The New Berlin, described by city marketers as a large architectural exhibition, is a city (again) reborn. Berlin is the chronotope, or space-time formation, through which contemporary dreams of national futures are imagined. Celebrated by its engineering feats, architectural designs, and youthful energy, the city, as Germany’s reunified capital, represents a new millennium in a new Europe and is advertised to be cosmopolitan, world class, and open. As one virtual tourist guide proclaimed, “When the wall came crashing down in the late 1990s, even Berliners would never have guessed that a city plagued by war could become a global destination sought after by the uber hip.”

The grand spectacle of Berlin’s performance, of becoming new again, demands attention, asking locals and visitors “to keep your eyes open,” to watch closely so as to remember the progress of the new. According to one marketing spokesperson who described summer tours to the construction sites, “Berlin is a large architectural exhibition. Each and every year things change. Normal tours might show you similar things, but they do not go into depth. We [Partners for Berlin] tell you who is constructing what and what lies behind it. Other sightseeing tours in cities are always superficial. I don’t have to do a tour a second time in Munich, but in Berlin I have to do it again and again because things change so fast” (interview, 2000). The cover of a 1997 brochure for these summer tours and events, called Schaustelle Berlin, or Showcase Berlin, depicted young people (Germany’s future?) watching the spectacle of construction, a landscape somewhere
between Berlin's imagined dusk and sunrise. The object of their collective gaze was not the contemporary city but a moving spectacle of past and future landmarks. They watched from the vantage point of the future, remembering a dreamscape in transition, awaiting the next scene. This New Berlin reframed the city by detaching existing places from their known, everyday experienced spaces and times and relocating them as icons of the new Germany in an always becoming, always deferred future.

Such portrayals of "the new" create temporal categories—the historic, old, new, future—as well as the locations of their meaning. In the optic of the new, past and contemporary social problems are removed from the spectacle of the city, which for Berlin include corruption, the lack of affordable housing, an increase in poverty, racism, and xenophobia, and the disenfranchisement of the public. The New Berlin, as the object of desire, is distanced from the gray Cold War and dark National Socialist cities by mapping the "old" city as consumable objects, as tourist attractions. Places such as Checkpoint Charlie or the Berlin Wall become exhibitions, even museums, of themselves. At the same time, the historic, or royal, Berlin is given material form through urban design, architecture, aesthetics, and advertising images. City planners self-consciously reclaim a nineteenth-century Berlin in the spaces of the contemporary/future city through land use and building code restrictions.

Contemporary architectural re-creations of hip, cosmopolitan Weimar Berlin are also present in the mappings of the new, such as through glass display cultures of department stores that, according to Janet Ward, include the "Stilwerk building of furniture and interior design stores on the Kantstraße in Charlottenburg, with its rounded glass corner eye-catchingly reminiscent of Mendelsohnian consumerist architecture." This contemporary interpretation of early-nineteenth-century Berlin not only indicates the postmodern reconstitution of the flaneur in "spaces of streetwise consumption." For Ward, these architectural elements also signify the most interesting underbelly of post-Wall Berlin's reconstruction craze, amidst its obvious ongoing need to recreate itself as the metaphorical extension of a new nationhood. These new city windows reflect an impossible wish: the desire to recapture the Berlin of the 1920s. It is an eternal return that can seek but never arrive at a continually reminisced Weimar identity.

