tensions that either hold a given entity together, or traverse the boundaries of that particular entity.

The result is that some scholars and a greater number of journalists zero in on the existence of these kinds of ‘cultural traits’ as possessing the power to explain why Japan is inherently incapable of dealing with its aggressive and expansionist history (or in some cases to explain why Japan was, in fact, capable of such a dramatic renewal).<sup>55</sup> Earlier I suggested that we could discern the mechanisms of interpellation and national identity-formation operating more explicitly, more visibly, at the Shōwakan and the Yūshūkan than at the Topography of Terror and the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe. At the former two memorial sites, the curatorial approach is monologic. The spectator is treated like a passive recipient of a pre-distilled script, which leaves little margin for the active involvement of the spectator. In effect, the exhibits tell the spectators what it means to be a Japanese subject/citizen, and are thus constitutive of a particular national(ist) subjectivity put forward as the answer to what it means to be Japanese. Conversely, at the Topography of Terror in particular, the visitor is considered less as a spectator and more as an active, self-reflexive participant in a dialogic exhibition with deep

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<sup>54</sup> Interestingly, few have been undertaken by historians. More have emanated from the social sciences (such as Peter Katzenstein’s work in political science, including *Cultural Norms and National Security: Police and Military in Japan*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996, which includes a chapter comparing Japan and Germany, or Julian Dierkes’ recent work on history education), from literature, or, most predominantly, from journalism.

<sup>55</sup> Of recent vintage is Nils-Johan Jørgensen’s *Culture and Power in Germany and Japan: The Spirit of Renewal*, Kent, UK: Global Oriental, 2006, which treats Japan and Germany’s capacity for redemptive renewal in quasi-mystical terms.

layers of documentation and information available in the exhibition space itself, and in the library and archive on site. The theory driving the Topography of Terror's pedagogical approach is that subject-formation ought to be more 'self-constitutive' than it is something constituted by a didactic exhibition.

On the basis of this comparison between the curatorial practices and subsequent reception of the various memorials some might be inclined to conclude, based on deeply ingrained cultural traits, that 'the Germans' engage in deliberate acts of remembrance that confront perpetration squarely, while 'the Japanese' have a penchant for passive consumption of a pre-packaged past from which some of the more disturbing elements have been conveniently excised by those occupying positions of power in memorial institutions.<sup>56</sup> In short, conventional platitudes often result in a homogenized national character about which it is easy to generalize. In Japan, at a time when conservative forces are in the ascendency, it is all too easy to forget that collective memory remains fragmented, and to confuse state-level policy such as Koizumi's visits to Yasukuni, or the current conservative flavour of collective memorial expression emanating from contemporary Japan, with an essentialized conservative Japanese national character.

If Japan does not always emerge in the best light in my study, Germany's vaunted status in many a comparison suffers too, tested as it is by 'memory events' such as the German Historical Museum debates of the early 1980s, Helmut Kohl and Ronald Reagan's 1986 visit to the Bitburg cemetery, where SS officers are buried, and the *Historikerstreit* (1986-1987). Just as

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<sup>56</sup> In his *The Wages of Guilt: Memories of War in Germany and Japan*, London: Farrar, Strauss & Giroux, Inc, 1994, Ian Buruma offers a variation of this theme in one of the more unguarded of his many unguarded moments when he writes, in connection with the dearth of coverage of the Tokyo Trial in high school history textbooks, that "[r]evisionist worries about generations of Japanese being brainwashed by the Tokyo trial are, to say the least, exaggerated. Japanese school textbooks are the product of so many compromises that they hardly reflect any opinion at all" (p.161). So far, Buruma is on relatively solid footing, for the system of screening textbooks has been the object of many a critique. But even this comment overlooks the complexity of the process (for example, it is this very same much-maligned screening process that forced the writers of the JSHTR textbook to make substantial alterations in 2001 and 2006). He goes off the rails, however, when he continues: "As with all controversial matters in Japan, the more painful, the less said" (p.161).

the *Historikerstreit* finds parallels in the mid-1990s Debate about Historical Subjectivity touched off by Katô's *Haisengôron* (similar script, different decade), the re-dedication of the Neue Wache (1993) as a memorial to all victims of tyranny and oppression resonates with Katô Norihiro's call to mourn the fallen. Similarly, at the *Haus der Geschichte* in Bonn (opened in 1994), where the displacement of historical traumas via the salvific 'reality effect' of the (consumer) object produces nostalgia for a time when the nation came together to rebuild and redeem itself, the celebration of the nation finds an echo at the Shôwakan.

