MEMORIAL SPACES AND JEWISH IDENTITIES IN POST-WALL BERLIN[1]

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Fifty years after the end of the Second World War a series of events, exhibits, and public discussions took place in Berlin to commemorate the victims of the Shoah. The commemorative events included the dedication of the partially rebuilt New Synagoge in the Oranienburger Street, the debate about the design of the planned memorial for the murdered Jews of Europe and the growing fascination for and interest in Jewish history and culture in the so-called *Scheunenviertel* near the center of Berlin. In addition, the new Jewish Museum, designed by Daniel Libeskind, was briefly opened to the public in its raw form for an exhibit on the plights of the Jews in war-torn former Yugoslavia. The museum, which is attached by an underground passageway to the Berlin City Museum in the Linden Street, will house not only artifacts of past Berlin Jewish culture and history, but also host exhibits of "living" Jewish culture. Interestingly, the events commemorating the end of the war also included discussions and exhibits that focused on the immediate postwar experiences of the non-Jewish German population. These included roundtables with eyewitnesses and historians about the consequences of the war and the atrocities committed by the Nazis and their active or passive accomplices upon civilians, soldiers as well as upon victims of the Shoah. I would argue that this turn to publicly acknowledging "German" pain is not new per se, but that its juxtaposition with the obsession with "things Jewish" in the public sphere is, in part, linked to the difficulty in Germany of commemorating Jewish victims of the Shoah; a difficulty that has been accentuated by the reshaping of both German and Jewish identities in post-Wall Berlin, identities that are not dichotomous nor static, but which express how inextricably bound members of the second and third generation of victims, perpetrators, bystanders and witnesses are by the legacy of the Shoah and by the forms in which it is remembered.

Although Germans have been seeking to mourn their own since the end of the Second World War, the unification of the two states and their distinct, though equally troubling mourning cultures and attitudes towards remembering the victims of that war and the Shoah, has precipitated a shift in the mourning culture, particularly in the former GDR. The attention to Jewish culture and history, thought commendable, is itself a displacement of a confrontation with German-German history. This is particularly relevant in the case of the GDR, a nation that aligned itself with the "victors of history" after the Second World War and subsequently suppressed the trauma of the war upon civilians and their

culpability in the atrocities of the war and the Shoah. The silencing of personal trauma that took place through the monumentalized versions of the past in the national public sphere of the GDR behind the claim to anti-Fascism is no longer tabu, even as it is displaced by a growing interest in things Jewish in the former east. Whereas the communist victims were at the center of commemorative activities in the east, now numerous local historians (often with the limited resources of short-term job aid programs) have initiated oral history projects that address Jewish life—for the most part before 1933. Instead of taking a closer look at the implications of separate but similar histories in the former west and east Germany, the majority of oral history projects, funded by city government and non-profit institutions, concentrate on Jewish history and culture in localized areas. This phenomenon coincides with a desire among some Germans to properly bury their own, that is to publicly mourn those German soldiers and civilians who died in the Second World War. This desire is exemplified in the attempts of the German Organization for the Care of Military Graves and private initiatives for the "proper burial" of Wehrmacht soldiers who were killed in the Second World War in Germany, Poland, the former Soviet Union and the Balkan states.[2] These initiatives support the exhuming of the remains of the fallen soldiers from the ground of battlefields, identifying them, and giving them a proper burial. What appears to be a marginal activity, upon closer look, represents a desire for creating a final resting place not only for the remains of fallen German soldiers, but also for the memory of the historical context in which the soldiers went to war. This phenomenon is directly related to German unification and to the rise in a national sentiment that seeks to bring closure to the remembering of the war even as it goes through the motions of commemoration in annual rituals. That is, the honoring of the German war dead has become *Salon-Fähig*, an acceptable endeavor in the name of the new German nation.

