

## **HIST3116: The Holocaust Since 1945** **Research Essay**

**What role is played by representations of the Holocaust? Choose at least one representation (eg. film, documentary, literature, museum, memorial, etc.) and consider:**

- (a) Do you find that your source is driven by a current-day agenda?**
  - (b) How does your source serve to shape your understanding of the Holocaust?**
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“What we all have in common is an obsession not to betray the dead we left behind or who left us behind. They were killed once. They must not be killed again through forgetfulness.”

- Elie Wiesel<sup>1</sup>

In the years immediately following the Second World War, many Holocaust survivors repressed their painful memories, as the generally accepted mentality of post-war societies sought to forget the horrors and suffering of the past. During this time, victims of the Holocaust were often indistinguishable from the millions of non-combatant casualties of World War Two; by and large, the Holocaust was considered to be merely part of the general horror of the war.<sup>2</sup> Whilst “shards of memory existed” in the minds of individual survivors, they had “not yet been distinctively shaped into a narrative”.<sup>3</sup> From the 1970s onwards, however, the Holocaust gradually seeped into the public consciousness, as survivors increasingly realised that “silence could betray the victims, sustain ignorance, and bring with

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Berman, Judith E. *Holocaust Remembrance in Australian Jewish Communities, 1945-2000*. Western Australia: University of Western Australia Press, 2001, p.103.

<sup>2</sup> Linenthal, Edward T. *Preserving Memory: The Struggle to Create America's Holocaust Museum*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1995, 2001, p.5

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

it the danger of recurrence”.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, as Eva Hoffman points out, even as this event continues to recede from us in time, “our preoccupation with it seems only to increase”.<sup>5</sup> Recent decades have witnessed a proliferation of films, survivors’ memoirs, museums, memorials, and other media and representations focused on the Holocaust. Yet, although numerous communities in disparate parts of the world have displayed a “near-obsessive interest”<sup>6</sup> in this event, it is clear that the shape the memory of the Holocaust has taken in each environment and context is distinctly different. This essay will focus on an analysis of the way museums and memorials in the United States and Australia, and, to a lesser extent in Israel and Germany, have portrayed the Holocaust, as well as the current-day political agendas that can be seen to be driving these representations. By examining the nature of collective memory in general, and Holocaust memory in particular, as well as the techniques used by various museums in their representations of the Holocaust, it will ultimately become evident that despite general agreement on the fact that the victims of the Holocaust “must not be killed again through forgetfulness”,<sup>7</sup> there is more than one way of remembering.

French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs has been credited with first coining the term “collective memory” in the 1920s.<sup>8</sup> Halbwachs posited that every individual memory is not an autonomous act,<sup>9</sup> rather, it is primarily through membership in religious, national or class groups that people are able to acquire and then recall their memories.<sup>10</sup> “[O]ne does not remember alone, but also uses the memories of others, and...one grows up surrounded by phenomena and gestures, sentences and images, architecture and landscapes that are full of

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<sup>4</sup> Berman, p.103.

<sup>5</sup> Hoffman, Eva. *After Such Knowledge: Memory, History, and the Legacy of the Holocaust*. New York: PublicAffairs, 2004, p.ix.

<sup>6</sup> Hoffman, p.154.

<sup>7</sup> Wiesel, quoted in Berman, p.103.

<sup>8</sup> Novick, Peter. *The Holocaust in American Life*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1999, p.3.

<sup>9</sup> Williams, Paul. *Memorial Museums: The Global Rush to Commemorate Atrocities*. Oxford: Berg, 2007, p.176.

