Etched in Metal and Stone: The Local Contexts of Holocaust Remembrance at Three Memorials

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ABSTRACT

Holocaust memorials’ physical structures and interpretations are necessarily mediated and shaped by local contexts, including place and the particular time of construction. Three monuments from across a wide geographic and temporal range show the broad influence of local contexts on physical and rhetorical manifestations of Holocaust commemoration. The planners of the 1964 Monument to the Six Million Jewish Martyrs in Philadelphia made frequent references to Jewish history and religious principles, the triumphant establishment of Israel, and American patriotism. The 1990 Miami Beach Holocaust Memorial is seen by its architect, monument planners, and visitors as a place especially of mourning for those lost in the Holocaust, as well as a conduit for education, resonant with the vigorous focus on the Holocaust in academia during the 1980s. The 2005 Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe in Berlin is considered by many to be an expression of German guilt for the Nazis’ attempted genocide of the Jewish people, or even a tool for overcoming the nation’s shame, after a West German historical reexamination of its Nazi past during the Historikerstreit and reunification. The memorials discussed demonstrate the extent to which the past takes a back seat to the present when events are being commemorated through physical structures.

INTRODUCTION

On April 26th, 1964, the Monument to the Six Million Jewish Martyrs opened in Philadelphia to great fanfare. Built in the aftermath of the 1961 trial of Adolf Eichmann and the publication of Hannah Arendt’s controversial book Eichmann in Jerusalem a year later, the monument, widely considered the first Holocaust memorial in the United States, marked an early awakening of Holocaust memory. Located at the intersection of Benjamin Franklin Parkway and 16th Street, the monument was squarely at the center of a city which had hosted the birth of American democracy. In fact, American patriotic sentiments played a prominent role during the monument’s dedication ceremony. Standing on an elevated platform decked in red, white, and

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1 Peter Novick, The Holocaust in American Life (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1999), pages 133-134.  
2 Dedication invitation letter to City Officials and Non-Jewish Clergy, April 7 1964, SCRC 96, Box 1, Folder 7, Abram Shnaper Papers on the Monument to the Six Million Jewish Martyrs, Temple University Archives, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, United States.
blue, Abram Shnaper, co-chairman of the monument’s founding committee, declared “it is no coincidence that the first monument of this nature should be erected in Philadelphia, the city where American independence was born.” The specificity of this rhetoric to the monument’s location is not an isolated occurrence. Holocaust memorials often develop meanings and interpretations that are molded by the spatial and temporal environment in which they are conceived and erected.

The development of place and time-specific meanings is also present at the Holocaust Memorial Miami Beach, built by Holocaust survivors in 1990. This site’s construction began in the wake of the Holocaust memory boom of the 1970s and 1980s, marked by Jimmy Carter’s formation of the President’s Commission on the Holocaust and the 1978 popular television miniseries Holocaust. Reactions to the memorial by various constituencies included both a focus on mourning by Holocaust victims and rhetorical appeals to larger issues of education. In Berlin, which dedicated the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe in 2005, interpretations of the monument’s significance included those who saw it as a testament to the unrepresentable horror of the Holocaust and as a manifestation of collective guilt. In all of these instances, monumental interpretation hinged not on the event being commemorated, but on local populations, events, and concerns.

This thesis demonstrates that Holocaust monumentalization does not represent one unified narrative, but rather reflects a collection of different perspectives and framings that appeal to various constituencies and eras. Using the three monuments highlighted above, I argue

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3 Shnaper Dedication Photograph, April 26 1964, SCRC 96, Box 1, Folder 10, Abram Shnaper Papers on the Monument to the Six Million Jewish Martyrs.

4 Abram Shnaper Speech at Philadelphia Holocaust Memorial Dedication, April 26 1964, SCRC 96, Box 1, Folder 6, Abram Shnaper Papers on the Monument to the Six Million Jewish Martyrs.

5 Novick, The Holocaust in American Life, 208-209, 216.
that historical memorialization through the erection of monuments is defined by the location and
time in which the structure is created.

This thesis focuses on the specific moments when the monuments were constructed,
showing that unique historical circumstances affected both construction and interpretation. This
will place the monuments within wider narratives in the development of Holocaust memory, on a
local, national, and international scale. Additionally, the thesis will discuss the manner in which
Holocaust remembrance manifests on a local scale at sites not specifically associated with the
atrocities. This feature distinguishes the three monuments from the Sachsenhausen concentration
camp memorial outside of Berlin, or any of the memorials built at larger death camps in Poland.
In addition, this thesis considers the interplay of monument architectural features and the
cultivation of memory. It examines realism, abstraction, and symbolism as ways to present,
interpret, and facilitate various threads of memory. The analysis of the production and
consumption of memory hinges on examining three particular groups: the organizers, sponsors,
planners, and administrators of the monuments; the architects who designed the memorials; and
the general public.

Of primary concern to this discussion is how, exactly, the terms “monument” and
“memorial” should be utilized. A monument, as I define it, is a structure built to commemorate a
fragment of the past. The subject could potentially be an individual, a concrete occurrence, or
even an idea. Monuments need not relate to a tragedy, like the examples from the current study.
However, a memorial is a physical marker of a tragic event, which typically acts as a tribute to
the affected individuals. With these definitions, a memorial is a type of monument. All three of
the structures in this study fit the definition of both a memorial and a monument, and thus these
terms will be used interchangeably in describing them.
**Literature review**

This examination of collective memory at three Holocaust monuments will be grounded in the work of Maurice Halbwachs, author of the seminal work *On Collective Memory* (originally published as scholarly articles in the 1920s). The book explores the ties that develop between physical space, specific occurrences, and memories for members of various social groups. This abstract connection between place and remembrance will form the foundation of the three case studies. Halbwachs’ theoretical framework informs the arguments made in later works on memorials, including Jay Winter’s 1995 book *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning.*

While Halbwachs’ ideas of memory formed in the immediate aftermath of the First World War, Winter was temporally removed from the conflict by nearly 80 years, allowing his work on the war to analyze decades of memorial activity. Similarly, I am approaching World War II and its atrocities nearly eight decades after the war’s end, allowing me to view the conflict’s memorialization over a wide time frame.

Studying the aftermath of the First World War, Winter examines some ways that people view and utilize commemorative monuments in the wake of tragedy. In particular, Winter asserts that monuments act as central sites of mourning after the losses of war. This purpose is distinct from memorials to victory or triumph, which invoke memory to celebrate the past rather than to contemplate what has been lost. Winter writes, “The construction, dedication, and repeated pilgrimages to war memorials in the interwar years provided a ritual expression of their

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8 A similar distinction can be observed at Civil War memorials in the United States. Many monuments built in the North, such as Grant's Tomb in New York City, celebrate the military triumph over the Confederacy. In contrast, many Southern monuments to the Confederacy (such as the recently removed statue of Robert E. Lee in Richmond, Virginia) mourn the “Lost Cause.”
bereavement, and that of their local communities.” In a similar manner, I suggest that the expression of mourning occurred through the construction and visitation of certain Holocaust sites, including the Philadelphia and Miami Beach monuments. Though other modes of memory, such as patriotism and Holocaust education, appear at these memorial sites as well, Winter’s model provides valuable examples of the cultivation of mourning-centered memory.

In addition to sources specifically about monument-creation, I will incorporate literature that addresses the broad history of Holocaust memory. Peter Novick’s 1999 book *The Holocaust in American Life* offers a wide-ranging American view of the Holocaust from the war years to the present day. Central to Novick’s argument is that the Holocaust was not prominent in American consciousness in the immediate post-war era, but was subsumed within larger narratives of death and tragedy. It was only during the ‘60s and ‘70s that Holocaust memory ascended to a central position. However, Novick’s position is but one of several arguments presented in the scholarly literature on the Holocaust. Hasia Diner, in her 2009 book *We Remember with Reverence and Love: American Jews and the Myth of Silence after the Holocaust, 1945-1962*, makes the claim that—contrary to common belief—Jewish Americans did engage in Holocaust and mourning activities in the immediate postwar years. Novick and Diner’s differing perspectives are part of a multifaceted scholarly debate about the prevalence and meaning of Holocaust memory in America prior to the early ‘60s. When writing about the Philadelphia memorial—which was dedicated in 1964—and its reception, I will examine whether this manifestation of memory reflects new versions of Holocaust memory, or simply re-statements of longer-standing notions.

9 Ibid. 6.
In addition, literature that attempts to qualify the boundaries and contours of various streams of Holocaust memory are deeply relevant to this project. Jennifer Hansen-Glucklich’s 2014 work *Holocaust Memory Reframed: Museums and the Challenges of Representation* compares representations of the Holocaust in three museums.\(^\text{11}\) In particular, Hansen-Glucklich asserts that each of the museums is indicative of a specific nationally-constructed Holocaust memory. The idea of “national memory” is also explored in Winter’s *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning*.\(^\text{12}\) However, some scholars reject this localized manner of studying Holocaust memory, preferring an international perspective. In their 2001 book *The Holocaust and Memory in the Global Age*, Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider posit that Holocaust remembrance is best understood as a cosmopolitanized global entity.\(^\text{13}\) They claim that local and national memorial distinctions have steadily lost ground to the rising rhetoric of human rights. Thus, this thesis will insert itself into a debate that centers around the balance of national and international Holocaust memory. While not eschewing mention of global memory, this paper will primarily focus on the manifestation of local memory at these memorial sites. While, at times, these communal dynamics will bear relation to international developments, particular emphasis will be placed on how these broader trends manifested within a smaller national or local context.

In addition, I use numerous sources that provide important factual information about the specific monuments. Natasha Goldman’s 2020 book *Memory Passages: Holocaust Memorials in the United States and Germany* examines the histories of both the Philadelphia and Berlin

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\(^{12}\) Winter, *Sites of Memory*, 97.

monuments. Johan Åhr and Quentin Stevens write observant reflections on architecture and visitor sentiments at the Berlin site.

**Primary sources**

The primary sources concerning the development of the Philadelphia Holocaust monument come from the personal papers of Abram Shnaper, a Polish Holocaust survivor who endured numerous concentration camps (including Auschwitz) and played an outsized role in the monument’s construction. The papers, which are housed at Temple University, include a wide array of document types in both English and Yiddish, including correspondence between the planners of the monument, fliers and letters released to the public, photographs of commemorative events held at the site over the decades succeeding its 1964 dedication, and newspaper clippings concerning the monument. The records cover a broad time range, from the early 1960s up to the end of the 20th century. These meticulous records form the primary basis of this examination of the memorial around its erection and dedication.