These material performances of the New Berlin assume that urban space is transparent, that the city can be visually known. Yet any representation of national pasts and desired futures through urban icons is haunted by past structures of meaning as well as personal memories of residents and visitors. The city is not merely an exhibition for the drama of utopian visions of national history, some of which were materialized and others that were not. As Steve Pile suggests, "Cities haunt . . . at least in the sense that they force us to recognize the lives of those who have gone (before). In this sense, the physicality of the city itself shimmers as it becomes a flexible and durable place of memory."
"Take a close look or you might miss something. That's the odd thing about Berlin. One day you notice something new and yet you have the feeling it's always been there. So the best thing is to keep your eyes open. Then you will be able to remember later on how things used to be" (Schaustelle Berlin [Showcase Berlin] summer tours brochure, 1997).
The places and people described in this book reveal how Berlin's materiality is haunted by past visions for the future and contemporary desires for the past. It is a city where temporalities collide in unexpected ways through the actions of individuals and groups—living, deceased, and not yet born—as they make places in their search for what it means to be German. In the process, people evoke ghosts, bump into past remnants of other Berlins, dig through social and material landscapes, and debate how the past should be remembered, for whom, where, and in what form. At the same time, precisely because Berlin is haunted by past and contemporary desires for the future, it will always be a city created, in part, by how it has been and will be staged for its citizens and visitors. Modern Berlin, as a concept and a place, is simultaneously haunted by past and future lives and presences, and shaped by the tourist gaze—an all-consuming scopic regime that circulates and judges, plays and performs.

In capital cities, tourism landscapes are material and symbolic expressions of the nation in a phase of late consumer capitalism. They commodify the fears and fantasies of national hauntings by imposing order on time (often to discipline ghosts) and package a palatable and profitable identity through place. What is distinctive about contemporary Berlin's tourism productions is that these stagings of the (remembered) new cosmopolitan city include the public acknowledgment of past national crimes. At the intersection of tourism, government, and business districts, three places will form a memory district in the center of the city. The Jewish Museum, opened in 2002, celebrates Jewish contributions to Germany and Europe through family-oriented museum exhibitions in a dramatic new building designed by Daniel Libeskind. The centrally located Holocaust Memorial, completed in 2005, commemorates the memory of persecuted Jews through a large field of rising and falling stelae designed by Peter Eisenman and its underground information center. The new four-story building for the International Documentation Center Topography of Terror, designed by Peter Zumthor and projected to open in 2008, will educate the public about the National Socialist terror system at a historic site of perpetrators. This memory district, as a hypervisible performance of Holocaust memory in the New Berlin, acknowledges a violent national past at the same time that it locates Germany as central to an emerging global moral community.

For some, this staging of the new is troubling. Günter Morsch, director of Sachsenhausen Memorial Museum and Brandenburg Concentration Camp Memorial Museums Foundation, argued that “the discussions about the Jewish Museum, the Topography of Terror, and the Holocaust Memorial result[ed] in a turning away from the authentic sites of terror and destruction... The spectacular architecture [of these three places] finds more attention among feuilletonists [art and cultural critics in the media] than we could have ever won for our [memorial museum] projects” (interview, 2000). Morsch, like other memorial museum experts, is concerned about the public attention these places receive for their world-famous architect-stars rather than their social functions of critically coming to terms with the past. He believes that the “spectacular” memory district signifies a troubling direction in German public commemoration, a centralization of memory that may undermine the existing national, decentralized network of memorial museums. His concerns thus raise a significant question: what does it mean to highlight
National Socialist and Holocaust memory at a centrally located tourist destination in the new German capital?

While Morsch’s criticisms about consumerist representations of a violent past are significant, the underlying dichotomy he presents to make his argument—between architectural surface, symbolic space, and consumption on the one hand and historical depth, authentic sites, and critical reflection on the other—is problematic. Such a dichotomy contains and constructs place and morality through materiality. The “authentic” or real place is defined according to its artifacts and historic location; it is understood as historical evidence (Zuweisn) of crimes against humanity and as a material trace (Spur), even sacred relic, that embodies a past that by definition is understood as unknowable and unrepresentable. When place is constructed as having an authentic aura, as being an eyewitness to past atrocities, it is also situated in social space, acquiring a special status in relationship to other places through international moral hierarchies and tourism economies.