<sup>10</sup> Young, James E. *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993, p.6.

strange pasts that preceded the subject”.<sup>11</sup> Collective memory is closely linked with identity, as a group’s shared memory of the past is used to “anchor and construct” its identity in the present, as well as to “nurture a vision of the future”.<sup>12</sup> Groups therefore choose to focus on specific memories that they consider to be expressive and constitutive of their collective identity. In turn, these memories, once brought to the fore, reinforce that identity.<sup>13</sup> This has been the case with the Holocaust and Jewry, as the influx of Holocaust memorialisation since the 1970s has, according to Peter Novick, cemented the place of the Holocaust as a “central symbol” of Jewishness.<sup>14</sup> It is important to note, however, that collective memory inevitably simplifies, in viewing historical events from a single perspective and thus reducing them to mythic archetypes.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, given the nature of collective memory – a process in which there is “no link between reflection and experience”,<sup>16</sup> as the memory is impersonal – it is easily malleable and overly susceptible to exploitation to suit political agendas.<sup>17</sup> Whilst it may be an exaggeration to proclaim that collective memory is “an instrument not so much of reflection or understanding – as of cultural agendas, or ideological purposes”,<sup>18</sup> it is nonetheless crucial to recognise its unstable and contingent nature, resulting in its ability to be constantly subject to reconstruction.<sup>19</sup> It is evident that the Holocaust has become an object of collective memory, especially as the numbers of remaining survivors become more scarce and it increasingly becomes a past that is remembered by individuals and groups who have no personal memory of the event and yet whose cultural consciousness is deeply

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<sup>11</sup> Williams, p.177.

<sup>12</sup> Huyssen, Andreas. “Monument and Memory in a Postmodern Age.” *Yale Journal of Criticism*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (1993), p.249.

<sup>13</sup> Novick, p.7.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Novick, p.3.

<sup>16</sup> Hoffman, p.165.

<sup>17</sup> Hoffman, p.166.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Huyssen, p.249.

affected by it. In the words of Andreas Huyssen, “Auschwitz [is] the major wound of Western civilization”.<sup>20</sup>

Novick stresses that rather than viewing collective memory as “the past working its will on the present”, it is engaged with the ways “present concerns determine what of the past we remember and how we remember it”.<sup>21</sup> Thus, whilst one may be inclined to sympathise with Hoffman’s plea that

[i]f we are to ‘remember’ the Holocaust, surely we should do so not through the lens of ideological positioning, but through sombre and sober reflection; surely, what is at stake are not our necessarily evanescent political ‘issues’, but a regard for the human realities of an awful event and for the past itself,<sup>22</sup>

this may prove unrealistic, given that “the motives of memory are never pure”.<sup>23</sup> In particular, museums and memorials can be seen as important factors in the shaping of Holocaust memory, as the ways in which the event is remembered depends largely “on the shape memorial icons now lend them”.<sup>24</sup> In their depictions of the Holocaust, museums and memorials do not present an objective encounter with this history; on the contrary, Susan Crane views museums as “site[s] where subjectivities and objectivities collide”,<sup>25</sup> thereby highlighting the potential inherent within them for contrasting and conflicting perspectives. Holocaust monuments across different countries may indeed present “a different Holocaust”

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<sup>20</sup> Huyssen, p.251.

<sup>21</sup> Novick, p.3

<sup>22</sup> Hoffman, p.170.

<sup>23</sup> Young, *The Texture of Memory*, p.2.

<sup>24</sup> Young, James E. *Writing and Rewriting the Holocaust: Narrative and the Consequences of Interpretation*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989, p.173.

<sup>25</sup> Crane, Susan A. “Memory, Distortion, and History in the Museum.” *History and Theory*, Vol. 36, No. 4, (Dec., 1997), p.46.

from one another altogether,<sup>26</sup> as they reflect the historical time of their respective creators, particular kinds of political and cultural knowledge, and the specific media and materials used.<sup>27</sup> Deriving from the Latin verb *monere*, monument means simultaneously to remind and to warn.<sup>28</sup> With regards to memorials, viewers need to bring their own historical knowledge to the site, because “memorials are interactive”;<sup>29</sup> on their own, they are of little value.<sup>30</sup> It is only when the viewer brings his or her own sense of history that a memorial can “lead us beyond their own materiality and back in time to the persons and events it commemorates”.<sup>31</sup>

