

# Holocaust *Mahnmal* (Memorial): Monumental Memory amidst Contemporary Race

DAMANI J. PARTRIDGE

*Anthropology, and Center for Afro-American and African Studies, University of Michigan*

This essay examines the relationship between contemporary racialized subjects in Germany and the process of Holocaust memorialization. I ask why youths from these contexts fail to see themselves in the process of Holocaust memorialization, and why that process fails to see them in it. My argument is not about equivalences, but instead I examine the ways in which the monumentalization of Holocaust memory has inadvertently worked to exclude both relevant subjects and potential participants from the process of memorialization. That process as a monumental enterprise has also worked to sever connections between racist memory and contemporary racism. The monumental display of what presents itself, at times, as moral superiority does not adequately attend to the everyday, mundane, repeatable qualities of racialized exclusion today, or in the past.

My motivation to write this essay originated with an investigation I conducted on citizenship and non-citizens in Berlin schools at the turn of this century. I was struck by the general disconnect between left-leaning, “‘68-generation” teachers and their “Turkish” and “Arab” Berlin-based pupils. One tenth-grade math

Acknowledgments: I would like to thank the Berkeley-Tübingen-Wien (Vienna)-Harvard research network for the initial inspiration and invaluable feedback on an early draft. For their financial support, I would like to thank the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, the Department of Anthropology, the Center for Afro-American and African Studies, and Rackham Graduate School at the University of Michigan. I thank also the anthropology writers group at the University of Michigan, as well as Bruce Mannheim for his comments on a later draft. Wolfgang Kaschuba welcomed me as a guest at the Institute for European Ethnology at the Humboldt University of Berlin, and I am grateful to Michi Knecht for sharing her office. *CSSH* editor Andrew Shryock’s support and contributions have been invaluable, and I thank him in particular for his editorial expertise and for considering this piece in the first place. Furthermore, I thank the four *CSSH* anonymous reviewers of this essay for their comments and suggestions, and David Akin for his editing. Finally, I would like to thank all of those in Berlin and Poland who participated in this research but who must remain anonymous. All translations are my own except where otherwise noted.

teacher at the Haupt/Realschule (a lower-tier secondary school) that I was observing told me that he had expected to be working with working-class (implicitly, “White”) kids, and had hoped to help to transform their socio-economic circumstances, but in his first year he was confronted with an entirely “Turkish” class. A history teacher for the same grade and school was dismayed by her students’ indifference to her teachings about the Second World War and the Nazis. The secondary school and its students and teachers were situated in a so-called “immigrant neighborhood,” notable for its beautiful canals, nineteenth-century apartment buildings, hip restaurants, bohemian bookstores, trendy student hangouts, and anarchist graffiti. The milieu was part of an emerging problematic concerning the place of German history in contemporary German life. Ironically, it seemed to me, teachers at the school were more likely to sympathize with a “White” German student who had begun to outwardly identify with skinheads than with the majority of their students who were “Turkish-” or “Arab-German.”<sup>1</sup>

Over the course of the 1999–2000 school year the school’s tenth-grade science teacher was scheduled to lead a class trip to the former concentration camp Sachsenhausen nearby, and I decided to accompany them. Like the school as a whole, most of his students were children of immigrants, predominantly Turkish and Arab, while a minority were “White” Germans. When I arrived the morning of the trip I was disappointed to find only two or three students there, all of them “White” Germans. The other students had said that they would come, but they did not show up and so we went on without them. The science teacher thought his students were apathetic, and I went along with his assumption that the absent students had simply taken an opportunity for a vacation from school. On further reflection, though, I wondered to what extent their absence was due to the event itself and the way in which the Holocaust is taught about in German schools. To what extent was their absence linked to the failure of the perpetrator discourse to include them, with its emphasis on *German* guilt?<sup>2</sup> I wondered if the identificatory terms of the

<sup>1</sup> In calling the students “German” in this context, I am less concerned with their official legal status or whether or not they identify as German—and most do not—but with the fact that they have either been born in or socialized in Germany.

<sup>2</sup> In reporting about a Turkish-German guide (Ufuk Topkara) at the Jewish Museum in Berlin and his young Turkish-German visitors, the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* recently gave an account of a visit to the Museum by a class from a school where 96 percent of the students had parents “who were not born in Germany”: “Only eight students have come. A girl from an Arab family simply did not show up this morning. ‘One can absolutely assume that her absence is on purpose,’ the teacher Elke Menzel says. ‘And sometimes I also assume this.’ Menzel was also not sure that Zafer would come today. But now he is sitting next to the other fifth graders on a bench on the ground by the Jewish Museum in Berlin. ‘Do I also have to go with the class? I’m not a Jew at all,’ Zafer had asked in class a couple of days before. He was required to go” (*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* 2008) In another recent piece on the Jewish Museum, the *Deutsche Welle* and *Qantara* quote Topkara: “The teachers often tell us that the children say to them: ‘Why should I go to the Jewish Museum? I have nothing to do with the Holocaust!’” (*Deutsche Welle* and *Qantara.de* 2008).

memorialization of Nazi genocide were creating new impossibilities of association or horror. I was struck by the way in which the discourse about the Holocaust, perpetration, and guilt, among not only teachers but also Germans more broadly, was fully retrospective, and avoided any connections between the genocide and contemporary circumstances. I observed also that the implicit demand for this affiliation with the guilt of historical perpetration was producing new specters of exclusion.

#### MEMORIAL TO THE MURDERED JEWS OF EUROPE

In 2009, I accompanied a group of “Palestinian”/“Palestinian-German,” and “Turkish”/“Turkish-German” youths on a trip to the recently constructed Berlin Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe (see figure 1). They were part of a program funded by the federal government and organized by a national anti-racism foundation to address “gaps” in “democratic education,” particularly among right-wing male and “immigrant” youth. The group I accompanied was scheduled to go to Auschwitz in the fall, and in preparation for that trip the foundation liaison had organized a series of events over weeks and months in Berlin.



FIGURE 1 The memorial covers an entire city block and looks out onto Berlin's enormous park—Tiergarten.

This trip was not the group's first meeting. Previous gatherings had included an exchange of personal histories (including histories of Palestinian refuge in Germany), watching a documentary film about a German family's confrontation with its own SS Nazi legacy, a visit to an unconventional memorial in a middle-class Berlin neighborhood that recounted the daily intensification of anti-Semitism during the Nazi era, and a guided tour of the German Bundestag.

On that Sunday afternoon, ten out of sixteen youths showed up. We began with brunch at the foundation, about an hour away from where the youth lived, then proceeded on a guided tour of the German Reichstag (the national parliament building), and concluded with a guided visit to the Memorial. The youth center's director and the social worker that usually accompanied the youth told me that no one had dropped out of the program, even after several months. This surprised me since the social worker had also told me that the program had been motivated partly by what she and others perceived as the youths' latent anti-Semitism. The director, who was also a social worker, participated in planning the program, but the main organizer was the foundation liaison. She said that the youth in everyday conversation had suggestively asked, "*Bist du Jude?*" (Are you a Jew?), or forthrightly proclaimed "*Du Opfer*" (You victim) as insults. She said that this rhetoric, or at least the direct references to Jews, had stopped after the first few weeks.

On the day of the visit to the Memorial, the liaison from the sponsoring foundation was annoyed with the youth for play-fighting in the Reichstag, which they also did at the youth center. The official guide had warned them to use language and behave in a way appropriate to the institution. On our way through the building, one of the young men struck a hip-hop pose behind an FDP (liberal party) podium as his friend and I took pictures. When we got to a part of the Reichstag where victorious Soviet soldiers had used charcoal to etch their names into the building,<sup>3</sup> the same young man gave the commemoration a modern twist by pretending to shake a can and spray-paint his name below the historical Soviet graffiti.

As we left the guide to take the elevator to the glass dome atop the Reichstag, which famously bears the words "*Dem deutschen Volke*" ([for] The German Folk—a racialist term) at its entrance, she said to the youth, "I'll see you again, when you're parliamentarians." Whether she meant this as an ironic jab or a form of motivation I could not tell, but I recalled her admonition about "appropriate behavior." Was hip-hop bravado unwelcome in this house of democracy, or would the democracy itself have to be transformed by the hip-hop messengers in order to become a more truly democratic institution? In other words, does not the demand for proper (democratic) comportment also exclude? How could the possibility of opening up the democracy be

<sup>3</sup> This part of the original *Reichstag* structure had been preserved by the British architect of the modernized reconstruction to commemorate the Soviet victory against the Nazis.

configured in relation to our next stop—the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe?

Between the Reichstag and the Memorial, the foundation liaison gave a talk to the youth about their behavior and said they needed to do better. Though he was not harsh, he had told me on the side that he would not go through with the trip to Auschwitz if such behavior continued. After their first meeting with the group, the social workers and the foundation liaison had both wondered if the youths' parents would let them continue with the program if they knew that it was about a history relating to Jews. Although the youth were excited about the prospect of going to Auschwitz, the liaison said that he was going to introduce the Jewish dimensions of the project slowly. In the first meeting, he told the youth only that the project was about history. On the day of the Reichstag visit, as the time approached for going to the Memorial, he seemed particularly agitated and nervous about the possibility of an inappropriate incident there.