Though not a mainstream activity, this task bears symbolic meaning, as a delayed public expression of grief. What has shifted since the mid-eighties in these attempts to exhume remains of soldiers and identity them by name, is the desire by some public figures in Germany to create shared commemorative spaces; that is, to construct metaphorical and real sites with others who were killed in the Second World War and in the Shoah. This is best illustrated by the controversy surrounding the dedication of the *Neue Wache*, the memorial to the victims of the Second World War. While the enlarged replica of Käthe Kolwitz's pieta conjures up images of motherhood and, therefore, as Sigrid Weigel has pointed out, feminizes the memory process, thus depleting the remembrance of the Third Reich of its patriarchal signification, it also raises questions about the ethical dilemma of shared commemorative sites in Berlin.[3]

Even as memorial installations, plaques, and monuments abound to commemorate the killing of the Jews by the Nazis and their colloborators during the Third Reich, the creation of such monuments reveals itself, I argue, as a compensatory act for some Germans that deflects energy away from dialogue and confrontation with living Jews. The attention paid to Jewish culture in German society can be seen as a displacement of the desire of many Germans to mourn their own loss. This loss includes both the loss of innocence and of the right to properly bury their own dead. Although I would argue that the mourning has been taking place in the private sphere since the end of the war, publicly Germans have felt pressure to mourn the victims of the Shoah and have been going through the motions of commemorating, not their own, but their victims for years.

Recently, however, even as the number of commemorative ceremonies has increased and the number of memorial plaques and sites has mushroomed, there is evidence of a shift in the public mourning culture of Germany towards attending to their own dead, that is, acknowledging the trauma of the war upon civilians and soldiers by giving them a symbolic "proper burial." A similar "proper burial" for the victims of the Shoah is, for known reasons, impossible. And the controversy about the building of the memorial to the murdered Jews of Europe, known in the media as the "Holocaust Memorial" is an example of how the desire among non-Jewish Germans to bury their own becomes displaced into a public German monument to the Jews. In fact, the debate about the memorial crystallizes the historical and contemporary relationship between Germans and Jews and their self-understanding as perpetrators and victims. The memorial is to be located between the Brandenburger Gate and Leipziger Square on the site of the former "ministerial gardens" and the more recent "death zone" that ran along side the eastern side of the Berlin wall. The idea for a "German" memorial to commemorate the Jewish victims of the Shoah, originated with Lea Rosh, the television personality who is the director of the Northern German Televison Station. Her idea has been heavily criticized by Jewish and non-Jewish Germans alike for reasons that I would like to consider. The actual competition for the design of the memorial, which was sponsored by Germany's ministry for domestic affairs and the Berlin Senate, and the public debate about the composition, intention, scale, and financial ramifications of the 500-plus entries, raised a number of crucial questions about the practice of memorialization in contemporary Berlin, questions that continue to be raised in light of the subsequent decision of the federal German government not to implement the winning design.[4] In addition, the winning design, a massive 20,000 square meter stone slab upon which the names of the victims were to be engraved one by one, evoked serious reservations about the adequacy of any

monument to memorialize human atrocity. Can the classical medium of a monument serve as an adequate means to commemorate the millions of dead Jews, for whom often nothing remains, not even their names or ashes? How can the destruction not only of their memories, but also of those who would pass on the memories be reconstituted in stone? And if this were thinkable, would German politicians, German judges and German artists have the ability and moral standards to initiate, create and maintain a site of commemoration?[5]

When we look beyond the polemics and emotional character of these questions we are nevertheless left with the core ethical and aesthetic problem to which they allude: How can a German memorial stand in the name of the survivors, who themselves remain as the sole keepers of the names of the murdered Jews and of their dead in postwar Germany?[6] And if this is possible, wouldn't such a memorial in the heart of the old and new capital of Germany become a kind of symbolic final tombstone that would provide a monumental conclusion to the discussion about the causes and consequences of German guilt for the persecution and murder of European Jews?[7] Would such a memorial not run the danger of being misunderstood as moral compensation and representation for a "cleansed" conscience of the German nation?