Multiple primary sources illuminate the structure and function of the Miami Beach memorial. The memorial’s website includes a written history of the site, an artist statement written by architect Kenneth Treister, and a photo gallery. In addition, interviews conducted

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18 “Holocaust Memorial Miami Beach: History,” *The Holocaust Memorial of Miami Beach*, holocaustmemorialmiamibeach.org/about/history/.
with Treister show his artistic process and goals for the memorial.\textsuperscript{21} The monument also published an educational guide to be used in classroom settings.\textsuperscript{22} Newspaper articles from 1990 document the period around the site’s dedication.\textsuperscript{23} A video of the memorial’s history features multiple interviews with prominent figures in the site’s construction.\textsuperscript{24} In addition, videos of the memorial’s 2021 Yom HaShoah and Kristallnacht commemorations show speeches and ceremonies conducted by numerous noteworthy individuals.\textsuperscript{25}

The analysis of the Berlin monument uses many primary sources to construct the history and significance of the memorial. \textit{Materials on the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe}, which was published by the monument’s foundation just ahead of its 2005 opening, features original articles written by site architect Peter Eisenman and others intimately involved in the memorial’s creation.\textsuperscript{26} In addition, \textit{Holocaust Memorial Berlin}, a 2005 photo essay in the form of a book published by Eisenman Architects (Eisenman’s architecture firm) features an essay by the architect.\textsuperscript{27} Articles written about the site around its time of opening help to illuminate the opinions of the German Jewish community and others about the monument’s functionality.\textsuperscript{28}

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{22} Damon Adams, \textit{Study Guide for the Holocaust Memorial Miami Beach} (United States: 2015).
  \item \textsuperscript{24} "Creating the Holocaust Memorial Miami Beach," created by Holocaust Memorial Miami Beach, 09:51. https://holocaustmemorialmiamibeach.org/photos/videos/creating_the_hmmb/.
  \item \textsuperscript{26} \textit{Materials on the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe} (Berlin: Nicolai, 2005).
  \item \textsuperscript{27} Hanno Rauterberg, Hélène Binet, and Lukas Wassmann, \textit{Holocaust Memorial Berlin: Eisenman Architects} (Baden, Switzerland: Lars Müller, 2005).
addition, material collected during my field visit to the site in October of 2021 will be used, including recordings of the audio guide, images of informational panels, and interviews conducted with monument visitors.

**Paper outline**

The first section of this paper discusses the Philadelphia Holocaust memorial, analyzing various memorial tropes and their relations to the specific spatial and temporal setting of the monument’s construction. In the period in which it was built and inaugurated, Jewish religious rhetoric was used extensively in relation to the site, and also shaped the memorial architecture. Furthermore, monument planners prominently honored Israel at certain events at the memorial. Additionally, American patriotism, and particularly the role of Philadelphia in the nation’s founding, became a central theme in conceptions of the monument. All of these themes, it will be shown, are influenced by the setting in which the monument was developed and built.

The second section will center on the Miami Beach Holocaust memorial. It will highlight the centrality of mourning in interpretations of the site, noting the manner in which the planners, audience, location, and time period of the monument contributed to this prominent interpretation. The realist architecture of the site actively develops this dynamic as well. However, the monument is also a locus for the dissemination of Holocaust education, an aim that is reflected in its architecture and the rhetoric of those speaking about the site. Both of these themes are actively influenced by the monument’s location in Miami Beach, and construction during the late 1980s and early 1990s.

The third and final section of this thesis focuses on the Berlin Holocaust memorial and how various constituencies use it to construct memory. It explores the historical environment in which the memorial was conceived and built, considering the impact of German reunification
and Holocaust memory in the late 20th century. For Peter Eisenman, the site architect, the monument attests to the impossibility of physically representing the Holocaust. This view is connected to a mode of interpretation in which the monument is a manifestation of German guilt for the atrocities of the Holocaust. For other members of the general public, the monument allows for the transcendence of national shame for the genocide. These differing interpretations coexist, both tied to local concerns and sentiments.

THE PHILADELPHIA HOLOCAUST MONUMENT

The Monument to the Six Million Jewish Martyrs is a Holocaust memorial erected in Philadelphia in 1964. The monument was built at a time when Jewish religiosity was reaching a peak in the United States.²⁹ This emphasis is reflected in the structure’s symbology and the way its central planners speak about it. There are also indications that the invocations of religious remembrance bears connections to earlier modes of Holocaust memory. Furthermore, Israel plays an important role in the monument’s conception of Holocaust remembrance. In this era, the young Jewish nation was busy establishing itself as the world leader for commemorating the Shoah, thus explaining its centrality to monument planners. Also, rhetoric about Israeli independence fits within wider American Cold War dogma which emphasized principles of freedom and self-determination for nation-states. The frequent invocation of American patriotic values in reference to the monument also played into this dynamic, indirectly emphasizing the immorality of the Eastern Bloc and the potential for citizens to rise up in the name of liberty.

On April 1st, 1961, the Association of Jewish New Americans of Philadelphia met for their regional conference at Beth Judah of Logan Synagogue.³⁰ They approved a resolution to

²⁹ Although this was the case for American Jewry as a whole, it should be noted that not all American Jews were religious in this period, and many individuals’ experiences certainly deviate from this trend.

³⁰ Jewish Exponent article “New Americans to Meet On Memorial to Martyrs”, March 31st 1961, SCRC 96, Box 3, Folder 1, Abram Shnaper Papers on the Monument to the Six Million Jewish Martyrs.
build a memorial to the 6 million Jewish martyrs of the Holocaust.\textsuperscript{31} For the first few weeks after this initial announcement, the preferred plan seemed to be the construction of a memorial chapel on Independence Mall, close to the Liberty Bell and Independence Hall. As is stated in the article about the proposed chapel, “another phase of the planned memorial to be discussed will be some sort of monument in the area, similar to the ones which have been erected in Warsaw, Paris, and Israel.”\textsuperscript{32}

While plans for the chapel never took shape, the idea to build a monument expanded to become AJNA’s primary commemoratory objective. Abram Shnaper, a prominent local Holocaust survivor, first organized the group in 1953, well before ideas of a memorial project arose.\textsuperscript{33} The group is described in a 1962 Philadelphia newspaper as “made up of over 350 families who came to the United States as refugees from Nazism.”\textsuperscript{34} AJNA worked together with the Federation of Jewish Agencies of Greater Philadelphia, a group made up primarily of wealthy German Jews who immigrated decades before the rise of Nazism, to raise funds for the memorial.\textsuperscript{35} Thus, the monument coalition represented the wide spectrum of Philadelphia’s Jewish community. Initially, the Commission planned to erect the monument in front of a new building at Gratz College, a prominent Philadelphia institution for Jewish learning.\textsuperscript{36} However, the Philadelphia Art Commission agreed to accept the monument as a gift, allowing it to go on display in a prominent city location.\textsuperscript{37} This led the monument to be placed at the intersection of Benjamin Franklin Parkway and 16th Street, a prominent location in the center of Philadelphia.

\textsuperscript{31} Article Clipping, Early April 1961, SCRC 96, Box 3, Folder 1, Abram Shnaper Papers on the Monument to the Six Million Jewish Martyrs.
\textsuperscript{32} Jewish Exponent article, March 31st 1961, Shnaper papers.
\textsuperscript{33} Goldman, Memory Passages, 67.
\textsuperscript{34} Jewish Exponent article “Martyrs Memorial at Gratz College”, December 14th 1962, SCRC 96, Box 3, Folder 1, Abram Shnaper Papers on the Monument to the Six Million Jewish Martyrs.
\textsuperscript{35} Goldman, Memory Passages, 67.
\textsuperscript{36} Meeting notes between memorial planners and Gratz College, 1962, SCRC 96, Box 1, Folder 3, Abram Shnaper Papers on the Monument to the Six Million Jewish Martyrs.
\textsuperscript{37} “Art Commission OKs Jewish Gift of Monument, 1964, SCRC 96, Box 3, Folder 1, Abram Shnaper Papers on the Monument to the Six Million Jewish Martyrs."
Permission for use given by Temple University Libraries, Special Collection Research Center.
Shnaper began corresponding with Polish artist Nathan Rapoport in 1960 about constructing a monument in Philadelphia. As a Polish Jew, Rapoport had narrowly escaped the Nazis by fleeing Warsaw for the Soviet Union. He spent the war in Bialystok, Minsk, and Kazakhstan, moving progressively eastward with German advances. Even aside from his wartime experience, Rapoport was a natural choice for the project. Shnaper already knew him from their childhood in Poland, and Rapoport was well-known for his design of the 1948 Warsaw Ghetto Uprising memorial. The monument designed by Rapoport is described in the April 7th, 1964 edition of the *Evening Bulletin* as 18 feet tall and made of 5 tons of bronze. The paper goes on to say, “It portrays a dying mother, lying amid flames; a writhing child, upholding the Torah; a patriarchal figure with arms raised in blessing; several arms wielding daggers, and a blazing seven-branched candelabrum. The scene is enveloped in a fiery bush.”

Rapoport coordinated the physical construction of the monument in Pietrasanta, Italy, likely due to the city’s long history of monumental sculpture production. He communicated with the Committee by letter and telegram, and shipped the sculpture to Philadelphia ahead of its installation. The dedication of the memorial took place on April 26th, 1964. The newspaper *Jewish Exponent* estimated that 3,500 attended the event. Among others, Abram Shnaper made a speech at the dedication ceremony.

Allusions to Jewish religious history and principles played a prominent role in the rhetoric used by memorial planners around the time of the Philadelphia memorial’s dedication, as

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38 Letter from Rapoport to Shnaper, May 18 1960, SCRC 96, Box 1, Folder 1, Abram Shnaper Papers on the Monument to the Six Million Jewish Martyrs.
40 Ibid. 60 and 67.
41 The *Evening Bulletin* article “City to get Bronze Statue of Slain Jews”, April 7 1964, SCRC 96, Box 3, Folder 1, Abram Shnaper Papers on the Monument to the Six Million Jewish Martyrs.
42 Western Union Telegram from Rapoport, October 2nd 1963, SCRC 96, Box 1, Folder 1, Abram Shnaper Papers on the Monument to the Six Million Jewish Martyrs.
43 *Jewish Exponent* article “3500 Join Dedication of Martyrs Monument, May 1st 1964, SCRC 96, Box 3, Folder 1, Abram Shnaper Papers on the Monument to the Six Million Jewish Martyrs.
well as the aesthetics of the monument itself. These Jewish religious and historical invocations helped to promote the importance of Holocaust commemoration within the wider American Jewish community. The use of religiosity within Holocaust memory at this time seems particularly apt. In the late 1950s, American Jewish synagogue affiliation reached 60%, a high point for the 20th century. Historian of American Judaism Jonathan Sarna writes that Jewish religiosity in the United States “had actually been gaining strength since the late 1930s, partly as a form of spiritual resistance to Nazism and anti-Semitism.” This religious inclination indicates that American Jewry at this time was particularly receptive to an ideation of the Holocaust that interwove religious narratives and imagery. Thus, these religious formulations responded to the specific temporal and locational situation in which the monument was erected.

Jewish religious themes played a prominent role in the Philadelphia monument’s dedication. In his speech at the ceremony, Shnaper makes allusions to both Jewish history and religiosity. When explaining that Jewish Holocaust victims resisted the Nazis up until their ultimate demise, Shnaper states, “With prayers on their lips and in their hearts, they went to meet their deaths as once the Spanish Jews went to the pyre of the Inquisition—with ‘Shmai Yisroel’.” The Shema is the most holy of Jewish prayers, and would be immediately familiar to any mildly observant Jew in Shnaper’s audience, regardless of denomination. By invoking this prayer, Shnaper establishes a connection between the religious life of Holocaust victims and the Jews to whom he is speaking. He draws attention to the fact that many Holocaust victims were Jews with the same traditions as any of their co-religionists. Many Holocaust victims were

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44 Jonathan Sarna, “1950s America: A ‘Golden Age’ for Jews,” My Jewish Learning, https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/a-golden-age-for-jews/. It should be noted that this shift toward religiosity is separate from, and should not be conflated with, attitudes towards Zionism in the same period. While some Zionist attitudes are religious in nature, many adherents were secular.
45 Ibid.
46 Abram Shnaper Speech at Philadelphia Holocaust Memorial Dedication, April 26 1964, SCRC 96, Box 1, Folder 6, Abram Shnaper Papers on the Monument to the Six Million Jewish Martyrs.
secular, as the Nazi persecution was racial rather than religious. However, Shnaper largely sidesteps this dynamic, placing emphasis on the religiosity of those who died. This frames Holocaust victims as relatable to American Jews, and thus encourages the creation of empathy for the ordeal that they had to experience.