Significantly, whereas in the past monuments dedicated to the Holocaust were conventionally classified as either museums or memorials, recent times have seen a blurring of boundaries between these two forms.<sup>32</sup> Contemporary Holocaust museums often include spaces of mourning within them, such as the Sanctum of Remembrance at the Sydney Jewish Museum, the Hall of Remembrance at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, and the Children’s Memorial at Yad Vashem. This is a subjective practice which signifies a breaking away from the authoritative “objectivity” associated with traditional history museums. This blurring of boundaries is reflected in the name of the American “Memorial Museum”, which Naomi Kramer reads as reflecting its dual goal of being objective in the presentation of historical facts, yet subjective in the preservation of memory.<sup>33</sup> Whatever form monuments to the Holocaust might take, it will become evident that they are inevitably driven, to a lesser or greater extent, by a current-day agenda and therefore shape the visitor or viewer’s

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<sup>26</sup> Young, *Writing and Rewriting the Holocaust*, p.172.

<sup>27</sup> Young, *The Texture of Memory*, p.2.

<sup>28</sup> Kramer, Naomi. “The Institutionalization of Memory: Museums as Keepers of the Past and Educators of the Future.” In Peter M. Daly et al. (eds). *Building History: The Shoah in Art, Memory, and Myth*. New York: Peter Land Publishing, 2001, p.98.

<sup>29</sup> Kramer, p.104.

<sup>30</sup> Young, *The Texture of Memory*, p.2.

<sup>31</sup> Williams, p.6.

<sup>32</sup> Crysler, Greig and Abidin Kusno. “Angels in the Temple: The Aesthetic Construction of Citizenship in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.” *Art Journal*, Vol. 56, No. 1, Aesthetics and the Body Politic (Spring, 1997), p.55.

<sup>33</sup> Kramer, p.102.

understanding of the Holocaust in often divergent ways. Yet, despite these differences, they all act as “sites where groups of people gather to create a common past for themselves; places where they tell the constitutive narratives, their ‘shared’ stories of the past”.<sup>34</sup> In this way, they enable visitors to experience and relate to the Holocaust through representation, as opposed to recollection. The following sections of this essay will examine the current-day agendas that might be driving memorial representations of the Holocaust and the techniques museums have adopted in an attempt to impart “lessons” on their visitors, as well as in seeking to maintain contemporary interest in the historical facts of the Holocaust. With countless injunctions to “remember” constantly repeated and a proliferation of Holocaust representations across different media, museums are confronted not with the problem of the Holocaust being forgotten, but with the danger of it becoming trivialised as an “empty referent, a *symbol* of historical horror”,<sup>35</sup> rather than historical fact.

As James Young points out, museums and memorials dedicated to the Holocaust serve a variety of objectives and purposes. “If the *raison d’être* for Holocaust monuments is ‘never to forget’”, Young asks “precisely what is not forgotten” at each memorial and museum.<sup>36</sup> Whilst some have been built in response to traditional Jewish injunctions to remember and mourn, others have arisen according to a government’s need to address aspects of its past, or as expiations of guilt or as self-aggrandisement, whilst others still might simply aim to attract tourists.<sup>37</sup> Just as individuals from every point on the political spectrum have been able to use the Holocaust to impart lessons which suit their own purposes,<sup>38</sup> so too have museums in different parts of the world. Despite Novick’s doubt that useful lessons that will affect

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<sup>34</sup> Young, *The Texture of Memory*, p.6.

<sup>35</sup> Hoffman, p.177.

<sup>36</sup> Young, *Writing and Rewriting the Holocaust*, p.173.

<sup>37</sup> Young, *The Texture of Memory*, p.2.