Although authentic places are represented by survivors, their families, and memory experts (historians, educators, and others) as important moral moments and sites in the history of humanity that warn about possible futures, they do not exist outside these capitalist systems of value. No less than the centrally located Holocaust Memorial, the authentic place is created by and constitutes tourism spaces, geopolitical relations, and transnational commemorative practices. These inherent contradictions belong to the politics of place making and memory in postunification Berlin. Because places of memory are always located in international, moral, and economic spaces, they are also defined by the tensions and structural hauntings that accompany their classification and related mappings. In this chapter, I explore those tensions by describing the New Berlin’s emerging memory district and its relationship to authentic historic sites, including Sachsenhausen, just north of the city, historically built as part of Hitler’s vision for a new Berlin and now a national memorial museum.

The Nascent Memory District

With the completion of the future center for the Topography of Terror, Berlin will be different from the other cultural centers in Europe that are marketed as “new.” Berlin’s memory district will be the first cultural space internationally that publicly acknowledges national guilt, commemorates the suffering of victims, and represents the history of the perpetrators in a national capital. It will attract tourists who, in planning their travels, will include a visit to at least one, if not all, of these places of memory.

Tourists will come to the memory district for a number of reasons, drawn to the center of the city by their curiosity about Berlin’s and Germany’s unusual history or their knowledge or familiarity with images and narratives of the Holocaust and the Cold War. They might visit the Holocaust Memorial, for example, because of its location, near the Reichstag, Brandenburg Gate, and federal district, or because they are moved by the sea of blank concrete slabs with no names, sites, times, or faces. They may decide to go to the Topography of Terror because it is adjacent to one of the last remaining fragments
of the Wall or because they wish to learn more about the history of Berlin during National Socialism. Even though the new international center is not yet finished, the Topography’s central location has resulted in tourist groups coming all the time. For the academic staff member Andreas Sanders, these groups “have maybe twenty minutes [to] look at the excavations and then rush to their next site. This is a new development that we must anticipate when the new building opens” (interview, 2000).

Tourists will probably continue to spend part of a day at the Jewish Museum, already one of Germany’s most visited museums. Because of the powerful presence of Daniel Libeskind’s design, what was originally envisioned as an extension of the Berlin Museum became the museum. Visitors must first go through the old Berlin museum, housed in an eighteenth-century yellow baroque building that is the last standing structure of its time in historic southern Friedrichstadt, to enter Libeskind’s silver bolted structure.

Model of Topography of Terror International Center. Design by Peter Zumthor. Courtesy of Stiftung Topographie des Terrors.

Organized around three intersecting axes—of exile, the Holocaust, and continuity—the Jewish Museum is created of voids and voided voids (empty spaces that can be seen but not physically accessed). At the end of the Axis of Exile, there is also an outdoor memorial, a concrete “garden” of forty-nine, closely spaced and tilted stelae in a compact courtyard space. While the physical space of the museum communicates rupture and
loss, the historical content of the exhibitions indicates continuity, dating from medieval times to the present day.

These three very different types of place (memorial, documentation center, and museum), each with its own discrete history and aesthetic form, embody the contentious postwar history and inherent contradictions of representing the German nation after the Holocaust. Each will be exhausting to experience emotionally and, at least for the Topography of Terror and Jewish Museum, overwhelming in terms of the historical material presented. Tourists visiting the Topography of Terror in recent years, for instance, described their experiences using words such as “unsettling,” “chilling,” “grim,” and “somber.” At the Jewish Museum, some called the building “complicated and confusing” and described the museum’s exhibit about the Nazi period as “disturbing.” While the memory district will soon become a tourism attraction in its own right, visitors will probably go to only one of these three places in their travels, including it as part of an existing tourism route, such as “Nazi Berlin,” “Jewish Berlin,” or “Retracing the Path of the Berlin Wall.”