A different dynamic is taking place when Shnaper mentions the Inquisition in his speech. This period, during which thousands were expelled from the Iberian peninsula and many were burned at the stake, is looked at by Jews as one of the darkest times in the history of the faith. By connecting the Holocaust to the Inquisition, Shnaper positions them as comparable tragedies. Just as Jews have collectively developed an admiration for the bravery and a sense of mourning for the loss of Inquisition victims, Shnaper seems to imply, the community should treat Holocaust victims with the same reverence. This dynamic is reinforced when Shnaper refers to Holocaust victims as martyrs, a linguistic choice which is also employed in the name of the monument and many of its promotional materials. Through the use of this spiritually charged word, victims’ deaths are framed as religious sacrifices, and they themselves are imbued with a sense of holiness. Thus, Jewish Americans are presented with a view of Holocaust victims as religiously significant people who died for their faith. Respecting and honoring them is presented as a natural extension of Jewish belief and practice.

These appeals to religiosity are not only rhetorical, but appear in the architectural design of the monument itself. When describing the design of the monument, a 1964 fact sheet distributed by planners makes clear that it architecturally relies heavily upon Jewish religious imagery. The monument is described as “topped by a flaming seven branched candlestick enveloped in a fiery flaming bush.”47 While the reference to a “seven branched candlestick” is

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47 Fact Sheet, March 26 1964, SCRC 96, Box 1, Folder 6, Abram Shnaper Papers on the Monument to the Six Million Jewish Martyrs.
quite convoluted (as will be explored later), it is a reference to the menorah, a Jewish symbol for the holiday of Hanukkah. The “fiery flaming bush” is a reference to a symbol of God that Moses discovers in the wilderness during the biblical book Exodus. For Jews, these two symbols both represent times of great tyranny. The menorah has become a common symbol for the desecration of the Second Temple in Jerusalem by the Hellenistic Seleucid Empire, and the ensuing 2nd century BCE revolt carried out by the Maccabees. The burning bush represents a biblical time in which the Jewish people were enslaved in Egypt. Thus, by incorporating these two symbols into a Holocaust monument, the Holocaust is framed as a continuation of the long list of tragedies that have befallen the Jewish people for thousands of years. The incorporation of these elements into the monument’s description in the fact sheet thus stresses this line of continuity, and establishes the religious and spiritual dynamic through which the Holocaust can be understood by Jews.

Notably, both Shnaper’s speech and the physical structure of the Philadelphia memorial place the Holocaust within the wider sweep of Jewish history through the invocation of past tragedies. This type of rhetoric is also present in a 1963 pamphlet advertising the construction of the memorial, which states, “Neither Tamerlaine [sic], Attila, nor Torquemada inflicted as much torture on the Jews as Hitler.” In this view, the Holocaust is not an isolated incident, but rather a reverberation of oppression that reaches far into the past. The Philadelphia memorial did not originate this trope. There is evidence that invocations of past tragedies in the commemoration of the Holocaust were already present in American Jewish rhetoric during the early 1950s, a period when the extent of outward-facing Holocaust memory within that community is hotly contested by later historians. Hasia Diner brings to light a prayer written in 1952 by the American Jewish

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48 The Monument to the Six Million Jewish Martyrs pamphlet, 1963, Box 1, Folder 3, Abram Shnaper Papers on the Monument to the Six Million Jewish Martyrs.
Congress. The passage is supposed to be recited during the Seder of the Jewish holiday of Passover, and mourns those who were lost in the Holocaust. The prayer reads in part: “On this night of the Seder we remember with reverence and love the six million of our people of the European exile who perished at the hands of a tyrant more wicked than the Pharaoh who enslaved our fathers in Egypt.” In this way, the prayer drew parallels between the horrors inflicted upon Jews in the Biblical Exodus story and during the Holocaust. This text was not confined to the Seder ritual, but was published yearly by Jewish newspapers and distributed in hundreds of thousands of copies by Jewish organizations. Thus, it seems that the use of previous tragedies to commemorate the Holocaust had a broad circulation in this era as well. The use of similar rhetoric during the erection of the Philadelphia memorial to the rhetoric produced during the “silent” era of the 1950s suggests that the planners of the Philadelphia monument were not working within a memory vacuum. Rather, the tropes they adopted to commemorate the Holocaust built upon prior rhetoric already more than a decade in the making. However, it is significant that the prayer circulated during the 1950s was largely meant for Jews, rather than the general American public. Even though it used similar themes to past commemorative activities, perhaps the Philadelphia monument was novel in its public-facing acknowledgement of the tragedy.

Overall, the planners of the Philadelphia memorial used significant amounts of religious symbolism in their pronouncements about the monument. However, there are also signs that the religious significance of the monument was at times downplayed for, or even obscured from, non-Jewish observers. As previously mentioned, the menorah referenced in the monument’s 1964 fact sheet is referred to as a “seven branched candlestick,” a perplexing terminological

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49 Diner, We Remember, 19.
50 Ibid.
choice. Furthermore, an earlier draft of the sheet, which is also archived in Shnaper’s files with his grammatical corrections, contains the word “menorah” in place of this wordy and overcomplicated phrase. Why did the Jewish Agency decide to remove “menorah” from their description of the monument? The most likely explanation would be an effort to appeal to two separate audiences simultaneously. The menorah was originally used in the Temple in Jerusalem and is still a distinctive symbol of Judaism. Notably, rather than opting for the overtly religious symbology referenced in the original draft of the statement, the Jewish Agency decided to remove it in favor of descriptive language. As previously discussed, mentioning the menorah portrayed in the monument encourages Jews to connect the Holocaust to the past tragedies that have plagued the people, and thus see the value of Holocaust commemoration. However, the presence of a menorah, a distinctly religious symbol, in the description also has the potential to make religious Jews feel detached from their Gentile or secular Jewish neighbors, for whom the symbol has little potency. Furthermore, it could isolate Gentile or non-religious Jewish observers, making them feel disconnected from Holocaust memory. This could potentially undermine the document’s aim of using American values to spread the message of Holocaust commemoration to the wider American public. It would seem that the drafters reached a compromise. While, to a religious Jew, the “seven branched candlestick” mentioned in the statue description is a clear reference to a menorah, the reference might be missed by a Gentile reading the statement. In this way, it is possible for the reference to bolster the religious allusion directed at observant Jews, while not negatively impacting the messaging directed at a broader American audience, including both Gentiles and secular Jews.

Draft Fact Sheet, 1963, SCRC 96, Box 1, Folder 4, Abram Shnaper Papers on the Monument to the Six Million Jewish Martyrs.
The extensive Jewish religious rhetoric employed by the planners and designers of the Philadelphia monument indicates that the monument was built with an eye towards local community dynamics. The monument, built by two Jewish organizations, appeals directly to an American Jewish audience reaching its most religiously observant level in modern history. At the same time, certain stylistic choices in public promotional documents suggest that the monument planners wished to avoid alienating the majority Gentile population of Philadelphia and the United States. Thus, the rhetoric used attempts to strike a fine balance which pays acute attention to temporal and locational considerations.

In addition, the Philadelphia memorial bears extensive connections to the State of Israel in the time surrounding its inauguration. These ties are underlain by the larger trend of Israel’s central role in Holocaust remembrance during the immediate postwar years. Nearly 50% of the Jews who immigrated to Israel between 1946 and 1953 were Holocaust survivors.\(^{52}\) Due to this influx, as well as Israel’s role as the only Jewish State, the new 1948 nation soon after the Second World War took on monument-based projects to commemorate the tragedy. These took the form of the Holocaust Cellar, a memorial built on Mount Zion in 1949, and Israel’s national Holocaust museum Yad Vashem, established in 1953.\(^{53}\) These prominent memorials, built at a time when American Jewry had yet to start constructing conspicuous monuments to commemorate the Holocaust, cemented Israel’s status as the leading nation in fostering Holocaust memory. This status was further bolstered in the early 1960s when Israel held a public trial for Adolf Eichmann, the Nazi bureaucrat who managed the logistics of the Holocaust. The Philadelphia memorial’s planners, in the monument’s early years, showed through their actions

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\(^{53}\) Doron Bar, "Holocaust Commemoration in Israel during the 1950s: The Holocaust Cellar on Mount Zion," *Jewish Social Studies* 12, no. 1 (Fall, 2005).
and rhetoric the important role of Israel in Holocaust commemoration. In this way, Holocaust memorialization at the monument was envisioned in a manner consistent with the era in which it was constructed.

In his speech at the monument’s 1964 dedication, Abram Shnaper invokes the importance of Israel for the Jewish people. Specifically, Shnaper uses language that connects the resistance efforts of Holocaust victims to the foundation of the State of Israel in 1948. He states, “the uprising in the Warsaw Ghetto served as a beacon for our people, and in the same spirit the heroic Israeli army won the war of independence.”

Firstly, Shnaper’s use of the phrase “our people” indicates that this sentiment is primarily directed at Jews in his audience. He also attempts to connect resistance efforts in the Warsaw Ghetto to the Israeli War of Independence, a moment that was seen as the culmination of Zionism which defended the right to Jewish self-determination. In this manner, while not asserting a direct causal relationship, Shnaper does seem to suggest that resistance efforts during the Holocaust are connected in spirit to the defense of Israeli sovereignty a few short years later. In this way, Shnaper gives Israeli national history a prominent role in Holocaust memory at the site through comparing it to the heroism of resistance against the Nazis. Furthermore, Shnaper’s rhetorical flourishes place large emphasis on Israel’s right to national self-determination. This relates closely to American Cold War rhetoric, as discussed later.

However, Israel’s connection to the site was far from merely rhetorical. On May 28, 1964, just over a month after the monument’s dedication, Abram Shnaper sent an urgent telegram to Israeli Prime Minister Levi Eshkol in Jerusalem. The communication, seemingly sent in anticipation of Eshkol’s imminent trip to Philadelphia, read:

Lt Honorable Premier Levi Eskol [sic]=

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54 Abram Shnaper Speech at Philadelphia Holocaust Memorial Dedication, April 26 1964, Shnaper Papers.
Please be advised that in our city of Philadelphia on April 26, 1964 has been erected a bronze monument created by the famous sculptor Nathan Rapoport in tribute to the six million Jewish martyrs. This is the first monument in the United States of such great magnitude and stature. It is located in the heart of Philadelphia, accepted and sanctioned by our municipal government. It is now our desire that the Premier of Israel should extend the dignity that is due our kadashim by placing a wreath at this monument. We appeal to you directly after having exhausted all regular channels because we feel that your tribute could set a precedent of zohar for future visiting dignitaries. May we have the favor of your reply?

As Shnaper himself says in his message, this was not his first attempt to ensure Eshkol’s visit to the monument. The day before sending the message to Eshkol, Shnaper received a letter from Avraham Harman, the Israeli Ambassador to the United States. Harman, responding to a similar request, states, “I am afraid it is now too late to change what is a very tight program.”

However, Shnaper seemingly had success in going over Harman’s head directly to the Prime Minister’s office. As reported in the June 1st, 1964 edition of the New York Herald Tribune, “A few minutes after arriving at the hotel [in Philadelphia], Mr. Eshkol and his entourage were taken in another motorcade for a brief look at a monument on the Benjamin Franklin Parkway.” The article, going on to describe the monument, makes clear that it is the Philadelphia Holocaust memorial. Eshkol’s visit, only a little more than a month after the monument’s dedication, was seemingly a spectacle in itself. As described in the same article, “Some 100 persons, singing Israeli songs and applauding the arrival of the Prime Minister, were at the monument site when he arrived.”