<sup>38</sup> Novick, p.12.

personal and political conduct can be drawn from the Holocaust,<sup>39</sup> it is clear that museums offer narratives which affirm certain values that conform to specific ideological purposes. Omer Bartov is of the opinion that “Holocaust museums seem to offer two narrative options: one that presents Zionism as the ultimate answer to Jewish persecution...another that argues in favour of toleration and understanding for cultural and ethnic minorities”.<sup>40</sup> Whilst it might be seen that the scope for narrative option may be slightly wider than that suggested by Bartov, his statement nonetheless reflects that the Holocaust has been put to different uses in different contexts; it has become fractured through the very different ways in which it has been memorialised. At Yad Vashem, Israel’s official Holocaust remembrance authority, for example, the Holocaust is presented as central to the foundation of the State, with the catastrophic diasporic event leading to rebirth in the Jewish homeland. It is also represented as an “endpoint to the history of the Jew as victim”, with the establishment of the State of Israel presented as the starting point for a new era of national history and self-assertion for Jewry.<sup>41</sup> This is in spite of assertions that “we do not wish to dictate lessons or messages, overt or covert”.<sup>42</sup> By contrast, in Germany the Holocaust has come to signify “an absence of Jews and a traumatic burden on national identity”.<sup>43</sup> The representational effects of this German engagement with the Holocaust will be discussed in greater depth further on.

It has been argued that in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington D.C., the Holocaust has been “Americanized”.<sup>44</sup> At its opening in 1993, the President dedicated the museum “as a physical container to preserve the memory of the Holocaust for

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<sup>39</sup> Novick, p.13.

<sup>40</sup> Quoted in Berman, p.135.

<sup>41</sup> Huyssen, p.257.

<sup>42</sup> Shalev, Avner. “Building a Holocaust Museum in Jerusalem.” In Ockman, Joan et al. *Yad Vashem: Moshe Safdie – The Architecture of Memory*. Switzerland: Lars Müller Publishers, 2006.

<sup>43</sup> Huyssen, p.257.

<sup>44</sup> Berman, p.3.

all Americans”.<sup>45</sup> The story of the Holocaust presented in this museum “carries an American inflection”,<sup>46</sup> as it deploys a narrative that promotes professed fundamental American values such tolerance, democracy, pluralism and human rights.<sup>47</sup> A central lesson, therefore, provided by the museum is “how to be a good citizen in the United States today”.<sup>48</sup> The project director during planning and construction of the museum himself admitted to this by stating that:

In America...we recast the story of the Holocaust to teach fundamental American values. What are the fundamental values? For example – when America is at its best – pluralism, democracy, restraint on government, the inalienable rights of individuals, the inability of government to enter into the freedom of religion, and so forth.<sup>49</sup>

The story of the Holocaust in the United States museum is thus told with a pedagogical purpose, as it is hoped that visitors will engage with the representation of the Holocaust not merely as a cultural commodity, but will be transformed by the lessons that emerge from this encounter. By learning of the importance of adhering to democratic values in being offered a stark example of what can happen which such values fail, the visitor will move from being a “passive unaware inhabitant of the nation state to active vigilant citizen empowered with the agency of a coherent moral public narrative”.<sup>50</sup> As Philip Gourevitch writes, “the museum, then, is meant to serve as an ideological vaccine for the American body politic. A proper dose

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<sup>45</sup> Linenthal, p.1.

<sup>46</sup> Williams, p.7.

<sup>47</sup> Berman, p.3.

<sup>48</sup> Crysler and Kusno, p.52.

<sup>49</sup> Quoted in Gourevitch, Philip. “Behold now Behemoth: The Holocaust Memorial Museum, One More American Theme Park.” *Harper’s*, (July, 1993), p.56. In Crysler and Kusno, p.52.

<sup>50</sup> Linenthal, p.xiii.

of Holocaust, the thinking goes, will build up the needed antibodies against totalitarianism, racism and state-sponsored mass murder”.<sup>51</sup>

Whilst the Holocaust as presented in the Washington museum has undoubtedly been universalised, the same cannot be said of its representation in Australian museums. As Berman notes, whereas the creators of the U.S. museum were limited by the need to serve political ends and to appease rival claims of victimhood, the founders of the Australian Holocaust museums were motivated by the primary goal of countering Holocaust denial.<sup>52</sup>

Unlike in the United States, there was no initiative on the part of the Australian Government to make the Holocaust part of the national consciousness (perhaps in part because Australia had not been involved in the liberation of the camps), which meant that there were no external pressures affecting the representation in the museums, as they were entirely financed by private Jewish funds.<sup>53</sup> In other words, the Australian museums were not concerned with universalising or “Australianising” the Holocaust, but in responding to the growth of Holocaust denial literature.