After a short break, we all walked past the Brandenburg Gate and the new American Embassy en route to the Memorial. The official Memorial guide contained pictures of the previous site, where the *Reichskanzlei* had stood before its destruction in the war. The liaison also showed the group another, failed proposal for the Memorial and asked them to evaluate it. He eventually asked them to walk into the Memorial and come back after five minutes. In the period before entering, one young man had fallen asleep on a stele. When another talked on his cell phone, the guide retorted, "If you have questions, you don't have to immediately pick up the phone to call information." During the guide's presentation, though three talked amongst themselves, most listened and answered questions; they were much more attentive and respectful than were youth from the eastern German city of Magdeburg who I had observed on a previous day.

When the Berlin youth came back to the guide after exploring the Memorial on their own, there was a discussion about the possible meaning of this memorial, one that, as the guide pointed out, had no names or words. We then proceeded underground to the "*Ort der Information*" (Place of information), where a display of names, images, and text narrated a more formal history of internment, deportation, and extermination. On the way down, before the security check, the foundation liaison poked his finger into the back of one youth and told the social worker that he would not take him to Auschwitz. The social worker had asked the liaison how he thought things were going, but I did not see what the young man had done. He did not respond immediately to the finger in his back, but seemed hurt after the incident. It was not clear to me whether this was a warning, or if instead the liaison meant what he had said. The guide told the youths to explore the exhibit on their own, after which I saw the social worker gathering the group together for a private discussion. Meanwhile, the foundation liaison spoke with the guide.

After we had returned upstairs and outside, the social worker, emerging from the conversation with the youths, told the foundation liaison that they had something to tell him. On the corner of the Memorial, in response to the youths' *mea culpa*, the liaison proceeded to say that he would go through with the next meeting, but that if the group's behavior did not improve he would end everything after that. He wanted each person to sign a contract agreeing to behave appropriately. One youth said that the activities had been too much for them for one day. The liaison responded that in Auschwitz there would be even more, and they countered that Auschwitz would be different because they had not been there before.

Things seemed to end on a more positive note. We walked back to Brandenburg Gate, and all of the youth proceeded to the *S Bahn* (regional train) to take it back to their neighborhood. I was anxious about the possibility of failure, that the program might end before the youth made it to Auschwitz. In comparison with the previous meeting, I thought that they had been less engaged, and, when they tried to participate more, they had been made to feel out of place, particularly in the Reichstag. The experience at the Memorial was more of a lecture than a conversation. When asked to interpret the stelae, many said they saw them as mere abstract concrete blocks, a place to play hide and seek. The guide gave his own interpretation of why people were tempted to play at the Memorial, that they were overwhelmed by the horror, and that play put things back into a manageable order, but this reading sparked no epiphanies among the youth. My own sense was that there was still too much distance between the events the blocks were meant to symbolize and the youth who were supposed to be affected by them. The interaction had agitated the liaison, although he did say, on the side, that it was up to the experience itself, including the guides, to engage the youth. While one young woman did offer an interpretation of her own, most simply gave the guide polite answers to his questions: "It's gray." "We had fun playing tag." They all continued to demonstrate a desire to go to Auschwitz, even if the Memorial had failed to reach out and touch or connect with them directly.<sup>4</sup>

#### MEMORIAL PLANNING AND FAILED CONNECTIONS

In speaking at the opening of the Berlin Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe on 10 May 2005, Dr. Paul Spiegel, then president of the Central Council of Jews in Germany, noted: "The 'Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe' honors the victims of National Socialist tyranny, but it does not directly implicate the perpetrators. On a visit to the Memorial, the perpetrators and supporters from that time and their contemporary ideological compatriots

<sup>4</sup> For more on the relationships between Holocaust memorialization, memory, and touch, see Adelson 2005.

do not have to feel as if the Memorial is speaking directly to them” (Spiegel 2005).

Against Spiegel’s claim, one might argue that the decision to put the Memorial in the center of the city—next to the site for what is now the American Embassy, Potsdamer Platz (a major commercial, shopping, and entertainment center), and Brandenburg Gate (the entrance to the traditional city center), and along the road leading to the Reichstag (the main house of the German legislature)—suggests a permanent confrontation with questions of perpetration. On the other hand, perpetration seems to be less and less a problem for those who claim non-Jewish German heritage but were not active in committing genocide. It is true that the perpetration issue is mildly sustained by national anxieties about renewed complicity between past agents of atrocity and young neo-Nazis who vandalize Jewish tombstones and attack so-called foreigners. But largely absent from discussions of memorialization or the monument is any reference to everyday racism, in either its institutional or intimate varieties, as part of the historical genocidal logic. Connections are rarely made between genocide and racism today, or other histories of atrocity. Part of Spiegel’s point seems to be that a confrontation with perpetration is one not only with the specific events of the Nazi Holocaust but also with what it means to be a perpetrator now, and how one might continue to be complicit in acts of racist violence.

More pointedly, contemporary monumentalization of, and distancing from Holocaust memory is necessary for contemporary modes of normalized racial exclusion. Europeans gain contemporary legitimacy by signifying an historical break from a genocidal logic, despite their building new (asylum) camps (see Agamben 1998). In other words, the technology of the camp has not been banned altogether, only in its particular historical use. I am not arguing that the Nazi camps and contemporary asylum camps or deportation prisons are equivalent, or that asylum camps commit the same kinds of violence as did Nazi-era concentration and extermination camps, or, as Agamben suggests (1998; 2005), that refugees in asylum camps are completely excluded from universal rights or political life. Rather, I want to draw attention to the ways in which a nationalist logic persists, not just in Germany, but also in Europe, the United States, and beyond, which differentiates types of citizens and qualifies the universality of rights.<sup>5</sup>

In writing this essay, I do not imagine Europe (in the political embodiment of the European Union) as the site for a re-emergence of a Holocaust. But I do

<sup>5</sup> Nationalism qualifies citizenship. In the phrase *La déclaration des droits de l’homme et du citoyen*,” Agamben argues, “It is not clear whether the two terms *homme* and *citoyen* name two autonomous beings or instead form a unitary system in which the first is always already included in the second.” He goes on to recall, “Burke’s *boutade* according to which he preferred his ‘rights of an Englishman’ to the inalienable rights of man” (1998: 127).

think that setting the Shoah as the standard for what should never happen again contributes to a *monumentalization* of an anti-racist and anti-anti-Semitic logic that solidifies the legitimacy of Europe and European nation-states while still excluding Others in practice (or even excluding while partially incorporating them; see Partridge 2008). Here I include as “Others” those who already reside within the nation-state and Europe. My main objective in this essay is to point toward a gap that is being produced between Holocaust memorialization and the recognition of contemporary racisms.<sup>6</sup> The discussion of memorialization that I address in what follows is wrapped in guilt, and yet it simultaneously relegates any confrontation with racism *cum* genocide to a past (see Olick 1998) that is now monumentalized, standardized, and made useful for contemporary purposes without addressing contemporary racisms in their complex European (or American) varieties (see Balibar 1991; Pred 2000; Özyürek 2009; Bunzl 2007; 2005).

Paul Spiegel added another dimension to the process of Holocaust memorialization and its contemporary implications when he argued at the opening of the Berlin Memorial, “The occasionally emotionally taxing conflict [over where, how, and why to build a memorial] has produced many noteworthy contributions to the German-Jewish dialogue about the still burdensome past. Unfortunately, this discussion has been in danger of producing a hierarchy of the victims and the losses suffered. In the face of torture and death, there is no hierarchy. Pain and sorrow over the losses suffered in every affected family are tremendous. Therefore, I emphatically support the proposition by other victim groups to have public sites of remembrance.” How the discussion about the past takes place now is significant for the present and future of anti-racist politics. The solution to which Spiegel refers relates to a larger controversy in which Lea Rosh and other advocates for a memorial (which ultimately opened in May 2005) argued that it should specifically honor the Jewish victims of the Holocaust, and against honoring at once all of those targeted by the genocidal logic. This discussion, of course, has relevance not just for how the past is remembered but also for contemporary life.

<sup>6</sup> In his “Between Anti-Semitism and Islamophobia: Some Thoughts on the New Europe,” Matti Bunzl is careful to distinguish between contemporary and previous (nineteenth-century) anti-Semitism. He also wants to demonstrate a break between anti-Semitism and what he calls “Islamophobia” (see 2005). In a response to the piece, Dominic Boyer (2005) points out that the legitimacy of the European Union is, in part, based on the prevention of future holocausts. In the present piece, I am not arguing for an analytical continuity between the genocidal logic of the Nazi era and contemporary racisms (see Pred 2000), but for an analytical and political connection between the politics of Holocaust memorialization and anti-racist politics now. This call is driven, in part, by what I have observed, from 1995 through the present, as a refusal to name racism as such in mainstream politics, unless it mimics its previous forms. This refusal to name the problem is combined with a finger-pointing mentality that blames racialized subjects for their “refusal to integrate.” As anyone who follows contemporary European politics knows, this is not a distinctly German problem.