Eshkol’s warm welcome at the site, as well as Shnaper’s persistence in securing his visit, demonstrates the important role of Israel in the

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55 Shnaper letter to Prime Minister Levi Eshkol, May 28th 1964, SCRC 96, Box 3, Folder 1, Abram Shnaper Papers on the Monument to the Six Million Jewish Martyrs.
56 Avraham Harman letter to Shnaper, May 27th 1964, SCRC 96, Box 3, Folder 1, Abram Shnaper Papers on the Monument to the Six Million Jewish Martyrs.
57 New York Herald Tribune article “Eshkol Starts Visit to U.S.”, June 1st 1964, SCRC 96, Box 3, Folder 1, Abram Shnaper Papers on the Monument to the Six Million Jewish Martyrs.
58 Ibid.
conception of Holocaust memory on display at the site. For Shnaper and those who heralded Eshkol’s visit, the Prime Minister of Israel gave legitimacy and meaning to their memorial project, in line with the cultural realities at the time the monument was dedicated.

In addition, the monument planners’ engagement with Israel as an important piece of their memorial project speaks to the international nature of Holocaust memory. Rather than confining Holocaust memory to a local or national context, the planners envisioned Israel, and the visitation of its Prime Minister, as part of their idea for cultivating Holocaust memory. In this manner, the Philadelphia memorial shows an early example in the development of international cooperation in the production of Holocaust remembrance.

Furthermore, the memorial planners stress the parallels between the story of the Holocaust and the importance of American principles of freedom and liberty. Those who opposed Nazism are presented as embracing the values on which America was founded. At the same time, the construction of the monument in Philadelphia is connected to the city’s status as the United States’ first capital and the birthplace of American democracy. This connection between patriotism and Holocaust remembrance must be framed within the context of the Cold War. At the time of the monument’s construction, the Cold War was at its peak, with the Cuban Missile Crisis occurring only a few short years prior. At this time, American values were used as propaganda as a display of superiority against the oppressive governments of the Eastern Bloc. Historian Alan Brinkley notes this phenomenon, writing, “the cold war also gave an enormous boost to American exceptionalism and triumphalism, the idea that America was carrying the banner of freedom in a world in which freedom was threatened.”

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Specifically, American values had a role in arguing against the USSR and its subservient satellite states. These countries, including Poland (the site of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising), had a right to self-determination which was being curtailed by Soviet imperialism. Invocations of American freedom and liberty thus marked a criticism of Soviet communism, and a call to action against the suppression of nation-state formation. This rhetoric was incorporated into Holocaust memory during the construction and dedication of the Philadelphia memorial. With the Nazis as a malevolent foil, those who oppose them are framed as embracing American values of liberty, whether these individuals are American or not. In fact, the previously discussed heavy emphasis placed on Israel’s national self-determination is a part of this dynamic. Israel can be seen as a model nation, in which the spirit of freedom inspired the populace to fight for independence. Thus, through the lens of the Cold War, Israel should be seen as an exemplar for those countries in the iron grip of the Warsaw Pact, inspiring the possibility of independence.

In his dedication speech, Shnaper makes heavy-handed allusions to American values and the nation’s founding. When talking about the historic importance of the monument’s erection, Shnaper expounds, “it is no coincidence that the first monument of this nature should be erected in Philadelphia, the city where American independence was born.” He goes on to talk about the importance of the monument in standing against “such cruelty, such barbarism, [and] such terrorism” as occurred to Jews under the Nazis. Thus, Shnaper asserts that American values of freedom and liberty, in opposition to tyrannical government, are naturally aligned with Holocaust commemoration. It is because Philadelphia is so linked to America’s founding principles that the city built a memorial before any other in the United States. Remembering and disavowing the cruelty of the Holocaust is framed as an American activity that reaffirms a commitment to the value of national liberty. Thus, Shnaper’s framing invites those who care about American

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60 Abram Shnaper Speech at Philadelphia Holocaust Memorial Dedication, April 26 1964, Shnaper Papers.
principles, whether they are Jewish or not, to participate in Holocaust commemoration as an American patriotic activity. Thus, his rhetoric speaks to not just the Holocaust, but wider geopolitical realities of the Cold War and the repression of national freedom by the Soviet Union.

A similar framing can be observed in the fact sheet about the Philadelphia memorial. The sheet explains that the memorial is meant to honor “the human struggle for dignity and freedom” during the Holocaust, including the victims who “raised the torch of freedom in the midst of darkness” and those who “sacrificed their lives on the altar of liberty.”61 The invocation of freedom twice within a single paragraph places particular emphasis upon the honorable display of this concept amongst Holocaust victims. While not stated explicitly, the passage appears to be extolling victims’ commitment to American principles, such as freedom and liberty. This connection is made explicit in the next paragraph, which states that it is “fitting and proper that this Monument be erected in Philadelphia, the birthplace of American liberty… dedicated to the ideals of justice, freedom, and peace.”62 A connection is made between American principles and the values of the Holocaust victims who resisted the Nazi’s murderous plot. Again, honoring the Holocaust and the bravery of those who experienced it is framed as an American activity that aligns with values of freedom and liberty. Thus, the memorial’s interpretation is firmly embedded within American criticisms of Soviet tyranny and the suppression of self-determination in the 1960s.

THE MIAMI BEACH HOLOCAUST MONUMENT

In the January 28th, 1990 edition of the Orlando Sentinel, the paper’s Miami-based writer Maya Bell wrote about the Holocaust Memorial Miami Beach, which was slated to officially open later that year. Reflecting on the monument’s purpose, Bell wrote, “For the 10 people who

61 Fact Sheet, March 26 1964, Shnaper Papers.
62 Ibid.
raised and donated $3 million to build the private park, the memorial accomplishes its goal. It is a tribute to a perished civilization. It is a place where the living can mourn the dead who have no cemetery. It is a classroom where those who are too young to remember will be taught never to forget." To a surprising degree, Bell captured the multidimensional goals of the monument within this short statement.

When the Miami Beach monument was being constructed, elderly Jews—many of them Holocaust survivors—formed a significant part of the South Florida population. For the purposes of this paper, Holocaust survivors will be defined as those Jews who lived in Nazi-controlled or allied countries between 1933 and 1945, as well as those forced to flee their homes due to Nazi invasions. For this constituency, much importance was placed on the mourning of loved ones who had perished in the Holocaust, leading site architect Kenneth Treister and other monument planners to design and interpret the memorial as a place to mourn the tragedy’s victims. In addition, the monument was built at a time when Holocaust education was becoming significantly more prevalent within American academia. In line with these trends, the monument became a source of educational materials and experiences for school children and the general population. These efforts have intensified and grown up to the present day. These two focuses shed light on Miami Beach memorial’s response to its environmental and temporal surroundings.

The Holocaust Memorial Miami Beach began to take shape in 1984, when local Holocaust survivors decided to build a monument in honor of the Jews who perished. Leading the charge were Abe Resnick, a Miami Beach City Commissioner, and Helen Fagin, a scholar in Jewish Studies. This group quickly settled on Treister to design the monument. He envisioned a monument centered around a seven-story hand reaching for the sky. Many local residents

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62 Bell, “Holocaust Memorial Stirs Anger.”
64 “Creating the Holocaust Memorial Miami Beach.”
objected to the design on artistic and aesthetic merits, leading to disputes in the local city
council. Helen Kohen, an art critic for the Miami Herald, said provocatively, ”The memorial is
ugly. There's nothing welcoming about it. I know people will say neither were the ovens, but
we're not talking about ovens. We're talking about art.” Furthermore, The Miami Beach Garden
Club, located next to the proposed monument site, had been planning to expand onto the land
granted to the memorial. One garden club member objected to the monument by saying “Gloom
is doom! Don’t turn one of this city’s few bright spots into a cemetery.” However, the
monument eventually received the green light, beginning construction on city-owned land. The
creators of the monument say that its location is bashert, or destiny, because its legal address is
1933-1945 Meridian Avenue, the same range as the years in which the Nazis were in power and
carried out their oppressive policies against the Jewish people.

Treister spent three years crafting his bronze monument at a foundry in Mexico City, built
to a slightly lower height after the public objections. The pieces were carefully transported to
Florida and assembled on-site. The memorial was finally dedicated, after years of work, on
February 4th, 1990, with noted Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel in attendance. More than 5,000
people attended the site’s inauguration, including many Holocaust survivors and their relatives.

The Miami Beach Holocaust Memorial was constructed on Meridian Avenue in the
center of Miami Beach. The prominent four-story bronze hand at the memorial’s center is
marked by a tattooed serial number on its wrist, identifying it as belonging to a victim of the
Auschwitz concentration camp, where all the prisoners were marked in such a manner.
as *The Sculpture of Love and Anguish*, this marks the physical and emotional center of the site.\(^{73}\)

Clinging to the hand are the bronze, naked figures of more than a hundred symbolic Holocaust victims. Some hold on for dear life or appear to be in the process of falling, while others reach down to save their loved ones. Scattered in the circular area surrounding the monument are various other bronze figures depicting Holocaust victims, including men, women, and children.

\(^{73}\) "Holocaust Memorial Miami Beach: The Memorial in Pictures."
kneeling and screaming in anguish, parents comforting their children, and figures lying on the ground dead. The site is encircled by a pond with only a small pathway connecting the memorial to the mainland, effectively making it an island in the center of a body of water. The small tunnel-like passageway connecting to the main site has the names of various concentration camps etched on the walls. Other notable features of the site include black granite panels with images of the Holocaust and an eternal flame.\textsuperscript{74}

In his book \textit{Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning}, Jay Winter establishes the phrase “sites of mourning” within the study of historical collective memory. For Winter, this phrase suggests that commemorative sites for tragic events can act as a focal point for those who wish to engage in mourning activities for those lost. Winter’s framework of a “site of mourning” applies fittingly to the structure and usage of the Miami Beach Holocaust Memorial. Indeed, although his primary focus is on the First World War, Winter might as well be referring to people mourning those lost in the Holocaust when he writes “we must attend to the faces and feelings of those who were bereft, and who made the pilgrimages to these sites of memory, large and small, in order to begin to understand how men and women tried to cope with one of the signal catastrophes of our century.”\textsuperscript{75}

The Miami Beach monument’s role as a site of mourning is a product of the place and time in which it was constructed. As reflected in a demographic survey released in 1990, the same year in which the monument was dedicated, the South Florida Jewish population was a robust 600,000, about 10% of American Jews.\textsuperscript{76} The report states that this population’s demographics differed from American Jewry as a whole, skewing significantly older. While only

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\textsuperscript{74} Ibid. \\
\textsuperscript{75} Winter, \textit{Sites of Memory}, 116. \\
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12% of Los Angeles Jews and 23% of New York City and Philadelphia Jews were age 60 or older, 44% of Miami Jews, 67% of Palm Beach Jews, and 73% of Boca Raton/ Delray Jews fell within the same demographic. The report explains this population distribution by stating that many of the elderly Jews in South Florida moved there when they retired. Due to the large number of elderly Jews in the region, there was also a large proportion of Holocaust survivors in the population. At the time of the monument’s erection, the Holocaust had ended about 45 years prior, meaning that many Jews who survived the war as teenagers and young adults were now amongst the elderly cohort moving to Florida in large numbers. Treister estimates that 30,000 Holocaust survivors lived in South Florida at the time the monument was erected, about 5% of its Jewish population.

The monument’s mourning-based utility was well aligned with the needs of this significant survivor community. For these individuals, the Holocaust was not merely a tragedy that affected their religious community, but a personal event in which they suffered and lost innumerable loved ones. The monument was constructed as a place for these people to process their bereavement and grief. Bernie Cytryn, whose family perished in the Holocaust, reflected on this purpose the day that the monument was dedicated, stating, “There isn't anyone here today who has a family intact.”