As centres of documentation, museums are considered to be “institutions of unquestioned authority”,<sup>54</sup> and according to Naomi Kramer, “[t]he indirect impact that these centres, as keepers of the past, have on Holocaust denial cannot be underestimated”.<sup>55</sup> It was this motivation that encouraged many survivors in Australia to share their stories after decades of silence, and correspondingly, the role of survivors in the running of the Australian museums is central. The curator of the Jewish Holocaust Museum and Research Centre in Melbourne, Helen Light, maintains that “the most powerful impact of this sombre place on visitors comes

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<sup>51</sup> Quoted in Berman, p.151.

<sup>52</sup> Berman, p.156.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Kramer, p.99.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

from the guides, all survivors, who are living testimonies to Nazi brutality and to human courage”.<sup>56</sup> Although on the whole the Holocaust museums in Sydney, Melbourne and Perth resist using their subject to teach democratic or humanist values to a far greater extent than the Washington museum, there are nonetheless traces of these lessons especially present in the Sydney Jewish Museum: of Australian Jewish History and the Holocaust. Amongst its objectives it aims to “appreciate the importance of religious and cultural tolerance...to pay tribute to the individual rights and liberties we enjoy in democratic Australia”.<sup>57</sup> Some of the closing displays in the permanent exhibition include warnings against being a bystander, such as the quote from Edmund Burke: “The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing”. Overall, however, the transmission of these lessons is secondary to presenting the visitor with a historical encounter with the facts of the Holocaust.

Another important issue with regards to the lessons imparted by Holocaust museums is that of identification. A publication of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum suggests that visitors will be positioned to identify with a variety of different roles that they might have played had they been alive at the time of the events:

The emotional impact of Holocaust history forces the museum’s open-minded visitors to ponder how they would have acted had they found themselves in the position of a Jew...or conversely, in the position of a German soldier ordered to kill innocent women and children, or how they would have behaved in the position of a witnessing bystander.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Quoted in Berman, p.109.

<sup>57</sup> Quoted in Berman, p.153.

<sup>58</sup> Quoted in Linenthal, p.247.

Yet, as Edward T. Linenthal points out, “it seems unlikely that many visitors will identify with any role other than that of Holocaust victim, or, possibly, American liberator”.<sup>59</sup> This is especially apparent in the museum’s identity card system, whereby upon entering the museum, each visitor is given a card which states the personal details of one Holocaust victim, which they continue to carry throughout the exhibition. Through this identification, the visitor acquires “the warm glow of virtue that such a vicarious identification brings”.<sup>60</sup> As well as this, the first photograph greeting the visitor at the museum is a life-size image depicting American soldiers standing at the edge of a pit filled with murdered Holocaust victims. Essentially, the blown-up image “allows the visitor to stand opposite the soldiers and look down into the pit with them”,<sup>61</sup> thereby enabling an identification with the “good guy”<sup>62</sup> witnesses, as well as the victims. No such identification with the witness is encouraged at the Sydney Jewish Museum, where only a singular identification takes place. As the visitor makes his or her way towards the displays on ghetto life, a mural depicts a group of Jews walking solemnly in a single file beside the visitor. The underlying message is clear: the visitor, like the Jews of Europe, is entering the ghetto. Thus, although one of the oft-stated aims of Holocaust museums is to encourage visitors to understand how ordinary people can become potential victimisers, the representation of the Holocaust in these museums ultimately encourages identification with the victim rather than the victimiser. In this way, it bypasses what Linenthal identifies as a crucial moral dilemma of the Holocaust, “to accept the reality of what is actually possible for human beings (like ourselves)”.<sup>63</sup>

A comparison of the way the Holocaust is represented in the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, Yad Vashem, and the Australian museums reflects the very different curatorial

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<sup>59</sup> Linenthal, p.247.