Consequently, the attempts to create a symbolic mass grave are wrought with ethical and emotional dilemmas. The winning design by Christine Jackob-Marks, Hella Rolfes, Hans Scheib and Reinhard Stangle is meant to represent a resting place upon which the names of the six million murdered Jews would be engraved. Ironically, the jury's evaluation of the design emphasizes that the model 1) "retrieves the victims from anonymity" and 2) mediates the feeling of helplessness in a fascinating way and is therefore the correct form for the theme: it mediates the six million in their entirety and yet individually. The names are to be added one by one."[8] But does the buying of Jewish names by non-Jewish Germans reconstitute the subjectivity, much less the memory of the murdered Jews?

Engraving names of the dead on monuments is fashionable at the moment, as the repeated reference to the success of the Vietnam War Memorial indicates. The notion that names take the place of the dead can not, however, be separated from the context in which the names are dedicated. The inscription of names at Yad Vashem has a symbolic meaning that cannot be emulated in Berlin; the relationship of the named to those who would have their names inscribed produces an irreconcilable dilemma. The inscription of names on monuments and memorials has a long tradition in the German context, a context that would be erased if the inscription of names were extracted from the specific national and cultural history that they evoke. Naming the dead has a long tradition in German military history and in the national mourning culture evoked by the

myth of the fallen soldier that George Mosse has documented in his book about the different practices of commemorating the war dead in Germany in the two world wars and in the postwar period.[9] The inscribing of individual names of soldiers on war monuments became standard practice after the First World War, a practice that was transformed in the Third Reich into collectivized, monumentalized versions of commemoration.[10] After the war, the Allies forbade the Germans to build war memorials until 1952. From then on, the monuments to the fallen soldiers concentrated on generalizing the experience of war and playing down references to heroism (Mosse, 213). "The Germans themselves in the western zones of occupation suggested that new war memorials should no longer contain inscriptions honoring national martyrs, but a simple dedication to 'our dead'" (212). In the GDR, the monuments erected after the Second World War emphasized the victims of fascism and militarism, rather than the "heroics" of war. One could argue that re-inscribing the names of fallen Jewish soldiers on First World War war memorials, from which they were removed by the Nazis in 1935, might be an appropriate gesture on the part of the German public sphere to acknowledge the memory of German Jews who fought for the "fatherland" they saw as their own. The notion of non-Jewish Germans buying the names of European Jews murdered by their ancestors perhaps, does not, however, represent a "proper" burial, but rather an affront to the dead.

Whereas it may be possible for Germans to enact a "proper burial" for German soldiers, who were killed in the Second World War, by naming their remains, it is unthinkable for murdered Jews to be given a proper burial by non-Jewish Germans. This is illustrated in a passage in Esther Dischereit's narrative *Joëmis Tisch: eine jüdische Geschichte (Joëmis Tisch, a Jewish Story.)*[11] Dischereit is a German Jewish writer who was born in 1952 in Germany. The crass difference between the contemporaneous and concurrent desire for a proper burial of fallen German soldiers and for a proper commemoration of the Jewish victims of the Shoah is illuminated in the following scene. A Jewish figure in the narrative, Ruth, comments sarcastically on the tactlessness of a German friend, Martha Elisabeth Steder, who asks her to find the soldier's grave of her husband in France, where he died a "hero's death" as a member of the Wehrmacht:

> Ruth travels in this direction for Martha Elisabeth. South of Valence... It must have been here—25 to 20 kilometers left of the road...south of the factory site. Ruth tries to remember [what she read in the letter announcing the death of Martha Elisabeth's husband]. "While driving along this road your husband was shot from the right so that he fell into

> the steering wheel...". . . Ruth drives alone the entire area, gets out, Do you see a dignified soldier's grave? There is none to be seen, she will tell that to Frau Steder. She did her best. (108-109)

Ruth comments with bitterness that it would be unthinkable for her to ask Martha Elisabeth (Frau Steder) to find the mass grave of her father and brother:

> Imagine if she would ask Frau Steder to go with her to her father's, brother's mass grave to look around.... Perhaps, the earth a fragment of a tooth or jaw, something by which most can be recognized....(109)

Ruth is asked to participate in the grief of the German woman over the loss of her husband. It would be awkward, indeed rude for Ruth to demand the same of the German woman. The ritualized funeral of the soldier, which takes place after Ruth reports that no grave exists in France contrasts sharply with the impossibility of a proper burial much less a place in the "German" memory for the murdered Jews.