Treister is one of the biggest proponents of seeing the Miami Beach monument as a place of mourning for victims. On the Miami Beach Memorial website, there is an artist’s statement written by Treister in which he expresses his creative process and the motivations behind his sculpture. Notably, while Treister’s statement reflects the enormity of the tragedy, it also specifically tries to pay tribute to Holocaust victims as individuals. Treister writes, “each of the six

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77 Ibid. 97.
79 Adams, “5,000 Dedicate The 'Arm of Six Million'.”
million was a person, with family, friends, and a full life... each enduring the most excruciating agony every second, minute, hour, and day, of the Holocaust.”\textsuperscript{80} Rather than merely referencing the number six million, Treister is trying to examine what the number is counting; namely, specific people who suffered at the hands of the Nazis and, crucially, have those who were close to and will miss them.

Treister makes the theme of mourning more explicit when he writes that he was hired “to create a memorial garden that would give survivors and those who lost loved ones a place to visit in lieu of the cemetery they do not have.”\textsuperscript{81} Treister’s reference to a cemetery is a motif that is repeated by many other commentators speaking about the Miami Beach memorial. His reference alludes to normative Jewish mourning rituals, as well as their disruption by the Holocaust. In traditional Jewish mourning, loved ones visit the grave of the deceased multiple times, including during burial, the tombstone unveiling, and occasionally thereafter to pay their respects. However, for many victims of the Holocaust, such grave-based rituals became impossible due to the Nazis’ disposal of bodies through incineration and mass graves. Treister makes clear that his monument was built to fill this gap, giving mourners a place to visit and remember their loved ones. Notably, through invoking a cemetery, Treister frames the site as specifically a place where people can remember individuals they once knew. Such is distinctly different from the experience of visiting the site to remember the Holocaust as a whole, or the impact it had on the Jewish people.

Within his architectural style, Treister developed specific elements of the Miami Beach monument to allow for the mourning of victims. One of the chief features which serves this purpose are the black granite walls surrounding the site, inscribed with the names of those

\textsuperscript{80} Treister, “In the Eyes of the Sculptor.”
\textsuperscript{81} Ibid.
murdered in the Holocaust. Rather than being randomly selected, the names on the memorial were submitted by family members, friends, or others who wished to see individuals included. One of the monument creators, reflecting on the names inscribed on the walls, states, “we look at the memorial basically as a cemetery, which is essentially what it is. There are no graves for those individuals’ names who are engraved in that memorial. It’s their place of rest.” As shown by this sentiment, the engraving of individual victims’ names becomes a central piece of the monument’s commemorative and mourning purposes. The fact that names act as an important part of mourning within this memorial is certainly not unique. Sites of mourning often have lists of victims—notably including the Vietnam War and 9/11 memorials (dedicated in 1982 and 2011, respectively)—allowing observers to find the names of those they knew and meditate on their loss. In addition, both the Vietnam and 9/11 memorials have the names of victims physically engraved in stone, allowing visitors to make rubbings of the names of those they knew and keep them as mementos to remember the individuals. The Miami Beach Holocaust Memorial appears to serve this same function, as documented by students from Gan Noar Religious School making rubbings of the panels during their visit to the site. In addition, Treister included an eternal flame within his design of the monument. Eternal flames are common features at tombs of unknown soldiers in various countries including France, the United States, India, and Russia, and are used as a focal point for mourning activities and rituals. Perhaps, this feature is meant to complement the listed names, honoring the Holocaust victims who do not have their names inscribed.

82 “Creating the Holocaust Memorial Miami Beach.”
83 “Guestbook & Reflections.” The Holocaust Memorial of Miami Beach, holocausmemorialmiamibeach.org/guestbook/.
84 “Holocaust Memorial Miami Beach: The Memorial in Pictures.”
In addition to these specific architectural additions, Treister’s overall design style contributes to the ability of the site to act as a place of mourning. Specifically, Treister adopted a realist style which portrayed the Holocaust in a concrete and non-abstract manner. In an interview, Treister describes his method by stating, “I didn’t want my memorial to be abstract. You lose the meaning. I made it very specific. I took pictures from the Holocaust and designed a lineal story so people could see the photographs that were taken. They are etched on granite walls.” In this way, Treister emphasizes the lack of ambiguity in his memorial design. His use of actual pictures and his design of the monument within a linear narrative serve to make overt references to the event he commemorates. The realism extends far beyond the narrative recounted on the granite walls. Treister’s choice to artistically represent Holocaust victims as fully-formed human figures within his sculptural portrayal marks a significant nod to naturalism. Treister made this artistic choice consciously, noting in his artistic statement about the memorial, “The totality of the Holocaust cannot be created in stone and bronze ...but I had to try.”

Interestingly, Treister’s design choice stands in stark contrast to a trend noted by Jay Winter in *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning*. Winter asserts that the horrors of “Hiroshima and Auschwitz” led to the widespread conclusion that “perhaps there was no way adequately to express the hideousness and scale of the cruelties” and prompted a dramatic move towards abstraction in artistic expression. Standing against this trend, Treister’s bronze figures at the Miami Beach Holocaust Memorial are quite realistic, drawing from the figurative, traditional school that Winter claims was largely eschewed in depictions of the Second World War.

In his public statements, Treister gives multiple examples of the way in which his realistic monument design allowed people directly affected by the Holocaust to mourn all that

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85 Oldt, “Renowned Artist Kenneth Treister.”
86 Treister, “In the Eyes of the Sculptor.”
they lost. Treister, in an interview with Rabbi Robyn Fisher, explains that, early in the memorial construction process, the Miami Beach City Council had a hearing in which many locals objected to the monument’s construction. Treister remembers that the mayor was convinced to let the project proceed after hearing testimony from a specific local Holocaust survivor. As recounted by Treister:

She told the story that she was a violin player, as a young child, and toured Poland as a child prodigy, and she had married a young musician who was the pianist, and during the war, she told, the Nazis deliberately amputated her arm so she couldn't play the violin, and her husband's arm so he couldn't play the piano, and she got up and said ‘This is gonna give me my arm back.’

While telling this story, Treister gets teary-eyed, indicating the emotionality of this moment in his memory. The survivor’s testimony is clearly meant to mirror the design of the proposed site: an arm rising out of the ground. This arm, she claims, will replace the one that was taken from her by the Nazis. In this way, the site architecture becomes a primary means for processing her ordeal during the Holocaust. Treister, by designing the site in this way, allows for it to resonate with her own personal experiences of loss.

There are numerous other examples that Treister highlights in which his realistic site architecture enables survivors to process and mourn their losses. One occurred during the monument’s dedication, when a woman came up to Treister to say that she believed a photograph etched into the granite walls of the monument depicted her and her mother during the War. When Treister told Elie Wiesel, who was speaking at the monument’s dedication, what the woman had said, Wiesel replied, “Ken, that’s right, that is her, and that is her mother, and it’s also thousands of other little girls and thousands of other mothers.” Through this statement, Wiesel highlights that the memorial architecture speaks to the universal pain felt by those who experienced the

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89 Ibid.
Holocaust. Just as the woman saw her mother in the photograph, whether really her or not, many others would see their own experiences and pain reflected as well. Treister’s inclusion of photographs within the memorial plan allowed for such experiences of mourning by those who lived through the Holocaust.

Other planners who helped to develop the monument bring a similar perspective to its interpretation, centering mourning practices. In a video produced by the memorial to document its own creation, a story is told of how Dr. Helen Fagin was visiting the site during its construction when she found the names of various concentration camps on stones placed in the floor of the passageway leading to the site. One of the first names she saw was Treblinka, the camp where her parents had both perished during the Holocaust. She immediately raised her objection with the rest of the memorial’s founders, and it was agreed to move them to the walls of the passage. One co-founder of the memorial remembers Fagin saying, “we are walking on graves.”90 This story makes it apparent that for one of the founders of the site, the names of the various camps commemorate those who died in the Holocaust. The name of Treblinka carved into the stone acts as the grave for her parents who perished there, and she wishes to give the inscription the respect due to a place of rest.

Visitors to the site, who had no role in its creation, interpreted and utilized the monument as a place for personal mourning and remembrance. One of the site planners recalls that when his aunt was walking through the bronze figures at the memorial, she was particularly taken with statues of infants lying on the ground. She lay down next to the small statues and began to cry. When asked what she was doing, she stated that the statues reminded her of her own children, who had presumably perished in the Holocaust.91 The site architecture moved her to mourn for

90 “Creating the Holocaust Memorial Miami Beach.”
91 Ibid.
her family, and remember what she had lost. In another instance, as reported by the South Florida Sun Sentinel, a man named Sam Shatz brought a poster with images of his brother and sister to the opening of the memorial in 1990. Having lost touch with his siblings during the War, Shatz believed they had died in concentration camps and was asking survivors if they recognized them, hoping to gain closure or miraculously be reunited. In this way, Shatz was using the memorial to process his loss, and attempt to overcome the uncertainty brought into his life by the tragedy of the Holocaust.

Most of the discussion above highlights the potential for the Miami Beach monument to be used as a place of mourning by survivors who lost specific individuals in the Holocaust. However, it should be noted that these mourning activities are also applicable to audiences who are not themselves survivors, or are not mourning specific victims. In an interview, Treister says that he once got a letter from a teacher who had brought his class to the memorial. The teacher stated that during their visit, a member of his class had stood transfixed in front of one part of the monument for nearly twenty minutes. Describing the specific sculpture in question, Treister stated, “There's one piece of sculpture which shows two elderly people saying goodbye. They might have been married for 50, 60, 70 years and they're saying their goodbyes before they're being killed in the Holocaust.” After standing there with the sculpture, the student took off her jacket and put it on the shoulders of the statue of the woman, trying to shield her from the cold night. The statue, for the student, had become a representation of all of the victims who lost their loved ones and their lives during the Holocaust, and she was paying her respects to them. While she had not personally lost anyone she knew in the tragedy, she was able to utilize the sculpture to remember and mourn the victims at large who had lost their lives.

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92 Adams, “5,000 Dedicate The ‘Arm of Six Million’.”
Engagement with the monument by individuals who did not experience the Holocaust firsthand is certainly possible, as shown by the example above. However, Treister and other monument planners do stress the particular importance of the monument as a place of mourning for those who lost loved ones. The issue, in present times, is that the number of people this applies to is rapidly dwindling. World War Two ended nearly 77 years ago, meaning all Holocaust survivors are now elderly. Within a few decades, no one will be able to personally remember or mourn those lost in the tragedy. Treister directly recognized this dynamic, saying in an interview, “The memory of the Holocaust will disappear eventually. People who experienced it directly are dying. The memorial was my small contribution to keeping the memory alive.”

When all the survivors are gone, will the monument’s utilization for personal mourning fade away, being completely replaced by other forms of engagement?

As shown in their most recent ceremonies, the monument operators appear to be planning for this eventuality, and trying to preserve mourning-based modes of engagement. At the beginning of the monument’s 2021 virtual Yom HaShoah commemoration, the chair of the event, Jessica Katz, identifies herself as a third-generation survivor. By this, she seems to mean that her grandparents survived the Holocaust. While she was not personally a survivor of the Nazi atrocities, this label ties her to the stories of her ancestors, making their story her own. Similar rhetoric is used in many Jewish rituals, including the Passover Seder, in which individuals are encouraged to speak as if they themselves were rescued from Egypt. This type of identificational practice has the potential to allow for the continuation of personalized mourning and remembrance long after all Holocaust survivors have passed away, with their descendants taking their places. The end of the Yom HaShoah ceremony alludes to this by having six individuals

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94 Oldt, “Renowned Artist Kenneth Treister.”
95 Jewish Miami, “Yom Hashoah 2021.”
recite the Kaddish prayer in memory of the Jews who died. While five are Holocaust survivors, one is identified as a second-generation survivor. Even when all of the survivors who can personally mourn those who died are gone, the monument seems to be preparing for others to take up the mantle and take on the responsibilities of their ancestors.