<sup>60</sup> Novick, p.13.

<sup>61</sup> Crysler and Kusno, p.59.

<sup>62</sup> Crane, p.61.

<sup>63</sup> Linenthal, p.247.

choices that have led to their respective permanent exhibitions. Yad Vashem and the Washington museum have been criticised for their visual representations, as the prevalent use of life-size photographs and slide shows has been seen as creating “propaganda factories, designed to manipulate the visitor through the precise emotional experience”.<sup>64</sup> As a result, it has been argued that they come to resemble “a Disneyland park devoted to Jewish suffering”.<sup>65</sup> The Children’s Memorial at Yad Vashem, for example, which consists of a dark underground chamber in which a single candle is reflected to appear as millions of floating flames, representing the one and a half murdered Jewish children, has been condemned for trying to “force-feed grief”.<sup>66</sup> It is evident that the creators of these exhibitions are faced with the dilemma of seeking to make their museums appealing to a public audience, whilst at the same time communicating the “moral traumas of history”.<sup>67</sup> This task is not an easy one; as Judith Miller states, “[i]t’s easy to get people’s attention. It’s much harder to get them to think”.<sup>68</sup>

According to Linenthal, in addition to providing lessons, the curators of the Washington museum wanted to “inflict” the Holocaust on the visitor.<sup>69</sup> Numerous aspects of the exhibition therefore enable an experience that allows visitors to “feel” the events in a highly intensified manner. Architecturally, the building is “designed as a place of disorientation” which “force[s] visitors to ‘leave’ Washington, D.C.”.<sup>70</sup> It is comprised of steel, brick and glass to evoke what has been called the “hard industrial forms” of the Holocaust”.<sup>71</sup> In order to reach the permanent exhibition, visitors must travel up an elevator to the fourth floor of the

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<sup>64</sup> Lopate, Phillip. “Resistance to the Holocaust.” *Tikkun*, Vol. 4, No. 3, (May/June, 1989), p.60. Quoted in Berman, p.137.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Russel Miller, quoted in Berman, p.137.

<sup>67</sup> Linenthal, p.xiii.

<sup>68</sup> Quoted in Berman, p.137.

<sup>69</sup> Linenthal, p.112.

<sup>70</sup> Linenthal, p.89.

<sup>71</sup> Herbert Muschamp. Quoted in Linenthal, p.88.

building, which further makes them “know they are in a different place”.<sup>72</sup> However, this personal engagement with history is countered with an unwillingness to simply turn the Holocaust into a “horror story”.<sup>73</sup> Thus, the potential for voyeurism is hindered, to some extent, by the “privacy walls” which hide video monitors depicting graphic scenes of murder and nudity and over which the visitor has to peer.<sup>74</sup>

In deciding what to represent of the Holocaust and how to represent it, museums place great importance on the presentation of artefacts, which, once in the museum context, become “loaded with emotional and historic weight almost certainly greater than that enjoyed in their initial incarnation”.<sup>75</sup> Huyssen suggests that the material quality of the object “attracts a public dissatisfied with simulation and channel flicking”;<sup>76</sup> at the very least, it signifies concrete evidence of the historical event. Perhaps one of the most indisputable items to have entered the “canon of Holocaust victims’ objects”<sup>77</sup> are the shoes of Holocaust victims, and their “power results in part from their ordinariness”.<sup>78</sup> Along with other artefacts, James E. Young argues that we come to know the victims through “[a]rmless sleeves, eyeless lenses, headless caps, footless shoes”, and thus only “by their absence, by the moment of their destruction”.<sup>79</sup> As Young powerfully states, “[t]hat a murdered people remains known in Holocaust museums anywhere by their scattered belongings and not by their spiritual works, that their lives should be recalled primarily through the images of their death, may be the ultimate travesty”.<sup>80</sup> Notably, however, the Sydney Jewish Museum bypasses this problem, as it is not devoted only to the Holocaust but also includes an exhibition on the history of

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<sup>72</sup> James Ingo Freed. Quoted in Linenthal, p.91.