## MONUMENTAL MEMORY AMIDST CONTEMPORARY RACISM

I now want to shift my attention from historical relationships to a contemporary one, that between Berlin's Holocaust Memorial, German Holocaust memory, and contemporary racialized subjects, particularly so-called "Turks," "Turkish-Germans," "Arabs," "Arab-Germans," and Palestinian refugees. I will also briefly address "African-American" and "Latino/Latina" youth in the United States, exploring several key questions: (1) How can the racialized subject, and the analyst, relate to what Viola Georgi (2003) calls a "borrowed memory," that is, the borrowed memory of the implicitly German, but also European genocidal perpetration and victimization of genocide? (2) To what extent are the nation-state and the supra-nation (Europe) being asserted and reasserted in this necessity for remembering via a major memorial? (3) What work does the memorialization of a violent racist history do to serve the contemporary nation and supra-nation (Europe)? (4) How does the Memorial contribute to the rupture between racist history and contemporary racism? And finally, (5) to what extent does the Memorial work as a form of absolution (and forgetting; see Olick 1998; Edkins 2003), while solidifying national and European consciousness?

In addition to addressing these questions, I want to note that one can read the Holocaust Memorial as something akin to what Benedict Anderson (1991) called "print capitalism." That is, the Memorial works like a novel, allowing people (i.e., national people) to read and argue over the same book in the same language at the same time, to come together as those who can—as opposed to those who cannot—discuss and read and be the national audience.<sup>7</sup> In this way, the Memorial and the discussions about it contribute to producing the nation.

In the spring of 2008, prior to my most recent visit, I decided to return to Berlin for the third anniversary of the Memorial's completion. On the Memorial's web site I had seen that a concert was to be performed within it, and more importantly (it seemed at the time), the most prominent advocate for the Memorial project, Lea Rosh, would speak. For many, Lea Rosh was at the center of what had become over the seventeen-year planning and advocacy process a very controversial project.

The project had been contentious due to its large size and its location in the center of the city, because it differentiated between Jewish and other victims,

<sup>7</sup> As Bruce Mannheim (personal communication) recently pointed out, the German novel has its own important place, and monumental status, in German history. Reading backward from my argument about the monumentality of Holocaust memory, the book becomes something like a portable monument, sustaining a sense of Germanness, even without a state. In the case of the Holocaust Memorial, its location within the nation-state and its fixity are both critical to understanding the ways in which the terms of belonging, and ideas of homeland, have now shifted. Buried there are not actual people, but rather nationalist and European memories.

and because the company that had supplied the anti-graffiti agent for the Memorial owned a subsidiary that had supplied the lethal gas for the Nazi extermination camps. Furthermore, Rosh had for seventeen years held onto a tooth from a Nazi extermination camp in order to bury it in the Memorial, a proposal that was ultimately abandoned because, many argued, it violated the Jewish law that calls for immediate burial of Jewish body parts and outlaws any instrumental use. Rosh had also begun the fundraising campaign for the Memorial by placing a provocative billboard on its eventual site that read: “*Den Holocaust hat es nie gegeben*” (The Holocaust never happened).<sup>8</sup>

#### ENTERING THE MEMORIAL

As the project’s New York-based architect Peter Eisenman has suggested in many statements, the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, while monumental, is not a classic monument. It is a field of gray pillars that appear to guides and visitors alike as if tombstones.<sup>9</sup> Unlike a cemetery, however, walking toward and into the pillars one is enveloped by them, until the surrounding Berlin cityscape disappears from view. The experience is profound, but to experience this profundity, or any connection to the Shoah in its richness, one must bring along one’s own memories.

When I returned to the Memorial for its anniversary, Catholic youth were reading aloud Elie Wiesel’s and others’ accounts of the Shoah. The young volunteers were dispersed throughout the field of stelae with yellow scarves tied round their necks like American Boy Scouts or Girl Scouts or East German Young Pioneers. The scarves were close to the color of the stars of David that Jews were forced to wear during the Nazi era. In the early afternoon, passersby were confronted with these readings or accounts of the numbers thought

<sup>8</sup> According to the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (2001), “Historian Peter Schöttler initiated the protest and within a few days a number of historians and colleagues in cultural studies have joined him. They are asking for ‘an immediate stop to this absurd campaign that gives the impression that the Berlin Memorial is first and foremost oriented against deniers, when, in reality it is supposed to serve the memory of the victims of the Holocaust.’” “The Signatories include Holocaust researchers such as Christopher Browning, Saul Friedländer, and Hans Mommsen, academics including Carlo Ginzburg, Richard J. Evans, and Judith Butler, Gary Smith from the American Academy, Reinhard Rürup from the foundation ‘Topography of the Terror,’ the sociologist Heinz Bude, and the author Marlene Steeruwit.”

<sup>9</sup> While Eisenman himself resists interpreting the Memorial, on a March 2009 visit, and in an earlier conversation with an official Holocaust Memorial guide after a presentation of Irit Dekel’s ethnographic work on the Memorial (see also Dekel 2009), I was struck that the guide referred directly to the memorializing function of the stelae, which, he pointed out, directly referenced ancient Greek practices of honoring the dead. It was apparent that he did not want to leave interpretation open to chance with a group of visitors in their twenties from the nearby city of Magdeburg. (One should note that Magdeburg has been the site of dramatic neo-Nazi attacks. When the guide spoke independently with the group’s chaperone and asked if some of them were right wing, he said that he was not sure, but that it was possible. When the guide showed a picture from another nearby memorial, of a dining room table with a fallen chair, and spoke about Gestapo raids of Jewish homes, I noticed two of the young men laughing.)

to have died in the Nazi camps across Europe. One young woman stood at a podium at the edge of the Memorial reading into a microphone. Others read deep within the Memorial, invisible from the street. One woman wore a Palestinian scarf over her yellow one (recalling a German fashion of the late 1980s to mid-1990s that had come back in style), but she refused to answer my questions about her decision to wear the scarf at this event, saying that the two scarves were unconnected and directing me to speak with the organizer about the readings.

Speeches by Lea Rosh, Wolfgang Thierse, former president of the German Bundestag, and by a representative from the Israeli Embassy were followed in the early evening by an orchestral concert, especially composed for the event (see figure 2). The concert, like the readings, took advantage of the space and the acoustics of the monument by using the sounds of horns, voices, strings, and tympani to create a new aura in a space that is ordinarily much more silent, without its own voice or speech to direct or “correct” interpretation.

In its everyday life, when it is not at the center of a special occasion, the Memorial makes few direct statements on its own. Although the Memorial covers an entire city block (see figure 1), the announcement that it is the “Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe” is subdued and only appears on the small street that parallels the main one that leads to other tourist attractions, including the Reichstag, Potsdamer Platz, and Brandenburg Gate (see figure 3). You might not see the sign at all unless you know where to look. Furthermore, traditional symbols of the Shoah play no role in the aboveground structure. As Eisenman put it, “We did not want to proscribe what they [the visitors] should think; on the contrary, we wanted to make contemplation possible” (2005).<sup>10</sup> Following this logic, Eisenman was initially against having the “*Ort der Information*” (Place of Information), which gives an historical account of the European dimensions of the Shoah underground, beneath the field of “2,711 stelae made of high-quality concrete, each measuring 0.95 m in width and 2.38 m in length, hollow, with inclinations of between 0.5° and 2°” (Stiftung Denkmal 2008).

#### PLANNING THE MEMORIAL FOR THE MURDERED JEWS OF EUROPE

On the planning foundation’s website, the most frequently asked question has been: “Why is the Memorial dedicated solely to the memory of the murdered Jews?” The foundation responds: “The decision to dedicate the Memorial to the murdered Jews of Europe was taken by the German Bundestag [lower house of Parliament] in 1999 after a lengthy debate. It makes it clear that the

<sup>10</sup> “Wir wollten ihnen [die Besucher] also nicht vorschreiben, was sie denken sollen, sondern ihnen das Nachdenken ermöglichen.”



FIGURE 2 For the Orchestral concert the audience and the orchestra stood dispersed among the pillars. One could hear the musicians, but not see them or the conductor. The orchestra watched the conductor on video screens.

recognition of the singularity of this crime and German historical responsibility are part of the core of the identity of the German nation-state....”<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> The answer to the Frequently Asked Question continues: “However, the Foundation also has the task of acknowledging and preserving the memory of all victims of National Socialism. This also involves building memorials to the Sinti and Roma and to homosexual victims, which the



FIGURE 3 This sign reads: “Foundation of the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe,” and gives the address.

This framing of “singularity” and “responsibility” as part of a national “core identity” brings us closer to some of the tensions underlying the disconnect between ’68-generation teachers and so-called “immigrant students.” The terms of the relationship to the Memorial and to the history it represents are pre-defined for those who want to claim belonging or citizenship. This was done in part to combat the danger of Holocaust denial, which is a crime in Germany, but it also closes off other kinds of connections to Holocaust memory, simultaneously producing victims of Nazi genocide and their descendants as non-German non-citizens.