Hence, at the Miami Beach Holocaust Memorial, Holocaust education plays an important role in the memorial’s purpose and functioning. Fostering Holocaust awareness in the next generation, and the use of the monument as a pedagogical tool, are features which figure prominently in materials and statements proliferated around the monument. This emphasis is a reflection of wider developments in American Holocaust education in this era. As explained by Stephen R. Haynes in his 1998 article “Holocaust Education at American Colleges and Universities: A Report on the Current Situation,” specific attention to the Holocaust in American academic circles experienced a meteoric rise throughout the 1980s and 1990s. Writing about the Holocaust in higher education, Haynes said, “most Holocaust courses currently listed in college catalogues did not exist as recently as 1980. Indeed, the past fifteen years have seen a veritable explosion of courses, conferences and faculty appointments in Holocaust studies.” Haynes attributes this increased academic focus to the high level of interest in the Holocaust reached by the general public in the late 1970s. The Miami Beach memorial, dedicated in 1990, thus came to fruition at a time when Holocaust education took on central importance in American academia. These influences molded the monument’s design, and the way individuals interacted with the site.

When speaking about the memorial at its 1990 dedication, Elie Wiesel made allusions to the importance of educating future generations about the tragedy of the Holocaust. In his speech,

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96 Ibid.
Wiesel provocatively stated, “What is worse than dying at Auschwitz is to forget those who died at Auschwitz.” The monument has largely upheld this theme through stressing education in its structural design. As previously discussed, the monument boasts granite walls inscribed with photographs of the Holocaust. Accompanying these images is a textual narrative written by Dr. Helen Fagin which recounts the tragedies that befell the Jews throughout the Nazi period. Fagin’s text was seen by the monument creators as complementary to Treister’s memorial design, allowing the monument to be utilized by various audiences for differing purposes. Norman Braman, one of the planners, describes this cooperation by saying, “I like to say, words by Fagin and music by Treister.” In a video produced by the site, it is explained that in addition to the site’s purpose as a place of mourning for Holocaust survivors, it “created an educational and emotional experience for other visitors.” The video shows clips of visitors reading and interacting with Fagin’s text while describing the educational mission of the site, stressing the importance of this architectural feature for learning purposes.

Another important piece of the memorial’s Holocaust education is developed through cooperation with local schools and classes. South Florida teachers bring students to the memorial on field trips, allowing them to learn about the Holocaust through touring the site. The Miami Beach monument’s committee, with the help of prolific Holocaust scholar Michael Berenbaum, published a nearly 150 page guide meant to assist teachers in crafting curricular activities around class visits. The guide includes instructions for teachers on how to broach the Holocaust with their students, offering advice such as how to humanize victims, avoid overgeneralizations, and construct lesson plans that do not result in reenactment. Also among the guide’s materials are six

98 Adams, “5,000 Dedicate The ‘Arm of Six Million’.”
99 “Creating the Holocaust Memorial Miami Beach.”
100 Ibid.
101 Berenbaum, Study Guide for the Holocaust Memorial Miami Beach.
lesson plans from which to choose, which complement a visit to the site. All of the lessons are labelled with the same overarching theme, which states, “The Holocaust happened to men, women and children, each with his or her own stories.”102 In this way, the lessons are structured to stress the individuality of Holocaust victims, attempting to ensure that they are appreciated as individuals who suffered and perished. Such themes are integrated through pedagogical tools, including an assignment to write a letter to a Holocaust survivor.103 The development of this in-depth guide highlights the memorial’s commitment to encouraging Holocaust education in local schools.

In recent time, with survivors passing away in large numbers, the site has redoubled its commitment to encouraging Holocaust education. In the monument’s virtual 2021 Kristallnacht commemoration, speakers talked extensively about the educational mission of the memorial. Daniella Levine Cavas, the mayor of Miami-Dade County, stated, “we know that this education is critically important, especially as the survivors of the Holocaust transition and are no longer able to communicate one-on-one, which is the most effective kind of education.”104 Sidney Pertnoy, the monument’s president, also emphasized education within his remarks:

The Holocaust Memorial Miami Beach is an important tool in our collective effort to transmit education of the Holocaust. Thousands of visitors come to this memorial every year and gain a deeper understanding of the Holocaust period, as well as a lasting awareness of the savage threat of genocide. Additionally, the Holocaust memorial is involved in a year-round teaching process that extends the lessons and legacy of the Shoah to youngsters in our schools and to adults through our community education.105

Pertnoy’s statement references both visitation to the monument itself and school outreach as central pieces of the memorial’s educational mission. He goes on to reveal that residents of

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102 Ibid. 57.
103 Ibid. 59.
104 Jewish Miami, “Kristallnacht November 7th, 2021.”
105 Ibid.
Miami Beach voted to approve additional funding to the monument, allowing them to construct a new education center to further buoy their influence. Pertnoy suggests that the monument’s educational mission is a crucial part of its work that will expand well into the future.

THE BERLIN HOLOCAUST MONUMENT

Simon Ungers, one of the architects who competed to design the Berlin Holocaust memorial, was very opinionated about the utility of the monument. He wrote that “whoever wants to mourn for the victims must go to the spaces of destruction…our kind of memory is based more on the interests of the persecutors, and less on the victims.”

Although Ungers’s design was ultimately not selected, his conceptualization of the site closely matches its current commemorative purpose. The site is largely meant for the German public, and therefore intimately interacts with ideas of historical guilt. This purpose is reflected in the site’s architecture, and the manner in which its founders and general observers speak about the memorial.

The Berlin monument and its interpretation is largely a reflection of the time and place in which it was built. The monument was originally conceived at a time when Germany was grappling with its culpability for Nazi crimes and its place in the modern world given this history. The memorial reflects these realities, and can be seen as a physical manifestation of German guilt. On the other hand, some believed that Germany should be able to move beyond its Nazi past, and for some of these people the monument also acts as a physical vehicle for this shift.

The Berlin Holocaust memorial was originally conceived by journalist Lea Rosh and historian Eberhard Jäckel in 1988. It took years of effort for them to make significant progress

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106 Goldman, Memory Passages, 146.
107 Ibid. 140.
on organizing, and a contest was announced for the design of the monument in 1994, after German reunification. In June 1995, it was announced that Christine Jakob-Marks had submitted the winning design. Her design would have consisted of a large slab of stone engraved with the four million known names of Holocaust victims. However, controversy erupted about the project’s lack of abstraction, with clear aesthetic nods to traditional Jewish forms of mourning. Chancellor Helmut Kohl vetoed the monument two days after the design was announced, sending the effort back to the drawing board. Perhaps, Jakob-Marks’ design did not speak to a German audience because of its emphasis on the mourning of individual victims rather than the actions of the perpetrators.

In 1997, another contest was held to determine the memorial design. Helmut Kohl preferred the structure designed by Peter Eisenman and Richard Serra, but asked them to alter their plan. Serra would not agree to the changes, and dropped out of the project. In 1999, the Bundestag approved Eisenman’s modified plans for the memorial. The structure took a considerable amount of time to build, and was not formally dedicated until 2005.

The memorial site, established within sight of the Reichstag building in the center of Berlin, covers an area of five acres, and is made up of 2,711 gray stelae. At this large scale, the monument is described by Johan Åhr as dwarfing all of those erected to commemorate wars in Washington D.C. The stelae are arranged in neat and orderly rows and columns at uneven heights, ranging from barely perceptible rises above the ground level to four meters. Generally,

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108 Ibid. 144.
109 Ibid. 146.
110 Ibid. 145.
111 Ibid. 147.
112 Ibid. 149.
113 Ibid. 150.
114 Ibid. 152.
115 Åhr, “Memory and Mourning,” 288.
116 Ibid. 289.
117 Ibid. 288.
the shorter stelae are arranged around the outside of the site, with their taller counterparts reserved for the middle. The ground-level drops in the middle of the site, making it roughly bowl-shaped. The monument has no designated entry or exit points, and is open to visitors at any time of the day or night with the sole exception of Christmas Day.\textsuperscript{118} The exterior site bears no marks or signage that designate it as a memorial to the Holocaust.\textsuperscript{119} It is only below ground, in

\textsuperscript{118} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{119} Ibid. 283.
the Information Centre that is hidden from view, that the memorial is clearly marked as a
Holocaust commemoration site.

The German Holocaust memorial in Berlin was largely designed as an expression of guilt
for the enormity of Nazi crimes, a reflection of the time and place in which it was built. After
World War II, Germany was dismembered into a West Germany aligned with the West, and an
East Germany aligned with the Soviet bloc. The country remained separated for more than 40
years, until the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the official process of German unification a
year later. However, this process was not met with universal enthusiasm by the German people.
For some, the idea of a united Germany was inherently linked to the Nazi crimes of fifty years
before. For instance, seminal West German writer Günter Grass was not enthusiastic about the
idea.120 His views are mentioned in a 1990 New York Times article, which states his belief that
“Auschwitz could not have happened then without a united Germany… and so Auschwitz
forbids German unification now.”121 Other German intellectuals harbored similar sentiments, an
anxiety which was expressed in the fact that “most West German intellectuals prefer [unification]
to 'reunification,' which they say implies a return to the prewar German state.”122

Just before unification, West Germany was rocked by an intense academic debate known
as the Historikerstreit, which scholars used to voice their opinions of how the Holocaust should
be remembered in the present. The liberal camp, led by philosopher Jurgen Habermas, argued for
the uniqueness of the Holocaust, and the continuing relevance of German national guilt. The
other grouping, led by conservative thinkers such as historians Ernst Nolte and Andreas
Hillgruber, thought that Germany’s antisemitism and genocidal action should not be seen as a

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120 Grass had a complex relationship with Germany’s Nazi past, as he was conscripted into the Waffen-SS during the
war as a teenager, which he did not publicly reveal until 2006.
121 Craig R. Whitney, “Upheaval in The East; In West Germany, Anxiety Over Unity,” the New York Times, February
122 Ibid.
unique phenomenon, but rather one of many atrocities of the twentieth century. These thinkers tended to believe that Germany held no special responsibility for its actions against Jews, which they framed as a response to Soviet aggression.123

Historical debates of culpability and doubts about unification played out in the headlines of newspapers and in the minds of the German people throughout the late 1980s and early 1990s. In this fraught environment, it is understandable that Germany would wish to cement their resolve against the past, and express guilt and shame over the crimes committed by the nation the last time it was a unified entity. This is particularly true in Berlin, the capital of the Third Reich which now hosted the government of a reunified Germany. This is the context in which the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe should be understood. The memorial, finished in 2005, acts as a physical manifestation of the country’s shame about its history of genocide. This purpose even seems to manifest itself in the selection of the memorial’s name. “The Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe” places emphasis upon the act of murder which caused the death of six million innocent people. Drifting unspoken over this name is the fact that it was the German state, and countless German people, who systematically carried out this genocidal policy. The name implies not so much a preoccupation with the people who were lost, but on the manner of their death by executioner.