> Ruths father did not fall in battle. He was burned and then turned to ashes. The brother does not have a proper soldier's grave ... he climbed over corpses, naked, since clothing can be removed from the living more efficiently than from the dead. When the bullet finally hit him, his body slammed onto the other bodies. His hands groped in the flesh that had turned cold (108).

In contrast to the resurrection of the imaginary body of the German soldier through the delayed proper burial, the disappearance of the Jewish body remains final. The finality of the disappearance reflects the continuation of the loss in the present. Even in Ruth's remembrance it is the maimed bodies of her father and brother and their absence that remain, not the memory of their life. It seems that Esther Dischereit wants to tell us that there can be no return (resurrection) of the exterminated Jewish life.

But that is exactly what members of the German politic and culture are attempting to do, often with the sanction of the official Jewish communities. Not only the reconstruction and re-opening of synagogues and communities are being financially supported. There are also countless television and newspaper reports about the decimated Jewish communities that are beginning to grow due to the emigration of mostly Russian Jews from the former Soviet Union. There are Jewish cafes and kosher stores, cultural events sponsored by the Jewish Adult Education School, the Center Judaicum and walking tours offered by

alternative and mainstream history working groups through the Spandauer Vorstadt, the *Scheunenviertel* and the Berlin Jewish cemeteries.

Nevertheless, the Jewish life, that had so uniquely influenced Berlin from the turn of the century to 1933, can not be retrieved nor reconstructed and many of those involved in the above projects are aware of this. The desire to save a demolished culture from oblivion, speaks to the impossibility of an "authentic reconstruction." Even if it were possible to recreate the Jewish life as it existed in the 1920s, is it even desirable to claim authenticity? Doesn't the very idea of reconstruction become unconscionable, since a fabricated past, like the one familiar to us at Disney World, would reduce past Jewish life to folklore and rob its methodically planned destruction a second time of its tragic dimension through Klezmer music and nostalgic *Shtetl* anecdotes? To replace the loss of life and of an entire culture with nostalgia or exoticized versions of that life only leads to a second death.

That brings us back to the initial question of how to represent the absence of Jewish life in Berlin, yet not diminish the presence of Jewish life and the awareness of its fundamental difference from the Jewish life that was destroyed by the Nazis and their collaborators. Is there a "correct" or even adequate means of empathetic commemoration? Commemoration implies the existence of a companion in the mourning process—it is a social and communal act, even when carried out in solitude. But the severe historical difference between the victims who are to be mourned and those who propose to create a means to mourn them prevent a communal experience. And it is more complicated than that. Among the mourners who are German are Jews and others, whose heritage and historical experience puts them in a different existential location than the second- or third-generation Germans, who are expected to visit the memorial to the murdered Jews of Europe, when and if it is built—a place not only of mourning, but also of learning and contemplation.

This is no new dilemma in the memorial landscape of Berlin today. One alternative to more classical forms of memorialization (which often monumentalize the subject being mourned) was dedicated in 1993 in a Berlin neighborhood, known as the Bavarian district (*Bayrisches Viertel*). The artists Renata Stih and Frieder Schnock created the memorial in order to draw attention to the process that led to the exclusion and death of millions of Jews in the Third Reich. Whereas the planned memorial for the murdered Jews represented a questionable monumentalization of remembrance by "petrifying" the subjective memories of millions of victims, the memorial project in the Bavarian district, where a high percentage of assimilated German Jews had

lived up until 1933, allows one to see the effects of the social, political, economic, and cultural consequences of German fascism in the present.

The form of the memorial does not construct commemoration as an empty ritual at a specified location that is performed for official purposes. Instead it demonstrates the methodical exclusion of German Jews not as a single event but as an everyday experience that was dispersed over a wide range of locations. The memorial, that is actually not a memorial in the traditional sense, attempts to establish a dialogue between different temporal spheres. The memorial shows how the present and the everyday can become a part of the commemorative process. The effect of the memorial may be purely pedagogical, but it reminds us that the exclusion of Jews was itself a process, that was carried out by German people, not just laws. The practice of exclusion made Germans into non-citizens, into ostracized and demeaned people, and it occupied both public and private spheres. People, who had been living side by side, who had shopped in the same stores, and who had greeted one another on the street began to experience the same location as essentially different horizons of experience.