That the Memorial’s planners thought that the German nation-state should be so crucial to the project’s rationale says a great deal about how *the monument* works in “nation space.” It also makes clear that the nation and the state, and not anti-racist politics, are at the center of the process of memorialization. A 2005 discussion between the monument’s architect Eisenman and *Spiegel Online* highlighted these ideas:

---

Federal Government has already decided upon” (*Stiftung Denkmal für den ermordeten Juden Europas*, “Frequently Asked Questions,” 2008).

*Spiegel Online*: Who is the monument for? Is it for the Jews?

Eisenman: It's for the German people. I don't think it was ever intended to be for the Jews. It's a wonderful expression of the German people to place something in the middle of their city that reminds them—could remind them—of the past.

*Spiegel Online*: An expression of guilt, you mean?

Eisenman: No. For me it wasn't about guilt. When looking at Germans, I have never felt a sense that they are guilty. Clearly the anti-Semitism in Germany in the 1930s went overboard and it was clearly a terrible moment in history. *But how long does one feel guilty? Can we get over that?*

*I always thought that this monument was about trying to get over this question of guilt.* Whenever I come here, I arrive feeling like an American. But by the time I leave, I feel like a Jew. And why is that? Because Germans go out of their way—because I am a Jew—to make me feel good. And that makes me feel worse. I can't deal with it. Stop making me feel good. If you are anti-Semitic, fine. If you don't like me personally, fine. But deal with me as an individual, not as a Jew. I would hope that this memorial, in its absence of guilt-making, is *part of the process of getting over that guilt.* You cannot live with guilt. If Germany did, then the whole country would have to go to an analyst. I don't know how else to say it.

*Spiegel Online*: The monument is specifically devoted to remembering the Jews who died in the Holocaust. Do you think it's right that the other groups victimized in the Holocaust are excluded from this monument.

Eisenman: Yes, I do. I changed my mind on that a few months ago. The more I read about World War II history, the more I realized that the worse the war went in Russia, the more Jews were killed by the Nazis. When the Nazis realized they couldn't defeat the Bolsheviks, they made sure they got the Jews. Now I think it's fine that the project is just for the Jews (*Spiegel Online* 2005, my emphasis, original English).

In what follows, I explore further the relationship between guilt and responsibility and the implications of getting over guilt, particularly for those subjects who can feel neither guilty nor responsible.

#### GUILT REQUIRES ABSOLUTION

"Thousands of Germans," he [then Chancellor Gerhard Schröder] said, "were prepared to take part in the mass murder of the innocent."

Today's European Germany has learned from these crimes, that they could never grow tired of repeating the phrase: "Never Again" (BBC News, 2002).

Within the context of thinking about the break between genocide and contemporary racisms, guilt becomes a central issue. This is expressed most explicitly in terms of the guilt of "Germans" in relation to what "they" did to "the Jews." This formulation is itself a serious problem because of its connection to an ultimate call, even if it is only implicit, for national absolution. When, the German politician wonders, will it be all right to act in the world without guilt, to make foreign policy (and even domestic policy) without atonement as the central rubric of what is acceptable on the world stage, on which some still have

low expectations for Germany and suspect hidden German desires for military aggression.<sup>12</sup>

Atonement is a problem because it does not directly consider the fact that racist thinking and policies persist, even if they are not equivalent to genocide. If atonement means getting over guilt, and that guilt is tied to *getting over a history of racism*, then atonement also potentially means not recognizing contemporary racism because *the nation* can be and has been forgiven.<sup>13</sup> As Sharon Macdonald found in a study of the contemporary impact of the Nazi Party grounds in Nuremberg, “Even well intentioned attempts to openly face the past can end up telling redemptive stories” (2009: 190). Furthermore, as many have correctly pointed out, the generation that was directly involved with the Nazi genocide is dying out. Increasingly, it makes little analytical or political sense to carry over guilt from one generation to the next, particularly when the ‘68 generation did so much to protest against their parents’ complicity with genocide. That guilt is being gotten over can be seen, in part, in Germany’s increasing willingness to participate in global military missions, even though its military is legally bound to a defensive posture. Additionally, the formulation of what “Germans” did to “Jews” is problematic in the sense that at least some, if not the majority, of those Jewish people who were murdered or had to flee Europe were also German, and only made primarily Jewish by the Nazis and their European sympathizers.

Finally, if atonement is so central to the framework of Nazi genocide and its contemporary recognition, then the fall of the Berlin Wall and German unification play critical roles in potentially bringing about the ultimate forgiveness for which the guilt, and possibility of atonement, have been calling. The trust that Germany has recovered was symbolized in the Allied agreement to, and former Chancellor Helmut Kohl’s call for, making the two Germany’s one, and most recently in a return to global military intervention in countries like Afghanistan, and even before that in Bosnia, where Germany is now on the “right side” of genocide.

Domestically, as I have pointed out elsewhere (2008), atonement may also allow Germany to end a refugee policy that was initiated, in part, to make up for the sins of genocide by letting people claim refuge in Germany to escape oppression by other governments (and this is part of a broader European process; see Pred 2000, on Sweden). Since the Asylum Compromise of 1993,<sup>14</sup> it has been much more difficult for non-European people to come to

<sup>12</sup> This can be seen, for example, in the debate about the role of the Germany’s military in Afghanistan and the recent call for a German air strike that ended up killing a number of Afghans.

<sup>13</sup> While a counter-monument movement (see Young 1993) and even Eisenman himself try to get beyond the problem of monumentality and call for ongoing reflection, these counter-movements have not been successful in the same way in producing a national discussion about memory, responsibility, and atonement (see Till 2005).

<sup>14</sup> This was a parliamentary agreement that reduced the possibility of asylum in Germany. While it did not eliminate asylum, it made entry by airplane with evidence of foreign government persecution one of the only ways in which one can be recognized as a refugee in Germany.

Germany (or to the other Schengen countries), claim asylum, and gain a legal status. In other words, the implicit call for atonement as a central rubric of a post-racist European future is embedded in an inability to see, and refusal to recognize contemporary racisms as central to the logic of the nation-state and Europe. Racism is linked to a particular historical moment that mainstream Europe now imagines it has overcome and left behind.

#### RACIALIZED GERMANNESS?

The monumental effort to get beyond racism reveals the persistent reassertion of a racial logic. It is clear in Eisenman's account in his *Der Spiegel* interview that he experiences a split between contemporary, "regular" German and global Jewish subjectivity. Even in the present, Jewishness remains an exceptional subject position. This separation is standard in the German context, but the difficulties that it presents are not confronted, even by the monument project's primary organizer Lea Rosh, who has also publicized her own genealogical relationship to Jewishness. She refers to her Jewish grandfather in some discussions, including one with another attendee at the third anniversary celebration, which I overheard. In that brief conversation, Rosh went on to say that she stands by this genealogical fact, which links her personal history to the event being commemorated (and to her advocacy for the Memorial in the first place), and yet leaves her standing as an exceptional figure in her biological connection to Jewishness and mainstream recognition in German life. The monumentality of Holocaust memory stems partly from the enormity of loss, re-inscribing the problematic separation between Germanness and Jewishness.

In this context, Germany, in both mainstream media and the everyday conversations of Germans, produces racialized subjects, while denying its participation in the re-inscription of processes of racialization (see also Chin et al. 2009; Fehrenbach 2005). Why else would Eisenman feel so Jewish when he comes to Germany? On the other hand, Eisenman's discussion and other mainstream accounts like it (with the exception of organizations like the one Paul Spiegel represents) miss the opportunity to make connections to other contemporary subjects undergoing processes and experiences of racialization and racism. While Turkish-German leaders have attempted to make such links, they are often rebuked, and they certainly are not addressed in the mainstream discussion (see Peck 1994; Yurdakul and Bodemann 2006; Margalit 2009). The monumentalization of the past turns it into something that can only be discussed dangerously.

#### MONUMENTALITY AND INACTIVITY

Monumentality also produces a problematical forgetting. The monumental as forgetting (see also Huyssen 1996) is palpable in the notion that the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe is the first and will be the last monument to tie Holocaust memory to the specificity of German planning and European



perpetration. An implicit conclusion follows: “We have paid our dues. We have put the monument in the center of the capital.” There is an implied teleological progression in the monument’s completion. When the monument is ultimately built and dedicated, the seventeen-year controversy about its erection ends. On what basis could an active discussion of this magnitude continue? Given that the logics of perpetration are not the same as those of guilt, how can a discussion of the changing nature of perpetration go on, either as a historical or contemporary problematic, which remembers but is not limited to genocide as its defining feature? How does the nation-state ultimately protect itself from contemporary accusation by building the monument as an historical artifact that primarily serves the contemporary function of memory?