The Berlin monument’s design is abstract in nature, decoupled from any recognizable Holocaust imagery. For Eisenman, the monument’s abstract nature plays a role in cultivating its capacity as a marker of guilt and shame. Speaking of his motivations in an essay, Eisenman asks if it is possible to “aestheticize [the Nazi’s] crime against humanity.”124 This question speaks

124 Rauterberg et al., Holocaust Memorial Berlin: Eisenman Architects.
volumes about Eisenman’s headspace while designing the memorial. Notably, he does not ask about the possibility of spatially representing the suffering of victims, an aim which is certainly attached to other Holocaust memorials, such the one in Miami Beach. Rather, he talks about the crimes themselves, placing emphasis upon the perpetrators. Similarly, he then asks if it is possible to “give meaning to the enormity of this crime.” Again, his linguistic emphasis is upon the scale of wrongful action, rather than the scale of suffering. In both of these questions, Eisenman seems particularly concerned with the Holocaust from the viewpoint of the German people, coming to grips with their nation’s complicity in one of human history’s largest mass murders. It is their preoccupation with the criminal act, rather than any kind of remembrance of victims, that guides his train of thought.

Eisenman goes on to quote Theodor Adorno’s famous saying, “To write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric,” and then asks for the memorial “not to be judged on its meaning or its aesthetic but on the impossibility of its own success.” Thus, Eisenman voices the oft-repeated sentiment that the Holocaust cannot, and should not, be represented by artistic expression. Eisenman’s conclusion seems intimately linked to his idealist, yet ultimately unattainable, purpose for the memorial. When asking questions about what can be properly represented artistically, Eisenman is centrally concerned with the Nazi crimes themselves. It is this preoccupation with visually representing the scale of the Nazi’s genocide that ultimately leads him to conclude that his efforts are doomed to fail.

Elsewhere, Eisenman makes clear that his memorial should not be viewed as a space for mourning those lost. Although some have said that the memorial appears to be a cemetery, Eisenman has roundly denied this influence. Writing in *Materials on the Memorial to the*

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125 Ibid.
126 Ibid.
Murdered Jews of Europe, Eisenman says that in the past, “an individual human life could be commemorated by a stone, a slab, a cross, or a star. The simplicity of this idea ended with the Holocaust and Hiroshima and the mechanisms of mass death. Today…architecture can no longer remember life as it once did.”

To Eisenman, traditional modes of individual mourning have become impossible in the wake of the human tragedies of the mid-twentieth century. In particular, remembering those lost in Holocaust in a nostalgic sense has become impossible.

Eisenman expands upon this idea later in the essay, when he says:

In a prescient moment in “In Search of Lost Time”, Marcel Proust identifies two different kinds of memory: a nostalgia located in the past, touched with a sentimentality that remembers things not as they were, but as we want to remember them, and a living memory, which is active in the present and devoid of nostalgia for a remembered past. The Holocaust cannot be remembered in the first, nostalgic mode, as its horror forever ruptured the link between nostalgia and memory. Remembering the Holocaust can, therefore, only be a living condition in which the past remains active in the present.

Thus, Eisenman holds that nostalgia is shaped by an idealized sentimentality for the past. As anyone familiar with grief will know, this is a dominant feeling when people lose a loved one. Eisenman rejects the relevance of these emotions in Holocaust commemoration, dismissing individual remembrance or mourning. He believes a “living memory,” in which the past is used to shape the present, is the appropriate way to remember the Holocaust, and the lens through which the Berlin monument should be viewed. For those Germans struggling with questions of culpability and guilt, this dynamic is perfectly suited in allowing them to process inherited shame within the contemporary world. However, it is more far removed from the sense of loss for those who died.

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127 Materials on the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, 10.
128 Ibid. 12.
Aside from Eisenman, others involved in the planning of the Berlin memorial emphasized guilt as an important aim. Lea Rosh, who along with Eberhard Jäckel conceived of the monument in 1987, writes extensively in *Materials on the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe* about the ultimate goals of the project:

Our goal was to create a memorial to the murdered Jews of Europe. We wanted to remember the crime, the million-fold murder, and to honour the memory of the dead, to give them back their names. We wanted to prevent Germany from simply getting down to the business of reunification, rebuilding, affluence—as if nothing had happened.\textsuperscript{129}

While Rosh’s statement makes reference to the imperative “to honour the dead,” she devotes the majority of her rhetoric to parsing the genocide itself and Germany’s role in it. She emphasizes the scale of the murder, and urges that it not be forgotten. In particular, she expresses her fear that German reunification will interfere with the continued awareness and acknowledgment of what occurred. As noted earlier, most German academics prefer the term “unification” in order to distance modern Germany from its Nazi past. Rosh’s use of “reunification” is thus a political statement, itself a claim that the past cannot simply be forgotten and moved past.

Rosh further emphasizes her point by quoting former German Chancellor Willy Brandt (1969-1974), one of the monument’s most prominent early supporters. In explaining why he saw the memorial as essential to the German nation, Brandt declared, “our honour demands an immense expression of remembrance of the murder of European Jewry.”\textsuperscript{130} Notably, it is not the Jews themselves that Brandt is trying to commemorate, but rather the act of murder carried out by the Third Reich. He also invokes German honor, showing a concern for the lack of dignity that this crime, and its lack of remembrance, brings upon the German nation.

\textsuperscript{129} Ibid. 9.
\textsuperscript{130} Ibid.
Eisenman and others involved in the memorial’s conception are not the only ones to interpret the Berlin monument as a testament to German guilt. Katharina Vester, a German academic, published an op-ed about her own misgivings concerning the monument in an October 2005 issue of *The Jewish News Weekly of Northern California*. She writes about how the lack of victims’ names perpetuates “the monstrous anonymity of the Holocaust.” This, according to Vester, is an issue because it “makes it so difficult today to explain to our children the scale of the crimes that their great-grandparents committed.” Thus, Vester explains that to her, the lack of names is detrimental not because it does not properly commemorate victims, but because it fails to allow parents to inculcate in their children a guilt-ridden awareness of the past. Her reference to the crimes committed by children’s great-grandparents establishes that she sees the monument as geared toward a German audience, whose ancestors participated in the atrocities. Her approach stresses above all else the retention of German shame for the crimes of the past, an aim she asserts the monument falls short of.

In addition, individuals interviewed at the site during my field visit in 2021 saw Germany’s continued remembrance and guilt over the past as an important function of the site. One man in his twenties visiting from the German state of North Rhine-Westphalia said that he was visiting the memorial because “I think it is important to remember what the Germans do in the history [sic].” In this manner, he identified the monument as a site tied to German wrongdoing, and the continued importance of its recognition.

The previous two memorials examined in Philadelphia and Miami Beach both placed a large emphasis upon the memory of people lost in the Holocaust. Reflections of these victims far

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131 Vester, “Reducing the Holocaust.”
132 Vester personalizes the Holocaust in a way similar to those at the Miami Beach monument who adopt the labels of second- and third-generation survivors. However, the familial connection she invokes is to the perpetrators and their guilt, rather than to Holocaust victims.
133 Interview conducted by author, October 12th 2021.
outweighed any preoccupation with the specific identity of those responsible for the massacre. This focus can perhaps be attributed to the direct involvement of Jewish Holocaust survivors in creating these monuments. The Berlin memorial places its emphasis elsewhere, focusing on the nation’s guilt. This decision can be connected to the overall lack of Jewish input in the project. Germany’s Jewish community, according to a 2005 article in the *Forward,* “had neither asked for a national, centralized monument commemorating the Holocaust to begin with, nor were they invited to offer input and contribute to its execution.”\(^\text{134}\) In addition, the memorial’s central focus on guilt did not escape the attention of Germany’s Jewish community, which noted the memorial’s lack of utility for mourning or remembrance. Uri Faber, a spokesman for the Berlin Jewish community, said of the memorial, “It was an initiative by Germans and for Germans -- not for the Jews.”\(^\text{135}\) This statement not only references the primacy of Germans in planning the monument, but also comments upon its intended audience for use. Faber emphasizes this point further, stating, “I don't think any Jew from any country will come to mourn in this place.”\(^\text{136}\) Thus, Faber identifies mourning as the central utility of Holocaust memorials for Jews, while also explaining that he cannot conceive of the Berlin monument serving this communal purpose.

Other statements made by German Jews express less concern about a lack of interaction with their community during the monument’s planning, but still interpret it as a testament to German guilt. Michael May, the executive director of Berlin Jewry, referred to the monument as “a symbol that finally gives the stamp of approval, and official acceptance, of German guilt and responsibility for the Holocaust.”\(^\text{137}\) May’s statement appears to obliquely reference the *Historikerstreit,* and German uncertainty over the nation’s culpability. To him, the construction of the monument in Berlin marks the ultimate victory of those who emphasized continued

\(^{134}\) Ibid.
\(^{135}\) Ibid.
\(^{136}\) Ibid.
\(^{137}\) Ibid.
German shame for the crimes of the past. Similarly, Walter Rothschild, a British rabbi living in Berlin while the monument was being built, praises the monument by saying, “France hasn't come to terms with its Vichy past, the Swiss with their banking, Italy with its fascists. Germany has done a lot more to work through its past than most countries.”\[138\] Rothschild frames the monument as a part of German memory work. Its erection indicates Germany’s willingness to own up to its past actions, and continued guilt for the massacre of European Jewry.

However, in contrast to all of the material presented thus far, the monument’s Information Centre noticeably diverges from a specific focus on German guilt. Rather, it integrates various narrative threads within the exhibit, including the remembrance of specific victims. This shift is acknowledged by Sibylle Quack and Dagmar Von Wilcken, the designers of the Centre, who write in an essay that the central theme of the exhibit is remembering the “lives, suffering, and death” of various individuals and families affected by the Holocaust.\[139\] This aim is certainly communicated through some of the Centre’s exhibits, including a dark room in which the names of Holocaust victims are projected on the walls and read aloud. Furthermore, the stelae from the aboveground memorial extend downwards from the ceiling into one of the rooms in the Centre. Each one tells the story of a Jewish family whose members were murdered by the Nazis. Quack and Von Wilcken specifically say that they wish to “[avoid] an empty or depersonalized presentation of events, or one that is too abstract.”\[140\] The audioguide also communicates the centrality of individual victims and their remembrance, stating, “At the Information Centre, the story of the Holocaust is told from the point of view of many persecuted and murdered individuals. Their personal stories and destinies come to the fore.”\[141\]

\[138\] Ibid.
\[139\] Materials on the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, 41.
\[140\] Ibid. 43.
\[141\] Information Centre audioguide recorded by author, October 14th 2021.
It should be noted that certain features of the Information Centre do conform with the rest of the site, emphasizing the cruel acts of murder that Germany carried out. For instance, the exhibit displays emphasize certain words by bolding them in orange text. The phrases selected are almost exclusively acts of cruelty carried out by Germany against Jews, including “November Pogrom of 1938” and “murder with poison gas.” This choice does specifically emphasize the reprehensible acts carried out by Germany during the Holocaust, making them the center of the narrative.

The heterogenous messaging in the Information Centre is noteworthy, particularly because of its divergence from the rest of the Berlin memorial site. It is likely due to this unique character that Eisenman wished to distance the Information Centre from his memorial project. While speaking at Temple University in 2002 about his ongoing work on the monument, Eisenman expressed his distaste for the Information Centre. For all of his discussion of the monument’s abstract nature, the Information Centre just below ground eschewed this dynamic, paying tribute to specific victims. These issues were discussed by both Tania Oldenhage and Shelley Hornstein in their presentations around Eisenman’s visit to Temple. However, for both the designers and Eisenman, the aims of the Centre were not to detract from the overall atmosphere of the memorial. Quack and Von Wilcken write about this dynamic, explaining that the underground Centre in its current form was a compromise between those who wanted to build a Holocaust museum, rather than a monument, and those who wanted a “pure” monument without any informative element. As part of this agreement, it was decided that “the ‘Information Centre’ would be subordinate to the memorial; it should not disturb Peter

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142 Photos of Information Centre taken by author, October 14th 2021.
144 Materials on the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, 40.
Eisenman’s huge accessible sculpture.” Eisenman expresses a similar sentiment when he says that the Information Centre “is subdued in manner, effectively designed to minimize any disturbance to the Memorial’s field of pillars.” Both of these statements express a level of intentionality in the Centre’s below-ground, obscured location. This kept the building spatially removed from the memorial, and thereby isolated its tributes to specific victims. Thus, Eisenman’s abstract design and its ideals of German guilt were kept separate from the Centre’s commemorative function.