The memorial consists of signs upon which excerpts from the Nuremberg racial laws are printed. On the other side of each sign is a simple picture of an object that could be associated with the content of the law. For example, a sign bears the words "Jewish veterinarians are forbidden from practicing" 3.4.36 "General Occupational Prohibition" 17.1.39. On the other side of the sign one sees a German shepard. The signs hang on eighty different lamp posts throughout the district. Instead of representing remembrance by means of monumental memorials at one designated historical location, these signs recall both the local, everyday and wide-reaching social and legal consequences of the Third Reich. The process of historical experience is related to the present instead of being projected into a distant past

The question that raises itself in light of this example, is if such a alternative would be appropriate at those locations at which the Nazi ideology was most horribly implemented and at which the mass murder of European Jews and other victims of National Socialism became possible through industrialized forms of killing technology. What may be an acceptable means of didactic explanation in a city district appears to fail at those places where the terror of mass murder is part of the "normalcy" of Nazi policy.

This question posed itself to me during a commemorative ceremony on the anniversary of the liberation of the women's concentration camp Ravensbrück in April 1995. During this "ceremony" former prisoners walked through a part of the camp that had been closed to the public because it was being used as a base for the Soviet troops that had been stationed in the former GDR. I saw the

old, half-dilapidated barracks and office buildings, whose windows were shattered and whose outside walls were full of peeling paint. Would the reconstruction of these buildings really remind us of the terror of the past, even if plaques placed on each building would inform us of their former use? I though of a line from Ruth Klüger about Dachau from her 1992 autobiographical work *weiter leben*:

> Here everything was clean and orderly and you needed more fantasy than most people have in order to imagine what took place there forty years ago. Stones, wood, barracks, *Appellplatz*. The wood smells fresh and hearty, a fresh breeze blows through the empty *Appellplatz* and the barracks are almost inviting. What does it remind you of, perhaps it appears to be more a vacation camp than tortured life. And secretly, some visitors may think that they had it worse than the prisoners in the orderly German camps. The least, that belongs there, would be the sweat of human bodies, the smell and the aura of fear, the tense aggression, the reduced life.[12]

Now it is clear, that no memorial could fulfill Ruth Klüger's demand and even the best documentary films that describe this terror can only approach the real terror of the everyday in the camps. "To grasp the image of memory as it appears to us in the moment of danger" appears to be a hopeless attempt.[13] The real terror of the past; the gassed, dismemembered, decayed, and burned bodies, the *Seuchenbarracke*, the gas chambers and the laboratories in which medical experiments took place, is not within the realm of experience for *die Nachgeborenen*, who are dependent on books, films and art, that is clean, purified materials for their information. The only sensation that can occur at these places is a "coming close to" (*Annäherung*), not identification and not reconciliation with the victims. We are dependent on the auratic charge of these places and on their uniqueness, a uniqueness that transcends all reason and rationality.

The difficult task of this memory process has been described by no other author so intensively and meticulously as by Jorge Semprun, himself a survivor of a concentration camp, Buchenwald. Semprun's recent book, *L'ecritur ou vie (Literature or Life)* was also one of the most superb literary contributions to the year of memory, 1995.[14] At the end of the book, Semprun describes his return to the former concentration camp 47 years after its liberation in 1945.

> I didn't know, however, what had been done with the camp itself, with the monotonous rows of huts and concrete barracks. So I was completely surprised.

They'd kept the barbed-wire, the observation towers set at regular intervals along this perimeter. The watchtower over the entrance gate was still there, just as I'd remembered it. As well as the crematory, the washhouse, and the store for prisoners' belongings. Everything else had been leveled, but as at an archaelogical excavation site, the positions and foundations of each wooden or concrete hut were indicated by rectangles of fine gray gravel, edged with stone, with a marker at one corner bearing the number that had once identified the vanished building.