Put differently, the Holocaust Memorial does, to some extent, seem to provide an anchor for a German and European future via its monumentality and centrality. But an active relationship to contemporary anti-racist politics is absent nonetheless. There are no events at the Memorial that regularly thematize this connection, and no active youth center at the Place of Information underneath the Memorial. Racism, thus, serves as a moment from which one progresses. With the erection of the monument, both the Holocaust and its memory are pushed into the past. “We remember for the culpability of our ancestors, not our own.” In this sense, the monument seems to achieve its author Eisenman’s goal of “getting over guilt,” but at what costs? Is there not some more critically engaged way to address the relationship between memorialization of Holocaust memory and contemporary racism, without insisting that successive generations need to suffer guilty consciences? Would continuing to raise the question of perpetration, as Paul Spiegel suggests, make Holocaust memory more active and differently relevant to the present condition?

Anyone who has even casually followed the debate over whether or not to build a monument, and then where to build it, knows that seventeen years passed between the initial proposal and the actual construction. Former German Chancellor Helmut Kohl liked Eisenman’s winning design, but some people felt that “the discussion [itself] is the *Mahnmal* [the memorial]” (Till 2005).

Implicitly, discussion is ongoing, while the erection of the monument represents an endpoint, a finality that seems as if it will last forever, and not, in fact, require new, unanticipated discussions that reach into not only the past but also the future. Edkins (2003) has added a European dimension to what has traditionally been imagined as a distinctly German problem<sup>15</sup>:

<sup>15</sup> Part of the innovation of this most recent articulation of memorialization itself is that it honors the murdered Jews of *Europe*, not only of Germany. In the Information Center, one sees that the largest number of Jews who were murdered was actually Polish. Furthermore, one sees that the concentration and extermination camps were aggregated in Eastern Europe while memorialization has

In the case of the French memorials of this [an earlier] period, there is no reference to the shared responsibility for the mass deportations or the French collaboration with Germany [Wiedmer 1999]. They make concrete a particular reading of events that has little to do with living memory but rather replaces it, as Pierre Nora argues [1996]. As products of an official, state-led commemoration, “rather than encouraging active remembering on the part of the community, these memorials remember for the community” [in Wiedmer 1999, 33]. Unlike the sites that evoke a popular response, like the Cenotaph or the Vietnam Wall, these monuments stand as evidence of a problem solved. We visit, ponder a while, and then turn our backs: “under the illusion that our memorial edifices will always be there to remind us, we take leave of them and return only at our convenience” [in Young 1993, 5] (Edkins 2003, 130).

One can push these observations further and observe that memory alone, even communal living memory, will not suffice inasmuch as living memory requires a type of witnessing that will be increasingly difficult to obtain as survivors die out. And of course those killed under the Nazi regime can never recount their own experiences of horror; the murdered cannot actively participate in the ongoing discussion (see Edkins 2003). What is needed is a way to stage the contradictions and problematics of a genocidal logic so that they can be accessed not only as an historical problem but also as one that affects the present. It must be connected to the specificity of the Shoah but also understand perpetration as an ongoing problem.

There have been efforts in this direction. In Berlin’s Jewish Museum computer screens display questions about contemporary dislikes, such as a dislike of Jews among one’s friends or family, and provide an instant tally of how other visitors have answered each question. The Museum has recently decided to use Turkish-German guides to speak to general audiences, and also to predominately Turkish-German school classes, about the histories of Jewish presences in Europe. These approaches evince willingness to link history more directly to the present, and this sets them apart from the normal process of memorialization (see Topkara 2009; *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* 2008; *Deutsche Welle* and *Qantara* 2008; *TAZ* 2008).

Interestingly, Eisenman himself claims that he resists monuments: “Actually, I’m not that into monuments. Honestly, I don’t think much about them. I think more about sports” (*Spiegel Online* 2005). He nonetheless agreed to design this one and sees it as one of his major achievements. It seems important to think through Eisenman’s claims both that this is a monument for the German people “devoted to the Jews who died in the Holocaust,” and that it is, at least for him, about getting over guilt. While the monument was being built, how did the process of getting over guilt work? If guilt ends, does the meaning of the monument change? How does the German production of

---

taken place primarily in Western Europe (as an audio tour of the information center points out). One wonders if there is an implicit point about the “progress” of Western Europe in pointing to the frequency of its contemporary sites of memorialization.

Eisenman as “a Jew” really relate to this guilt, and further, to contemporary racism and anti-Semitism (often expressed via a kind of philo-exoticism)? One can take these questions a step further and, returning to Anderson’s reading of the novel, ask how the reading of *the monument* works in translation. Can new audiences be created? Can other Others enter the discussion? How do translations relate to the monument’s reading, and the creation of a common community with an implicit common fate? Why is the *Besucherordnung*—the official guide to how one should behave at the monument (see figure 4)—only in German, while the information center, its pamphlets, and the monument tours are all in other languages also, such as English, Hebrew, Russian, and Turkish? (On my first visit I did notice the absence of Turkish and other languages.) Does the monument, itself, need no translation? Does the politics of translation imply its own gap?

FROM MONUMENTAL ARCHITECTURE TO MONUMENTAL FILM—FROM GERMANY TO THE UNITED STATES

The relationships between distance, “being touched” (in the sense of being both physically and emotionally moved; see Adelson 2005), Holocaust memorialization, and contemporary racism are not just German problems, but transnational ones. The relationships between history, memory, memorialization,

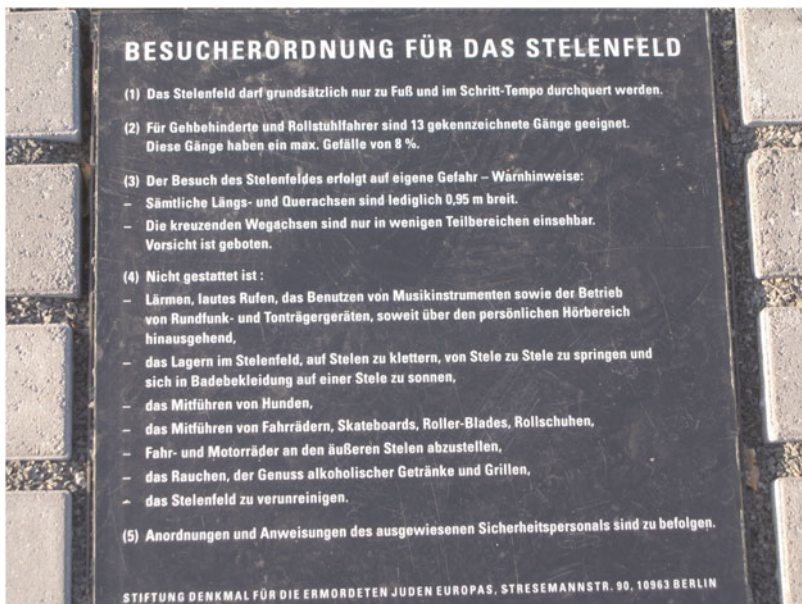


FIGURE 4 Guide to how to behave at the memorial.

and citizenship can be fully understood only by examining them within different national settings and also in their complex international manifestations. Let me illustrate the former with a case drawn from the United States, of a high school visit to a local movie theater's screening of Steven Spielberg's *Schindler's List*:

A group of students from Castlemont High [in Oakland, California], mostly African American and Latino, went to see "Schindler's List" as part of a class trip. About an hour into the matinee at the Grand Lake Theater, a boy shouted as a young Jewish woman was slaughtered on screen.

"Oh," he said, "that was cold."

Laughter followed. A couple of dozen other moviegoers—some whose family members had died in the Holocaust—besieged the theater manager to complain (Spolar 1994).

After the laughter, the film was stopped, the lights came on, and the owner asked the students to leave. According to the newspaper article, "As the 73 students walked out, some of the patrons, obviously angry, gave a standing ovation" (ibid.). The *Oakland Tribune* took up the incident as one of racial significance, of "Blacks" laughing at slain "Jews." While some movie-goers commented on "the pain caused by them laughing," some of the students defended themselves by saying, "We always talk at the movies." The high school dean said that the laughter had to do with the students having been desensitized to violence, both on screens and in their neighborhoods. Steven Spielberg agreed. The owner of the cinema said that it was simply an issue of what was "proper behavior" at the movie theater, not anti-Semitism. The teacher who arranged the visit revealed that he had taught his students nothing about the Holocaust before the theater trip, and that many of them had wanted to instead see *House Party* (an early hip-hop film). It seemed that a number of students had gone in anticipation of the ice skating trip that was to follow the cinema event. The most revealing statements come from the students themselves:

"We were just expressing ourselves—to relieve the tension, to do what we do in movies," Tracy said. "We're used to going to a movie theater and just talking. The media tried to turn this into an anti-Semitic thing, but it wasn't that."

"Some people said we were too young for the movie, but I knew about the Holocaust in sixth grade," said Danielle.

"We could understand.... What I didn't like was it was a three-hour movie—in *black and white*—with no credits or anything in the beginning. When a teenager goes to a movie, you want to see something interesting" (ibid., my emphasis).