While the collective guilt experienced by German society remains robust and certainly the primary means through which the Berlin Holocaust Memorial should be viewed, it is necessary to examine a second perspective in which the monument does not elicit remorse, but rather helps individuals overcome their collective guilt. A desire by Germans to rid the nation of its historical baggage is by no means novel to this case. This was the argument of the conservative side of the Historikerstreit, led by Nolte and Hillsgruber. Noted German legal scholar and public intellectual, Bernhard Schlink, wrote about this dynamic in his 2009 book Guilt About the Past when he describes seeing a German soccer fan throw his arms in the air and shout “We are somebody again” during the World Cup when the national team scored a goal, feeling temporarily freed from “the long shadow of the past” that is German collective guilt. This desire for a freedom from guilt of the Holocaust was also expressed by renowned German writer Martin Walser, who in fact opposed the construction of the Berlin Holocaust Memorial on the grounds that the nation had already made up for its immoral deeds. Even the chair of the

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145 Ibid.
146 Ibid. 11.
147 Bernhard Schlink, Guilt About The Past (St Lucia, Queensland: University of Queensland Press, 2013), 26. (originally published in 2009)
148 Ahr, “Memory and Mourning,” 293.
Central Council of Jews in Germany is reported to have said that Germans should experience “new patriotism” that allows for “loving one’s country.”  

The Berlin Holocaust Memorial, and its interpretation, have at times aligned with the expression of this sentiment. When discussing the memorial, Eisenman argued that it was not “sacred ground” and that children could jump on the stelae. He went as far as to endorse the idea that couples would go to the site for a picnic and “make love” there. This rhetoric disconnects the site from a sense of historical or emotional resonance, suggesting its use in ways that are unrelated to remembering the tragedy of the Holocaust. It appears that visitors to the site have followed Eisenman’s prescription. Quentin Stevens, who observed visitors at the site for 50 hours, describes how he viewed people “running and laughing, sitting on the stelae eating food, taking shirts off to enjoy the sun, lying sleeping on the stelae, kissing and hugging, talking on mobile telephones, eating ice cream, and carrying balloons.” Indeed, Stevens even recalls seeing an individual urinate on a tree in the monument during a nearby music festival and it being used as a “homosexual cruising ground” during the night due to its “many hidden corners.” While I did not see anything quite like this during my own visit to the site, I did observe several teenagers jumping across the tops of the stelae, and younger children playing cheerful games of tag in the labyrinthine structure.

This type of conduct, at a time when the proper etiquette for visiting Holocaust remembrance sites has become a hotly contested debate, suggests that the monument allows for a transcendence of collective remembrance and guilt. Rather than being hallowed ground, the existence of the site enables, or even encourages, the notion that Germany has made up for its

150 Ahr, “Memory and Mourning,” 286.
151 Ibid.
152 Stevens, “Visitor Responses at Berlin's Holocaust Memorial,” 41.
153 Ibid. 44.
historical atrocities. This would appear to be an explanation for why the Berlin Holocaust Memorial was used as “a rallying point and celebratory stage during the Soccer World Cup of 2006.”\textsuperscript{154} By visually displaying the nation’s remorse for their actions, the monument allows German individuals to overcome their collective guilt, displaying nationalist sentiments, or indeed simply acting ordinarily, without being tied down by the shackles of history.

CONCLUSION

Holocaust memory is not a universal, uncontested entity. It can be interpreted and presented in multiple ways, all placing emphasis on different modes of remembrance and commemoration. This multiplicity is on display at Holocaust monuments, which offer starkly different messages concerning the tragedy. Generally, these particular interpretations are shaped by the specific time and place in which the monument took shape.

This study examined three separate Holocaust memorials constructed in different eras and geographic regions. Despite all being constructed to mark the same tragedy, the projects could not be more different; they range from an eighteen-foot tall sculpture to a five-acre landscape. However, perhaps the biggest disparity was the identity of those who advocated for the various memorials. Two of the sites were initiated by Jews and Holocaust survivors, while one took form through the efforts of Germans, the descendants of those who carried out the genocide. Both groups, victims and perpetrators, had evidently not completely left the tragedy in the past. The involvement of these differing constituencies related to where the monuments were built. As previously described, both Philadelphia and Miami Beach had relatively active Jewish communities—and specifically Holocaust survivor populations—at the time the monuments were built. These environments were ideal for the construction of memorials by those who faced the

\textsuperscript{154} Ahr, “Memory and Mourning,” 286.
tragedy first-hand. The same cannot be said for Berlin. Germany had a Jewish community of around 200,000 at the time when the monument was built, most of whom were recent immigrants from the Soviet Union and had tenuous ties to their Jewish identity.\textsuperscript{155} The immigrant profile of this population and its relative disconnect from Judaism might help explain why it played next to no role in the Berlin memorial. On the other hand, many non-Jewish Germans, in the throes of reunification and the \textit{Historikerstreit}, were highly invested in keeping Holocaust memory alive. It was these people who spearheaded the memorial project. Thus, the identities of those involved in the projects are highly reflective of where they were constructed.

Another major difference between the monuments is their architectural level of realism or abstraction. The Philadelphia memorial, although difficult to visually decipher, contains many symbols including a menorah and a burning bush. The Miami Beach monument goes even further, showing symbolic Holocaust victims hanging from and encircling the central arm sculpture. At both of these sites, the realist architecture enables personal engagement with the site, either through religious connection or mourning. These modes of engagement were particularly suited for Holocaust survivors and other Jewish people processing a personal tragedy. In contrast, Eisenman’s Berlin monument is chiefly abstract, a choice that reinforces the indescribable horror of the genocide for a German audience, while not facilitating Jewish mourning in the same way as the other sites. The architectural design of all of these monuments is somewhat tailored to particular audiences and sensibilities. This, in turn, invites particular patterns of engagement. A Holocaust memorial built in 21st-century Berlin is a universe away from one built in 20th-century Philadelphia or Miami Beach.

Undoubtedly, the influence of local factors on Holocaust monuments is not limited to the three examples in this analysis. This phenomenon has been on full display during the Russian invasion of Ukraine. On March 1st, 2022, Russia dropped a bomb on Babyn Yar, just outside of Kiev, killing five people in the process. In September 1941, the site had served as a mass grave for 33,771 Jews shot dead by the Nazis. During the 1950s and early 1960s, there was no monument built to commemorate this tragedy, a fact which is forever enshrined in Yevgeny Yevtushenko’s 1961 poetic line “No monument stands over Babi Yar.” Although Ukraine announced in 2016 that they would complete a memorial complex by 2021, that date came and went with minimal progress. It was at this point, with the site in a constant state of disarrayed planning, that the Russian bomb struck.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, himself the Jewish descendant of Holocaust survivors, expressed outrage at the bombing, tweeting, “To the world: what is the point of saying «never again» for 80 years, if the world stays silent when a bomb drops on the same site of Babyn Yar? At least 5 killed. History repeating…” Shortly thereafter, the Babyn Yar Holocaust Memorial Center announced that it was launching a new program to investigate Russian war crimes against Ukrainians. That this project had nothing to do with Holocaust memory, or the Nazi massacre at Babyn Yar, did not seem to give the Center pause. The Russian invasion had become a major threat to Ukraine, its Jews, and eventually to the proposed memorial itself. This localized situation led the planned monument to expand its mission in response to immediate and

158 Ain, “Russian Missile Strikes.”
dire circumstances. This is only the most recent example of a Holocaust memorial responding directly to its spatial and temporal situation.

Perhaps these conclusions are relevant to not just Holocaust memorials, but to man-made monuments in general. This broad application raises questions regarding the reasons that people decide to build memorials in the first place. Can they really just be about marking and remembering the past, if so much of their function and aesthetics are based around the present? Can these representations be said to be full and accurate, or are they necessarily mediated by a specific lens? One must remember that memorials are only constructed when someone decides it is worth the effort. It is that person, organization, or government that gets to determine the messaging, rather than any of the individuals being commemorated. Thus, putting memory in stone says more about the present than about the event being commemorated, and more about the people remembering than those being remembered.
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Holocaust Memorial Miami Beach. “Yom HaShoah 2021.” YouTube, uploaded by Jewish Miami, April 9, 2021. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CjycKOmbL-Q&t=1754s


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**Central Secondary Sources (Annotated):**


Diner’s book offers a reevaluation of the idea from Novick and other scholars that the Holocaust was not commemorated prominently by American Jews prior to the 1960s. Her work draws attention to many commemorative objects and practices from the late 1940s and 1950s.

Goldman examines the aesthetics of histories of multiple Holocaust monuments across the United States and Germany, including the Philadelphia and Berlin memorials. Her analysis draws particular attention to the stories of the memorials’ erection.


Halbwachs was one of the first scholars to think about the functioning of collective memory within society. He also uses this volume to specifically speak about the relations between collective memory and place, using the example of Masada prominently.


Hansen-Glucklich uses this volume to describe the exhibits and purpose of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington D.C., Yad Vashem in Jerusalem, and the Jewish Museum Berlin. She shows that the museums’ chronicling of the Holocaust is greatly influenced by the national contexts of remembrance in their respective countries.


Levy and Sznaider analyze how the Holocaust took on universalist themes in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. In particular, the Holocaust contributed to the global concern for human rights, and is often invoked in reference to atrocities and war crimes.


Novick chronicles the history of American Holocaust remembrance by Jews and others during the decades after the tragedy. He asserts that American Jews were largely silent about the Holocaust until the 1960s, and describes the Holocaust memory boom of the subsequent decades.

(originally published in 1995)

Winter explores forms of artistic and physical remembrance after the tragedy of World War I. In particular, he asserts that monumental sites of mourning were established after the War for people to remember those lost.

**Other Secondary Sources (Annotated):**


Ahr reflects on the architecture of the Berlin memorial and Eisenman’s interpretive framework.


Bar writes about the Holocaust Cellar, Israel’s first memorial to the Shoah before Yad Vashem’s dedication.


Dekel analyzes how Jews and Gentiles interact with the Berlin memorial in different ways.


Haynes reflects on the large increase in Holocaust-related courses during the 1980s and 1990s.

This is a lecture delivered as part of Eisenman’s speech and exhibition at Temple University.


This PBS television segment speaks about Germany’s 2005 Jewish population, including the large influx of Soviet Jews following the fall of the Iron Curtain.


Ofer writes a history of Holocaust survivors immigrating to Israel in the 1940s and early 1950s, including those sent to Cyprus by the British while illegally immigrating to the Palestine Mandate.


This is a lecture delivered as part of Eisenman’s speech and exhibition at Temple University.


This forum offers a basic overview of the major players and controversies of the Historikerstreit.

This article, excerpted from Sarna’s book on American Jewish history, discusses the heightened religiosity of Jews in the late 1950s.


Schlink writes a compilation of essays reflecting on contemporary manifestations of German guilt about the Holocaust.


This is a demographic study of Jewish populations in Southern Florida and Israel, with a particular focus on the percentage of the elderly as a part of the population.


Stevens observed visitors to the Berlin Memorial for 50 hours, writing about their disrespectful and irreverent behavior.