<sup>73</sup> Linenthal, p.193.

<sup>74</sup> Linenthal, p.196.

<sup>75</sup> Williams, p.28.

<sup>76</sup> Huyssen, p.255.

<sup>77</sup> Williams, p.29.

<sup>78</sup> Ochsner, Jeffrey Karl. “Understanding the Holocaust through the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum.” *Journal of Architectural Education (1984-)*, Vol. 48, No. 4 (May, 1995), p.234.

<sup>79</sup> Young, James E. “The Veneration of Ruins.” *Yale Journal of Criticism*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (1993), p.278.

<sup>80</sup> Young, “The Veneration of Ruins”, p.279.

Australian Jewry, thereby providing a more comprehensive account of Jewish civilisation. Moreover, in its representation of the Holocaust, the Sydney Jewish Museum mainly restricts its presentation to visual artefacts and photographs which are accompanied by short descriptions. Sophisticated technology and re-enactments have not been used to “sell” the Holocaust to visitors as in the Washington museum.<sup>81</sup> The survivor-guides are also an important part of the exhibition, and their presence “brings authenticity and dignity to the museum”.<sup>82</sup> Hence, the Sydney museum, along with the museums in Melbourne and Perth which follow a similar structure,<sup>83</sup> has not been subject to the same criticisms that have been levelled at Yad Vashem and the U.S Holocaust Memorial Museum.<sup>84</sup>

According to one view, physical installations in the form of Holocaust memorials and museums, rather than contributing to the formation of an active public memory, actually destroy memory in reifying past events in concrete objects.<sup>85</sup> Adherents of this view argue that “we may be delegating to the archivist the memory work that is ours alone, thereby allowing memorials to relieve us of the memory burden we should be carrying”.<sup>86</sup> Such views have led to the rise of what have been termed “counter-monuments”, especially in Germany. Young describes counter-monuments as “brazen, painfully self-conscious memorial spaces conceived to challenge the very premises of their being”,<sup>87</sup> which are created by artists for whom the idea that the memory of events so grave “might be reduced to exhibitions of public craftsmanship or cheap pathos remains intolerable”.<sup>88</sup> The most famous monument of this kind is arguably Jochen and Esther Gerz’s “Monument Against Facism” in Harburg,

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<sup>81</sup> Berman, p.138.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> See generally, Berman.

<sup>84</sup> Berman, p.138.

<sup>85</sup> Crysler and Kusno, p.55.

<sup>86</sup> Young, “The Veneration of Ruins”, p.279.

<sup>87</sup> Young, *The Texture of Memory*, p.27.

<sup>88</sup> Young, *The Texture of Memory*, p.28.

Germany. It is a tall cylindrical pillar to which the citizens of Harburg were invited to inscribe their names before the monument was gradually descended into the ground until it disappeared, leaving behind only the memories of those who had previously visited the site.<sup>89</sup>

In effect, “the vanishing monument will have returned the burden of memory to the visitors”.<sup>90</sup> In this way, it acts as a powerful reminder that “all monuments can every do is rise up *symbolically* against injustice”,<sup>91</sup> it is left to the individual to carry the memory and fight injustice in a meaningful way.

These monuments might be seen to signify a future direction of Holocaust memorialisation. Ultimately, “no single monument will ever be able to convey the Holocaust as such”,<sup>92</sup> and this has been shown to be especially true in light of the current-day political and ideological agendas inevitably driving, to a greater or lesser extent, representations of the Holocaust in contemporary museums. As Huyssen asserts, “the possibility of a Holocaust monument today lies in its intertextuality as but one part of our memorial culture”.<sup>93</sup> In their blurring of boundaries between museum and memorial, between subjective memory and objective fact, Holocaust monuments will continue to evolve and thus enable individuals and communities to continue to engage in the “slow and persistent labour of remembrance”.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Crysler and Kusno, p.55.

<sup>90</sup> Young, *The Texture of Memory*, p.28.

<sup>91</sup> Young, *The Texture of Memory*, p.34.

<sup>92</sup> Huyssen, p.259.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

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