> The effect was unbelievably powerful. The empty space thus created, surrounded by barbed wire, dominated by the crematory chimney, swept by the wind of the Ettersberg, was a place of overwhelming remembrance. (295-6.)

The empty space or open place that Semprun describes is transformed in his text into a location of "insightful remembering" (*Eingedenken*), that makes it possible for the reader to project his or her own associations of the terror of the camps onto the gray surfaces out of stone and shale. Semprun's book shows us that no symbolic memorial and no didactic sign can replace or alleviate the difficult gaze into one's own self or can distort the unbearable question, how one would have lived and acted in the world of the concentration camp. Semprun's text does not relieve the reader of the responsibility to grasp the past as a part of one's own present. The text assumes, however, that the sense of responsibility and the ability to differentiate between the suffering of others and one's own history has not yet been obliterated through the indifference of a historical image that portrays fascism as an exception, an "accident of history."

Naturally there are other alternatives to the empty space that Semprun describes that remain in memory through their simple and effective formation. One of these places is the memorial in the Steglitz district of Berlin, a memorial that was strongly rejected by CDU politicians and upon whose simple mirrored walls the names of the deported Jews of Steglitz and the dates of their deportation are engraved. As one reads the names, one sees one's own face reflected in the mirrored surface of the wall. But here too, some of the names of the murdered Jews are missing, a fact that the engraved introduction to the names mentions. The names are missing because some of the names on the deportation lists were illegible. The writing of the SS bureaucrats who wrote

down the names was indecipherable to those who came after. The bearers of the illegible names are once again removed, made absent, forgotten, since the script of the bureaucratic accomplices in murder—*Schreibtischmörder*—are indecipherable to the generation of Germans born after the Third Reich. It remains questionable, the thought that the naming of the names of the victims, could fill the voids from which Semprun speaks.

In closing, I want to relate an experience that exemplifies the dilemma of commemoration and the difficult task to speak across the void that has fallen upon the second and third-generation Jews and Germans, despite the recognition that the terms "Jews" and "Germans" are themselves not discrete entities.

During the year of commemoration, 1995, while walking down the Wilhelmstrasse in Berlin, along which Prussia, the German *Kaiserreich* and the Nazi regime had had their governmental offices, I came to Voss Street, where, a little over fifty years ago the battle for the *Reichskanzelei* had raged. At the end of this street, in the former area of the so-called "ministerial gardens" and the death strip of the Berlin Wall, there stands a small pile of dirt that is covered in dandelions and grass. Most of the city guides do not mention this location, but it opens up a panorama upon the site where the memorial for the murdered Jews of Europe is supposed to be built. I stood on the small dirt hill above the debris of Hitler's bunker and looked out over the desert-like, deserted site towards the Brandenburg Gate and to Christo's and Jean Claude's wrapped *Reichstag*. The silver material draped over the *Reichstag* shone in the afternoon sun and had transformed the old smoke-blackened building into a lively, light and soft object. The empty surface of the wrapped *Reichstag* made collective communication possible given the projective character of the emptiness. This collective communication among strangers from all over the world, of all walks of life and background made the dialogue possible that had been missing during the commemorative events of 1995. But soon the *Reichstag* was unwrapped and the inscribed words *Dem deutschen Volk* "to the German people" were again visible. The question remains whether this dialogue, that took place on the wide-open space in front of the wrapped *Reichstag*, could take place among the descendants of the Shoah legacy, despite all the memories and the unbridgeable historical experience of the children and grandchildren of the victims and perpetrators. After the winning design for the memorial for the murdered Jews of Europe was rejected by the German Federal Government in July 1995, time remains to think once again about the project and possibility of commemoration in Germany. Perhaps this is the best way to commemorate the dead—to face the dilemma of commemoration across time and across historical divisions that remain the legacy of the Shoah for those who come after.

Notes

[1.] I would like to acknowledge the insightful comments on previous drafts of this paper by Holger Teschke and the helpful feedback by colleagues and students who heard different versions of this essay over the past year.