Here, it becomes clear, there was little possibility of "touch." From the perspective of the students, *Schindler's List* reifies the fourth wall (the impossibility of their entering the life of the film) through the sustained use of black-and-white images. Like a photograph, the film forced itself into irrelevance for the teenage spectators, as something past and not "now," and this alienation was highlighted by the film's juxtaposition of black-and-white and color. The spectators

who jumped up to applaud the students' forced removal clapped, not primarily because of the world the film had created, but because of their knowledge of what the film symbolized. The mimicry of documentary evidence employed by the film's use of black-and-white non-fiction-like footage demands the respect of the "knowledgeable" spectator, and yet the high school students refuse to be taken—they see it simply as a film: "It wasn't like people were laughing because people were dying. The woman who got shot *fell funny* and people just laughed. I mean we react differently in school than we do outside of school" (ibid., my italics). The student continues, "When it started you could just see a candle.... I mean, what is that? That's not interesting.... I think the teachers should have told us more. And I don't think they should have taken us there on Martin Luther King Day. No way. None of us is Jewish" (ibid.). Here, one should note the distance (lack of touch), in the student's words, between the commemoration of Martin Luther King, Jr. and the cinematic memorialization of genocide.

As with Eisenman's refusal, not only does the film fail to create the possibility of what Kaja Silverman (1996) calls an "identificatory lure"; it also fails to create a space within which the unknowledgeable spectator will feel a part. The feeling of utter sadness that informed spectators feel when they leave the theater is largely based on their memories of other images, documents, and stories. The film triggers these memories, as opposed to making immediate touch possible or challenging spectatorial subjectivity. The uninformed spectator does not experience the film. They are not touched. Their own memories are not brought into the conversation. Can concrete memorials be more effective in connecting to what Viola Georgi and Rainer Ohlinger (2009) have recently called "crossover *geschichte*" (crossover histories), or what Michael Rothberg (2009, 11) refers to as a "multidirectional memory" as opposed to "memory [in] competition"?<sup>16</sup>

#### BACK IN BERLIN

According to Richard Serra [an artist commissioned to participate in the original competition to design the Holocaust Memorial in Berlin], putting sculpture on a pedestal in a public square meant that the object of art was separated from the lived world of the onlooker. Sculpture on a pedestal transmits 'the effect of power without distinction'; it requires a subdued, even invented, audience to accept an idealized topic defined by the art community as worthy of commemoration (Till 2005: 183).

In Berlin, even though one can walk into the Holocaust Memorial and disappear, does it really ever escape the problem of being like "sculpture on a

<sup>16</sup> According to Rothberg, "The model of multidirectional memory posits collective memory as partially disengaged from exclusive versions of cultural identity and acknowledges how remembrance both cuts across and binds together diverse spatial, temporal, and cultural sites" (2009: 11).

pedestal”? Does it undo the monumentalization of racialized history? Does it allow for unexpected touch?<sup>17</sup>

One should also ask if “Turkish”/“Turkish-German” and “Arab”/“Arab-German” kids not going to the Memorial, or “African-American” or “Latino/Latina” children laughing during *Schindler’s List*, are forms of resistance, or are necessarily anti-Semitic. When German teachers insist on a certain form of memory, are they reproducing nationalist memory and securing national sovereignty? Is any heroism to be found in Berlin’s Holocaust Memorial?

Political theorist Jenny Edkins argues, “What we call trauma takes place when the very powers that we are convinced will protect us and give us security become our tormentors: when the community of which we considered ourselves members turns out against us or when our family is no longer a source of refuge but a site of dangers.” In the “Turkish”/“Turkish-German,” and “Palestinian”/“Palestinian-German” cases, the family (sometimes only in a reconfigured sense) is a potential site of refuge, while the nation-state is systematically a purveyor of (at least) indirect violence—the violence of unemployment, or the threat of being deported as a “foreign” youth who has committed “too many crimes” even though one was born in Germany. The intensity of reliance on the biological family and the nation-state becomes more critical under conditions in which: “Battered women would not recognize the picture of the family as a source of protection and stability.... States abuse citizens on the battlefield, in captivity, in concentration camps. The modern state cannot be assumed to be a place of safety, any more than the patriarchal family can” (Edkins 2003: 7).

In this respect, given their experiences of alienation in the school setting, one could argue that the “Turkish” and “Arab”-German kids distrust the German teacher’s account of German memory. They do not trust or identify with the teachers’ empathy or potential horror. The “Turkish”/“Turkish-German” and “Arab”/“Arab-German” students who do not show up, and the “African-American” kids who laugh, are not touched, because no hand is reaching out to them directly to recognize the connections between these past events, their own histories, and their contemporary social injuries. They are greeted instead by the society at large with a pessimistic response to “their culture,” which is assumed to be anti-Semitic.<sup>18</sup>

In line with the Memorial project’s dominant actors, Eisenman did not think about designing the Memorial for an audience beyond the “normal” Germans,

<sup>17</sup> Tzvetan Todorov has argued, “It is often right to want to erect a monument to the past in order not to forget, in order to preserve the memory. But it is even better that it become at the same time an instrument to help us think and live better in the present” (2001, 19).

<sup>18</sup> Again, the example of the Turkish-German guide at the Jewish Museum offers a counter example, but it is an unusual case. It is clearly not the norm in the German classroom, where most teachers are much older than their pupils and are very unlikely to be Turkish-German.

or in terms of a more complicated relationship to the specificity of Jewish victimization. His vision limited the scope of the way in which the arguably monumental architecture could move and touch people. (On one hand, it leaves the interpretive field too open; on the other, it closes it off too much.) Even though Eisenman argues that he wants to be understood as an individual and not as only a Jew, when he travels to Germany, his interpretation of the process of memorialization sees Jews as Jews, and not as Europeans or German people who are also Jewish. While Jews were murdered for being Jewish, perhaps the Memorial should do more to suggest lives in complex negotiation with this identification and even with the contemporary lure of perpetration. Otherwise, one is left with an abstract representation of victimization that does not and cannot reach beyond those who already remember, or at least partially know.

#### NEW DIRECTIONS, NEW TOUCHES: FROM NATIONAL TO POST-NATIONAL IDENTIFICATIONS

The national space constructed by the Memorial, Hollywood film, and national literature creates networks in which people imagine themselves belonging, as Benedict Anderson puts it, to the same community without ever actually meeting each other. The irony is that local “Turkish” and “Arab,” or “African-American” and “Latino/Latina” youth are made to feel foreign, as if they have nothing to contribute to the conversation, even though they have long-term claims to the communities in which they reside. Immigration and identification are thought of not in terms of local affiliations but as national and diasporic phenomena. And what about touch? In addition to the possibility of being moved, if touch (Adelson 2005) were taken more seriously in the local, tactile sense, then processes of memorialization would be transformed. They would be taken off of their pedestal. This does not mean that they would be without conflict, but perhaps conflict would also become part of the process of being moved.

As the local dimensions of memorializing touch are beginning to be taken more seriously in Berlin, new things are beginning to happen. In a project called *Stadtteilmütter* (city-quarter mothers), carried out via programs with local and national support, so-called “immigrant” mothers are beginning to engage their local environments and German history in new ways. They are learning about the relationships between familiar local buildings and Nazi perpetration—that the local department store once fired all of its Jewish employees, that an old factory was once a site of forced labor, that Jewish residents had been deported from a building in which or next to which they now live.

In its turn to history, this program had, like others, failed to consider relationships between past and contemporary experiences of racism and exclusion, but the mothers themselves made the perpetuation of this failure impossible.

In their daily lives as well as in their assessments of the program, they actively demonstrated the multiple dimensions of touch. As one mother put it in an interview following a public presentation of the project, in the same district where the *Stadtteilmütter* project took place: The experience of this history “was horrible. We cried a lot.” At the event itself, another mother said: “We have become more sensitive. We ask ‘Who lived here before?’ ‘Who was deported from here?’” One of the women said, “Those who were born in Turkey, they didn’t learn a lot about this history.” One of the leaders of the seminar continued: “We don’t feel as if we belong to this society, because we are not allowed to become a part of it.”<sup>19</sup>

After a film was shown about another group of mothers from the same district that went to Auschwitz as part of their program, a heated discussion ensued. In the film itself, the mothers recounted how, when they went to a synagogue near Auschwitz as part of their trip, some local people near the synagogue insulted them with words such as “Headscarf woman” and “*Kanacke Raus*” (Get out *Kanacke*; a racist term for Turks). “We were afraid to walk alone on the streets through the city.”

Following the screening, a woman in the capacity audience, who identified herself as Palestinian, got up to speak: “We’re always living in our past. The same thing and even worse is happening now.... It’s happening with German weapons.... I want to say a word for peace....” After her speech, the audience of just over two hundred people clapped loudly. A “White” German woman spoke next: “We have to differentiate” between what happened then and what is happening now. The audience applauded after her speech as well. Then a German-Jewish Holocaust survivor spoke: “There is a huge difference between comparison and making equivalent (*vergleichen und gleich zu setzen*). ... It disturbs me when I hear people say Gaza and Auschwitz are equivalent. I have been trying for years to make contact with Palestinians. I don’t have any Palestinian acquaintances/friends. I want it to stop with the demonstration signs, ‘Kill the Jews.’” To a suggestion that a group dialogue was needed between Jews and Palestinians in Berlin, the Palestinian woman said to the Holocaust witness, “I agree with you.”