Even the Topography of Terror's checkered history of uncertainty subverts the notion of a monolithic, normative German overcoming or 'working through' of the past. In short, plenty of challenges to historical responsibility and the exigencies of ethical remembrance have emerged in both places. If a concerted engagement with historical responsibility is more visible materially and lodged more prominently within the 'collective social imaginary' of contemporary Germany than it is in Japan, this has less to do with inherent 'cultural traits' than it does with historical contingency of shifting domestic and geo-political conditions, and the way in which these factors have shaped the possibilities or imposed limits on responses to the continued existence of ghosts that haunt the present.

## **CODA**

Focusing on memorial sites within the context of the related debates swirling around their permeable boundaries provides a window, however opaque, onto how Germany and Japan have attempted to grapple with commemorating their dual legacies of victimhood and perpetration. In Germany, a nascent desire and willingness to confront the past had come to the fore over the course of the 1970s and 1980s. But at the same time, conservatives called for a historicization of

Germany's past, often expressing a desire to 'turn the page' in order to confine the Nazi past to a 'normalized' history. This pattern forming a loose framework for debates in 1980s Germany finds an echo in 1990s Japan. But whereas the 'progressive' view of historical responsibility carried the day in Germany after the wall came down, the case has been different in contemporary Japan. Partially as a reaction to the successes of progressive social configurations in admitting more voices to the debates about representing Japan's past, partially in response to the void created by post-1989 geo-political realignments and domestic dislocation resulting from neo-liberalist economic policies, neo-nationalists promoted patriotism and nationalist pride as a remedy to the ills perceived to be afflicting Japan. The 'Yasukuni view of history' that emerged to challenge its own caricature of the 'Tokyo Trial view of history' finds its reflection both in the tenor of the *Yûshûkan* and the *Shôwakan*, and in the exclusions these memorial sites effect.

Commemorative projects – or their paucity<sup>57</sup> – provide a 'mirror' for the broader unfolding of the politics of memory and debates about the ethics of commemoration in the postwar. Because the emperor remained on the throne – and because many had fought and died in his name – a greater degree of ambivalence has characterized collective memory in Japan. Those sites associated with imperial power and authority, such as the palace grounds in the center of Tokyo, have a much different resonance than Hitler's Chancellery, which was demolished soon after the guns fell silent, or Hitler's bunker, which was discovered in the early 1990s within the former 'death strip' that ran along the Berlin wall.<sup>58</sup> Nothing exists in Berlin that is as simultaneously divisive and ambivalent as the Yasukuni Shrine, inextricably bound up with the imperial house even if current emperor, Akihito, does not participate in shrine rituals.

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<sup>57</sup> What is not represented at the center of power becomes marginalized in the 'geography' of the collective social imaginary.

<sup>58</sup> Berlin's chief architect, Alfred Kerndl, argued strenuously in favour of developing a memorial site where Hitler's bunker had been uncovered, but the proposal met with stiff resistance, and the bunker was eventually sealed after its contents had been documented.

Conversely, there is no existing site in Tokyo comparable to the Topography of Terror – former Gestapo, Sicherheitsdienst, and Reichssicherheitshauptamt headquarters – around which to organize reflection on perpetration.

To be sure, the memoryscapes of Tokyo and Berlin are differently hued, with various social, political, national, or transnational ends motivating the building of the memorial sites I consider in this study. In a 2003 article in the newsletter for one of the citizens' initiatives involved with the agitation that gave rise to the Topography of Terror on the former site of the Gestapo headquarters, former member Martin Becher makes reference to the 'Regenbogenmischung' (rainbow 'coalition') of intellectuals, artists, Christians, trade union members, and both dogmatic and non-dogmatic leftists that came together to force the state to act to preserve this important memorial site.<sup>59</sup> In spite of clashing visions concerning the general usage of the site (monument or memorial site, documentation center, active museum), the purpose of the site (commemoration of victims, or commemoration of perpetrators), the most appropriate architectural expression for any future exhibition hall, and the nature of the exhibition's content and mode, these civil society participants in the 1980s and 1990s memory debates were so effective in advancing their case that the state eventually assimilated a version of their discourse of commemoration.<sup>60</sup> Initially contestatory, the politics of this unwieldy 'Regenbogenmischung' reaching deep into civil society gradually transformed into the consensus of contemporary *Erinnerungskultur* (memory culture). The memorial sites in Berlin are the material expressions of this tentative consensus that attempts, with greater or lesser degrees of success, to work through the traumas of the past.