[2.] For an in-depth description of this phenomenon see Timothy Ryback, "Stalingrad: Letters from the Dead," *New Yorker*, 58-71 and "Gottessegen schauen" *Spiegel* (1995:20), 142, 145. The latter describes the work of Erwin Kowalke and his wife, who have single-handedly exhumed not only the skeletal remains of Wehrmacht soldiers, but also those who fought in the Soviet army.

[3.] See Weigel, "Der Ort der Frauen im Gedächtnis des Holocaust: Symbolisierungen, Zeugenschaft und kollektive Identität," *Sprache im technischen Zeitalter* (Fall 1995). My quotations are taken from a manuscript that Sigrid Weigel graciously made available to me.

[4.] Recently, members of the jury, politicians, artists and members of the Jewish communities in Berlin once again engaged in discussions about the function and form of the memorial for the murdered Jews of Europe at a colloquium dedicated to this topic in Berlin. According to Peter Radunski, Berlin's Senator of Culture, the construction of the "Holocaust Memorial" as it is known colloquially, will begin on January 27, 1999.

[5.] Compare Henryk Broder's criticism of the competition, "Deutschmeister des Trauerns," *Spiegel* (1995:16): 222-4. Broder considers most of the designs for the memorial to be exemplary of the Germans' preoccupation with themselves: "Similarly, it appears to hold true for the larger collective that is suddenly afraid of itself and seeks a way out of a border-line situation. The preoccupation with the incomprehensible and the unfathomable does not lead to an increase in insight but rather to a decrease in bad conscience, since 'obviously' one is trying so hard to approach the incomprehensible and unfathomable." In her article "Der Ort der Frauen im Gedächtnis des Holocaust: Symbolisierung, Zeugungskraft und kollektive Identität" Weigel comments on how the designs correspond to a "self-thematization of the Germans about the obsessive appropriation of the victims into a model of a national tragedy." The English translation of these quotations and others in this essay are my own (KR).

[6.] Weigel attributes the permanent separation between the victims and the bearers of the "perpetrator responsibility" to the incommensurability that emerges in the experience of death:"Given that the death experiences are already not capable of being communicated since the dead cannot bear witness to it, except through their remains, even the remains were made unrecognizable in the camps, after the individuality of the deaths had already been demolished in the process of killing."

[7.] This sentiment and others similar to it are raised by Jane Kramer in her book *The Politics of Memory. Looking for Germany in the New Germany.* (New York: Random House, 1996.) As in previous work on the subject of Holocaust memorials and memory, James Young has written about the importance of considering the debate about the planned memorial as an integral part of the commemorative process. See Young,

"Gegen das Denkmal, für Erinnerung" in *Der Wettbewerb für das "Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas:" Eine Streitschrift.* Eds. Leonie Bauman et al. (Berlin: Verlag der Kunst, 1995), 174-8.

[8.] This quote is taken from the jury's evaluation of the design, printed in the documentation of the competition. See *Künstlicher Wettbewerb. Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas. Kurzdokumentation.*Ed. Senatsverwaltung für Bau- und Wohnungswesen, (Berlin, 1995), 54.

[9.] See George L. Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

[10.] The tradition of inscribing individual names on public monuments grew out of an existing practice in the 19th century to list the names and rank of soldiers who had fallen in war in cemeteries and in churches. For a thorough overview of the evolution of the form and meaning of war memorials in Germany, see Meinhold Lurz, *Kriegsdenkmäler in Deutschland*. Vol. 1-6, (Heidelberg: Esprint Verlag, 1985).

[11.] Dischereit, *Joëmis Tisch: Eine jüdische Geschichte*. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1988).

[12.] Ruth Klüger, *weiter leben. Eine Jugend*. (München: dtv, 1994), 77.

[13.] Benjamin, "Über den Begriff der Geschichte," in *Walter Benjamin. Gesammelte Schriften*. I-2. eds. Rudolf Tiedemann, Hermann Schweppenhäuser, (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1980), 695.

[14.] Semprun, *Literature or Life*. trans. Linda Coverdale, (New York: Viking, 1997), 295-6.