After a long back and forth with audience members and among the mothers about questions of comparison and whether or not the Shoah can be compared with other historical events, one of the organizers of the history project intervened: “One can’t get away from comparisons. The point is not just to educate from one perspective.”<sup>20</sup>

<sup>19</sup> These are my translations of a conversation that took place in German.

<sup>20</sup> This claim seems similar to Michael Rothberg’s assertion, “Comparisons, analogies, and other multidirectional invocations are an inevitable part of the struggle for justice” (2009: 29). Against memory as a zero-sum game or as necessarily universal, he suggests the possibility of “multidirectional memory” (see note 16). See also Gryglewski 2009.



Weeks later, I managed to interview the Shoah survivor, and I asked her, “On what grounds, or on what basis, do you think that dialogue could take place?” She responded in English<sup>21</sup>: “I don’t know on what basis, really. Um. I think it is necessary that people express their prejudices. Like me, I think I have the prejudice that people who come from Arab countries and Turkey know little about the Holocaust, if anything at all, and that they are anti-Semitic ... and that they have anti-Semitic concepts. This is my prejudice. If somebody would please tell me theirs, about me, so that we can then establish a dialogue to learn to what extent these prejudices are true or not.”

To what extent can the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe also be used as a local rather than an exclusively national space, in order to begin this type of dialogue, which would then also address relations between the conditions of the Shoah and contemporary life? Such meetings and dialogues could reconfigure what we mean by memorialization, as well as the effectiveness of touch.

The emerging discussion will raise new questions that cannot be easily contained by established discourses. New touches also mean new challenges, but also potentially personal and social transformations. In the end, we need to connect the monumental to the local and make historical memory continually active. We cannot re-live the Holocaust, but we can be moved by its memory, particularly when it is directly connected to how we are living here and now. To experience this connection, we should not have to think of ourselves as national citizens, or only as ancestors of perpetrators or survivors. Powerful connections can be established through new experiences of this history in relation to our contemporary condition.

#### OŚWIĘCIM, OCTOBER 2009

Let us now rejoin the youth group that we met earlier, to travel beyond the sites of recent memorialization to the actual sites of mass murder. After an overnight train trip and two switches the next morning, we arrived at the Polish city the Nazi’s named Auschwitz. At one stop Polish commuters had stared at us, a group of fifteen youth (ranging from sixteen to twenty-three years of age), two organizers, a social worker, two interns, and me, all shelling and eating sunflower seeds, searching for coffee, and talking loudly. Walking from the final train station, we eventually arrived at the German-Polish meeting center, built before the end of socialism. It was more like the campus of a small American liberal arts college than the youth hostel I had expected. Our rooms were in several different buildings with a large center at the entrance

<sup>21</sup> The woman insisted on speaking with me in English. She had grown up in Australia and only returned to Germany as an adult. She said that when she saw someone who looks like me, it was strange for her to speak to the person in German.

where we would eat, and eventually meet with a Holocaust survivor to hear about her experiences in the camps.

That same day we walked to Auschwitz I; not the center of mass murder, but the center of its local organization. Our Polish guide spoke perfect German and said that we could take pictures, even though this was officially forbidden. We followed him with earphones as he spoke into a portable microphone, rattling off numbers and facts, leaving, as I wrote that evening in an anonymous assessment of the day, no time for emotion.

It was pitch black before we left Auschwitz I. I think what I wanted most at the end of that day was just to be held and comforted, having been exposed not just to numbers but also to rooms full of children's shoes, suitcases bearing family names hand-written in large letters, children's clothes, domestic pots and pans, and a massive collection of human hair. One young woman from our group refused to enter that room, and another immediately burst into tears. While in graduate school I had read about the hair in a *New Yorker* article (see Ryback 1993), but its author had failed to adequately enunciate its impact, and perhaps to do so is impossible. I was struck by the smell, a human smell of age, decay, and loss. On that day at Auschwitz I, I could not sustain my anthropological role. Critical distance was impossible. I could not observe, but only feel.

A number of the young men proceeded directly to a liquor store they had spotted on our walk there. One of the young Palestinian-German men got drunk for the first time. He started, not with beer, but with vodka. The next day one of the trip leaders told me that this was a normal response to Auschwitz. She had observed on many trips that alcohol was often turned to as a coping mechanism. This trip, however, was complicated by the fact that most of the youths' parents forbid alcohol. The next night, as they sat around smoking, drinking, and talking in the main building of the center, the social worker asked that same young man about his ability to recite the Koran, to which he simply responded, "I'm drunk." His facial expression implied less that he was unable to recite than that it would have been disgraceful to do so given his condition.

On the first evening, a woman who regularly led trips to Auschwitz and who worked for a major memorializing institution in Berlin led the discussion by asking everyone to write or draw a picture on small pieces of construction paper in response to the following questions: "What moved you the most?" "What irritated you the most?" "What most annoyed you?" "What made you the happiest?" Everyone, with the exception of this trip leader, participated in the exercise, which allowed us to remain anonymous. The answers were as follows:

The excursion to the concentration camp was very informative.  
 Moved by: child poverty.  
 Children's shoes; ashamed for the people who, the crimes....

That lots of people looked at us strangely. The Children who were murdered.  
 Three of us received glances because of our [Palestinian] scarves.  
 The city tour was too short.  
 I was moved by the perspective of the people in the concentration camp, all of what they had to endure.  
 I hope that we don't have to walk so much tomorrow.  
 Thorough tour, informative, the children's clothes.  
 CHILD. [The foundation liaison told me later that this is what he wrote.]  
 Positive: that everything was explained to us thoroughly; negative: all of the walking.  
 I learned enough for today.  
 Death by starving.  
 Hair.  
 Hair; The exhibit wasn't in the German language. [The social worker later mentioned being surprised by this fact.]  
 Harrowing, professional tour.  
 The cells where prisoners could only stand.  
 Experiments with children!!!  
 Black wall [Execution Wall]; children's clothes  
 Hair.  
 Emotion without time. [This was my entry. Although I did not discuss it publicly, I did tell one of the young men, a sixteen-year-old, and the group leaders.]  
 The Standing prison—4–5 persons.

This last person also drew someone with a whip (a guard), a person on all fours with a dog mouth, and someone standing in front of a wall, probably the shooting wall, saying something. On top of the picture was written "Empathy." On the bottom the person wrote: "That we didn't have a smoking break. When the man [the guide] wanted to go, we had to go."

That evening, we discussed what was meant by my (anonymous) phrase: "emotion without time;" about the murder of children, and then at length about why other youth were at Auschwitz I with Israeli flags draped around their shoulders. The female organizer said that she disagreed with this "instrumentalization of the Holocaust." The young men were disturbed by the way that the apparently Israeli bodyguards stared at them and their Palestinian scarves. The discussion then moved briefly to Israel and Palestine, until the female organizer ended it.

The next morning we drove in vans to Auschwitz II, the center of mass murder, which had been, to the extent possible, preserved in its original post-War state. We saw the barracks, a train car that transported people to their extermination, and then the remains of the crematoria. The Polish guide pointed to white flecks on the ground and told us that these were the remains of human bones. "Allah, where have you brought me?" asked one of the young "Turkish-German" women.

I was left speechless after learning the purpose of a large wheelbarrow in the only exhibit at this camp, alone in a room behind glass. I had assumed that it was to transport clothes, since this was also the building in which the prisoners

were made to exchange their clothes for the camp uniforms. When I asked the guide what the barrow was used for, he told me: to transport human ashes.

That evening, we watched *Schindler's List*, at the suggestion of one of the young Palestinian-German men. Seeing it after Auschwitz, in Auschwitz, was a totally different experience, as the foundation liaison also observed. Both of us had always been critical of the film, but seeing it now gave daily life a presence beyond the ends of the preserved death camp. It made the sense of loss even more visible. The film re-inhabited the camp, the chambers, the barracks, the lone train wagon, with living souls.

During the screening, the same young woman who had cried in the room of hair, cried again throughout most of the film. "How could people do this to each other? What would I have done for my family members if I were in the same situation?" she asked later.

The experience—not just that of the film, but also of being in the camps, listening to the survivor's account the next day, and being in the town—sparked other memories of trauma, of families going hungry in Palestine, of seeking refuge from political repression in Iran, and even of a father who had abandoned his daughter and left a rage in her that she did not know how to deal with other than letting it out on those close to her.

Through this experience, it struck me that what was absent in the contemporary German discussion of racism, expressed in terms of immutable "cultural difference" and the "failure of integration," was humility and love. There may have been and may continue to be a lingering anti-Semitism among some of these young people. One of the Palestinian men, the one who refused to recite the Koran while drunk, whose family had lost their home in Israel, said, "The Jews *then* are different from the Jews *now*.... The Germans then are also different from the Germans now," he added, suggesting that the Germans were no longer Nazis. But such anti-Semitism might best be overcome by constructing a safe space of care, which not only teaches these young people but also learns from them, in conversation with their contemporary experiences.