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<sup>59</sup> Martin Becher, "Der Verein 'Aktives Museum' – ein Akteur im Feld der Erinnerungspolitik," in *Verein Aktives Museum Faschismus und Widerstand Berlin: Mitgliederrundbrief* (49), July 2003, p.17. One significant constituency whose role he overlooks is feminists.

<sup>60</sup> As noted above, external transnational pressures resulting from the changed geo-political situation combined with these domestic pressures in shaping the state's agenda.



If an array of left-progressive intellectual and activists have spoken out critically against the curatorial policies and effects of the Shôwakan and the Yûshûkan in Tokyo, the participatory base of this resistance has not cut as deeply or broadly into Japanese society as it has in Germany, nor has it been anywhere near as prominent in the public sphere.<sup>61</sup> Moreover, the critique of and resistance to the representations and elisions that make up the neo-nationalist perspective of the past has not translated into a successful bid for a critically engaged and self-reflexive memorial site ‘at the center,’ so to speak. That is not to say that memory issues pertaining to the Asia-Pacific War are not alive and well in bookshops and university seminar rooms. But as I suggested above, the vibrancy of this debate is confined to a relatively narrow segment of civil society, and has not translated into many material expressions on the streets and in the public spaces of Tokyo. Rather, the memory of perpetration, though not completely repressed, is, nonetheless, figuratively and geographically confined to the margins of Japan/Tokyo’s urban (post)modernity. Peace halls are inconvenient revenants that threaten to upset the dominant narrative painting an image of Japan as an affluent, technologically advanced peace-loving country – and as the ultimate victim of the Second World War.

Not only do these memorial sites ‘at the center’ remain impassive in the face of the insistent criticism emanating from the margins, they remain impervious to the influence of transnational dynamics shaping collective memory. Where the prominent and centrally located memorial sites that have sprung up in Germany since the end of the Cold War embrace a transnational orientation sensitive to the anxieties of its erstwhile victims, their counterparts in

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<sup>61</sup> A quick glance at the list of the vast array of organizations, institutions, initiatives, associations, clubs, workshops, religious groups, and the like that have participated in the debates surrounding the Topography of Terror and the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe – to name but a few projects – confirms the broad base of civil society participation in these debates. One of the sourcebooks collecting documents pertaining to the Memorial of the Murdered Jews of Europe runs to nearly 1300 pages, with over half dedicated to the lively debate carried out in the press. Significantly, this sourcebook was published on the eve of the Bundestag vote on the second design competition in June 1999. Not open to the public until 2005, Eisenman’s design generated plenty more public sphere interest in the intervening years.

Tokyo remain blissfully parochial. The intended audience of the Yûshûkan is the (mythical) Japanese nation; the intended audience of the Jewish Museum or the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe is rather more transnational in complexion.<sup>62</sup>

In the ‘geographies of memory’ that define Japan in general and Tokyo in particular, uncomfortable memories are displaced to the periphery. In Germany, though cultural life is highly decentralized, these conditions have not resulted in a similar spatial displacement of traumatic or unsettling memories from the center to the periphery. Because cultural policy pertaining to the institutions that run museums and memorial sites devolves to the regions, significant and prominent commemorative projects have been undertaken in such places as Hamburg, Kassel, and Saarbrücken, to say nothing of the former concentration camp sites in Dachau, Buchenwald, Sachsenhausen, and Ravensbrück. But where in Japan critical engagements with Japan’s perpetrator past *remains* confined to the regions, Berlin is home to a number of memorial sites that adopt a critical perspective on the past. These range from major and prominent sites (the Jewish Museum, the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, the Topography of Terror), to major but less prominent sites (the Wannsee Conference Villa Memorial Center, the German Resistance Memorial Center), to the minor but no less persistent reminders of German persecution of political opponents, the genocide of the Jews, and the horrors of the forced labour program (Plötzensee prison, the Bebelplatz memorial to the Nazi book burning, the Documentation Center of Forced Labour in Schöneweide). Not to be overlooked are the ubiquitous ‘Stolpersteine’ (‘stumbling stones’) set into cobblestone entries to Berlin apartments from which Jews were deported. This is a non-exhaustive list. In Tokyo, the urban spatialization of memory is different. Two of the most prominent memorial sites dealing

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<sup>62</sup> In drawing this contrast, it should be borne in mind that the German Historical Museum in Berlin and the *Haus der Geschichte* in Bonn is geared toward a broadly ‘German’ audience, but one much less exclusive than the Yûshûkan.

with the Asia-Pacific War – the Shôwakan and the Yûshûkan – sidestep the issue of perpetration, leaving it to the smaller and often underfunded institutions such as the Women’s Active Museum or the Center for Research on War Responsibility to formulate, research, and then teach about these issues that problematize the kind of national identity promoted by the major memorial sites.

Most significantly for the arguments I am trying to develop within this study, these memorial sites are lightning rods for the *representation* of the past. Representation calls forth questions of aesthetics, affect, and experience as commemorative practice on memorial sites contribute to, or actively question the mechanisms of, identity formation. As reflections of broader socio-cultural dynamics, the current iterations of space and exhibition at memorial sites such as the Topography of Terror and the Shôwakan are prime sites on which to study the extent to which institutions interpellate their visitors. Whether the exhibition is dialogic or monologic, whether the message is a unified, didactic message, or one that is more tentative and invites the participation of the visitor will have an effect on the extent to which memory is tightly administered (closed) or invites contestation (open-ended) at various memorial sites.

In a similar vein, one type of curatorial strategy leaves no room for the distinctions between an individual experience of the museum in the present and a putative and retroactively attributed collective experience that may well be at odds with a contemporary individual’s experience based on gender, class, ethnicity, subcultural affiliations, or political leanings. Acknowledging that collective memory is highly mediated, the other type of curatorial strategy creates more room at the margins for the contemporary visitor to explore the ways in which the collective identity in which he or she ‘resides’ (his or her ‘habitus,’ in Bourdieuean terms) is made up of a multiplicity of individual experiences layered over time.

Insofar as the memorial sites I study are lightning rods for questions surrounding the representation of the past, they also afford an excellent opportunity for studying the differential valences of authenticity. How the discourse of authenticity is consciously or unwittingly activated and used by the variety of groups, institutions, and individuals involved with the development of memorial sites sheds light on the ideological armature undergirding museums and memorial sites that purport to represent the past. Authenticity ‘means’ differently in different contexts. At the Topography of Terror, the ‘authenticity of the document’ drives debates ranging from the most appropriate means of preserving the site to the most effective pedagogical means of encouraging the active participation of the visitor. At the Shôwakan, the ‘authenticity of the relic’ produces a reality-effect that brings the past closer – tangibly present – to the spectator. Authenticity also authorizes. Though far from being an unproblematic move, the curators and trustees of the Topography of Terror derive their authority to represent the past from the empirical document or documentary photograph. At the Shôwakan, authority is derived from the aura of the authentic relic.<sup>63</sup>

In terms of spectator and visitor reception, these varieties of ‘authenticity’ evoke qualitatively different affective dynamics – fear, horror, repulsion, resonance, pride – that shade into aesthetic experiences ranging from resonance and recognition to different kinds of shock (productive to gratuitous), empathic unsettling, and sublime elation or disorientation. What is more, the production of different experiences works toward different political ends and generates different degrees of historical consciousness. Arising as they do out of differential deployments of the discourse of authenticity, and out of the relative claims to authoritativeness made by the

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<sup>63</sup> Of course, what I have just posited is not a strict binary distinction, for the fixation on the ‘authentic trace’ – remains of building foundations – on the part of certain individuals and groups involved with the Topography of Terror betrays not a small amount of fetishization of the aura.

exhibitions, the 'museum experience' can serve to validate or valorize the status quo or the nation as much as it can serve to contest official renditions.

Projects that compare memorial sites are thus important insofar as they take up the continual renegotiation of identity that unfolds in accordance with changing needs of a community or group over time. A comparative project focusing on memorial sites illuminates the complexities and ethical implications of historical responsibility as an ongoing project that acts upon a continually changing present.

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