The foundation liaison worried about the future of these youth that he had now brought to Auschwitz. At one point, I heard him ask the social worker what would happen to them after they got too old for the youth center. He said that this trip alone would not be enough. He was referring here not simply to their education, but to their future prospects in the nation. At one point the other organizer asked the youth if they would go back to Palestine if offered the chance. A number quickly raised their hands, indicating that they would immediately go back. "What else could they say?" the foundation liaison asked me rhetorically later, when I talked to him on the phone from back in Ann Arbor. Even if most of them had been born in Germany, and had German citizenship, Germany was offering them no strong vision of a possible future. I told him about my research in the schools in which the teachers, too, saw no future for their so-called "immigrant" pupils.

The liaison, whose family had been away for the first few days after he returned to Berlin, told me that he had been feeling depressed, not just about Auschwitz, but also about the future of these young people. On that day when he asked the social worker, "What will happen to the youth," she had answered that they would need to start getting ready to move on, to make way for others.

Just before leaving Auschwitz, the foundation liaison asked me to tell the group more about my work. I talked about how impressed I was with how loving and close-knit the group was. Later, however, it occurred to me that this community was ephemeral, a temporary form of community made tighter by a new experience of trauma that would tie them more to each other, but not to the nation-state that wanted them also to remember. The foundation liaison briefly worried about his participation in nation building, but then quickly added that for these youth that was not the point. The point of the state-funded program was simply to make them less irritating residents within the nation-state, not, the logic follows, to make them more equal members who would be given a larger platform from which to speak, even to their experience in relation, if not in comparison, to this history.

## REFERENCES

- Adelson, Leslie. 2005. *The Turkish Turn in Contemporary German Literature: Towards a New Critical Grammar of Migration*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Agamben, Giorgio. 1998. *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Agamben, Giorgio. 2005. *State of Exception*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Anderson, Benedict. 1991. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso.
- Balibar, Etienne and Immanuel Wallerstein. 1991. *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities*. London: Verso.
- BBC News. 2002. 20 Jan. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/1771656.stm> (accessed 3 June 2008).
- Boyer, Dominic. 2005. Welcome to the New Europe. *American Ethnologist* 32, 4 (Nov.): 521–23.
- Bunzl, Matti. 2005. Between Anti-Semitism and Islamophobia: Some Thoughts on the New Europe. *American Ethnologist* 32, 4 (Nov.): 499–508.
- Bunzl, Matti. 2007. *Anti-Semitism and Islamophobia: Hatreds Old and New in Europe*. Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press.
- Chin, Rita C.-K. et al. 2009. *After the Nazi Racial State: Difference and Democracy in Germany and Europe*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Dekel, Irit. 2009. Ways of Looking: Observation and Transformation at the Holocaust Memorial, Berlin. *Memory Studies* 2, 1: 71–86.
- Deutsche Welle* and *Qantara.de*. 2008. Guided Tours for Muslims in Berlin's Jewish Museum: Discovering a Different Belief. [http://www.qantara.de/webcom/show\\_article.php/\\_c-478/\\_nr-805/i.html](http://www.qantara.de/webcom/show_article.php/_c-478/_nr-805/i.html) (accessed 3 July 2009).
- Edkins, Jenny. 2003. *Trauma and the Memory of Politics*. Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press.

- Eisenman, Peter. 2005. Speech. <http://www.holocaust-mahnmal.de/dasdenkmal/geschichte/reden/redeisenman> (accessed 3 July 2009).
- Fehrenbach, Heide. 2005. *Race after Hitler: Black Occupation Children in Postwar Germany and America*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung. 2001. Plakat sofort abhängen! 6 Aug.
- Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, FAZ.NET. 2008. Muslime im Jüdischen Museum. 3 July. <http://www.faz.net/s/RubCF3AEB154CE64960822FA5429A182360/Doc~E-CA738C014E3E4420BC8064B375BACE65~ATpl~Ecommon~Scontent.html> (accessed 3 July 2009).
- Georgi, Viola B. 2003. *Entliehene Erinnerung: Geschichtsbilder junger Migranten in Deutschland*. Hamburg: Hamburger Edition.
- Georgi, Viola B. and Rainer Ohlinger. 2009. Geschichte und Diversität: Crossover statt nationaler Narrative? In Viola B. Georgi and Rainer Ohlinger, eds., *Crossover Geschichte: Historisches Bewusstsein Jugendlicher in der Einwanderungsgesellschaft*. Hamburg: Edition Körberg-Stiftung.
- Gryglewski, Elke. 2009. Diesseits und jenseits gefühlter Geschichte: Zugänge von Jugendlichen mit Migrationshintergrund zu Schoa und Nahostkonflikt. In Viola B. Georgi and Rainer Ohlinger, eds., *Crossover Geschichte: Historisches Bewusstsein Jugendlicher in der Einwanderungsgesellschaft*. Hamburg: Edition Körberg-Stiftung.
- Huysen, Andreas. 1996. Monumental Seduction. *New German Critique* 69 (Autumn): 181–200.
- Macdonald, Sharon. 2009. *Difficult Heritage: Negotiating the Nazi Past in Nuremberg and Beyond*. London: Routledge.
- Margalit, Gilad. 2009. On Being Other in Post-Holocaust Germany—German-Turkish Intellectuals and the German Past. In J. Brunner, ed., *Juden und Muslime in Deutschland: Recht, Religion, Identität*. Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag.
- Nora, Pierre, 1996. "Introduction," In *Realms of Memory*. Pierre Nora and Lawrence D. Kritzman, eds. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Olick, Jeffrey. 1998. What Does It Mean to Normalize the Past? Official Memory in German Politics since 1989. *Social Science History* 22, 4 (Special Issue: "Memory and the Nation"): 547–71.
- Özyürek, Esra. 2009. Convert Alert: German Muslims and Turkish Christians as Threats to Security in the New Europe. *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 51, 1: 91–116.
- Partridge, Damani. 2008. We Were Dancing in the Club, Not on the Berlin Wall: Black Bodies, Street Bureaucrats, and Exclusionary Incorporation into the New Europe. *Cultural Anthropology* 23, 4: 660–87.
- Peck, Jeffrey. 1994. The 'Ins' and 'Outs' of the New Germany: Jews, Foreigners, Asylum Seekers. In Sander L. Gilman and Karen Remmler, eds., *Reemerging Jewish Culture in Germany*. New York: New York University Press, 130–47.
- Pred, Allan. 2000. *Even in Sweden: Racisms, Racialized Spaces, and the Popular Geographical Imagination*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Rothberg, Michael. 2009. *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Ryback, Timothy W. 1993. Evidence of Evil. *New Yorker*, 15 Nov.: 68–81.
- Silverman, Kaja. 1996. *The Threshold of the Visible World*. New York: Routledge.
- Spiegel Online. 2005. How Long Does One Feel Guilty? 9 May. <http://www.spiegel.de/international/0,1518,355252,00.html> (accessed 10 June 2007).
- Spiegel, Paul. 2005. Speech. <http://www.holocaust-mahnmal.de/dasdenkmal/geschichte/reden/redespiegel/?highlight=paul%20spiegel> (accessed 3 July 2009).
- Spolar, Christine. 1994. The Kids Who Laughed Till It Hurt. *Washington Post* 117 (10 Mar): C1.

- Stiftung Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas. <http://www.stiftung-denkmal.de/dasdenkmal/geschichte/reden/redeisenman> (accessed 15 May 2008).
- TAZ, Die Tageszeitung*. 2008. Ein Moslem erklärt die Schoah; Ufuk Topkara macht Führungen im Jüdischen Museum—auf Türkisch. Als Ansprechpartner vor allem für muslimische Kreuzberger Schüler versucht er ihre Vorurteile gegen Juden und Israel abzubauen. 7 May.
- Till, Karen E. 2005. *The New Berlin: Memory, Politics, Place*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005.
- Todorov, Tzvetan. 2001. The Uses and Abuses of Memory. In *What Happens to History: The Renewal of Ethics in Contemporary Thought*. New York: Routledge, 11–22.
- Topkara, Ufuk. 2009. Interkulturelle Museumsarbeit mit Kindern und Jugendlichen: Erfahrungen aus dem Jüdischen Museum Berlin. In Viola B. Georgi and Rainer Ohlinger, eds., *Crossover Geschichte: Historisches Bewusstsein Jugendlicher in der Einwanderungsgesellschaft*. Hamburg: Edition Körberg-Stiftung.
- Wiedmer, Caroline. 1999. *The Claims of Memory: Representations in Contemporary Germany and France*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Young, James E. 1993. *Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning in Europe, Israel, and America*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Yurdakul, Gökçe and Y. Michal Bodemann. 2006. “We Don’t Want to Be the Jews of Tomorrow”: Jews and Turks in Germany after 9/11. *German Politics and Society* 24, 2: 44–67.