The memory district as a distinctive cultural space in the city, however, was never planned or marketed: it evolved to become a coherent tourism concept. Discussions for all three places began in the preunification city independently. In 1971, for example, when Berlin’s Jewish community celebrated its 300th anniversary through an exhibition at the Berlin Museum, there was a great deal of interest in establishing a Jewish Museum. An association was founded in 1975 with the goal of reviving the historic museum at Oranienburgerstrasse, near the city’s main synagogue. (The original museum opened shortly before the National Socialist rise to power and displayed Berlin’s
Jewish community’s collection of art and Judaica. It was closed in 1938 by the Gestapo, and its collections were confiscated.) In addition to reviving the historical museum, the Association for a Jewish Museum wanted to emphasize the history of Berlin’s Jewish community, including the diversity of Jewish life before and after the period of National Socialism, and the role played by important Jewish figures in German society. From the late 1970s to the 1990s, a newly organized Jewish Department in the Berlin Museum began to produce exhibitions in new galleries in the city, and Heinz Galinski, the former chair of Berlin’s Jewish Community, pushed for an independent museum. Shortly before unification, an architectural competition was held for an extension to the Berlin Museum; 165 architects submitted proposals, and Daniel Libeskind’s concept was chosen as the winning design.

Far from a tightly conceived plan, the memory district emerged as an effect of local and national discussions about German identity in the 1990s. Public awareness about representing National Socialist and Holocaust histories was at a peak after unification due to commemorative anniversary events for the end of World War II in 1995 and a number of heated controversies, including debates about a traveling exhibition by the Hamburg Institute for Social Research (War of Extermination: Crimes of the Wehrmacht [German Infantry], 1941–1944); Daniel Goldhagen’s contentious book Hitler’s Willing Executioners; the extent of German corporate and state responsibility for compensating forced and slave laborers; and the so-called Walser-Bubis affair, a public debate between the German author Martin Walser and former head of the Council of German Jews Ignatz Bubis about the political uses of the Holocaust in Germany.10

During this time, Berlin faced a number of local funding difficulties. In response, the directors of the Topography of Terror Foundation introduced the idea of a memory district.11 Academic director Reinhard Rürup emphasized the reasons why three, rather than one, places of memory were needed in the new capital.

The Foundation has tried to convince parliamentary members, government officials, and journalists that the Topography of Terror is a site where National Socialist crimes and the society of perpetrators are represented and explained, a central and indisputable part of the memory culture of the capital. In retrospect, the Jewish Museum in Berlin and the Holocaust Memorial have important architectural designs from Daniel Libeskind and Peter Eisenman; the Foundation reminds people that the architecture of Peter Zumthor is also appropriate and compelling. In view of the complementary character of the three institutions, the Topography of Terror cannot be left behind these other two impressive buildings in terms of the aesthetic quality of the building.12

To claim national status and gain financial support, directors located the Topography squarely in the center of the symbolic map of the New Berlin. As Andreas Sanders commented, the “‘trio’ [of places] is important: the [Holocaust] Memorial, Topography, and
Jewish Museum. . . . The three places will create an interesting tension. There are certain points where we overlap and would reasonably compete with each other, but the three institutions could create a very interesting whole” (interview, 2000).

Thus, although the memory district was not designed explicitly, it signaled the emergence of a new centralized public culture of commemoration. At the same time, however, the presence of the Topography of Terror, as a site of perpetrators, will question the spatial logic of performing history as an architectural exhibition and object to be consumed through the tourist gaze.

A Hypervisible Cosmopolitan Holocaust Memory
The symbolic commemorative space of the memory district, while unique in terms of historical content and social responsibility, will function in ways similar to other Western national theaters of memory. It will be centrally located, highly visible in the media, and highlighted in tourism guidebooks. Because of its proximity to the federal district and embassies, it will be visited by national politicians and foreign dignitaries, functioning much like Washington, DC’s, mall of memorials. To borrow Caroline Widmer’s description for the Holocaust Memorial, the memory district will be both a “self-effacing and self-aggrandizing gesture of public memorialization.”

This new dramaturgic space of national commemoration will stage a hypervisible cosmopolitan Holocaust memory for citizens, politicians, foreigners, and a Western moral community of democratic nations. Through these three places of memory, the Holocaust—the metacategory of the unknowable, the unrepresentable, the break in civilization and rupture in modernity—will be represented through international narratives and images based on metaphysical categories of good and evil, as described in the previous chapter. Berlin’s spectacular public acts of atonement, mourning, and healing—of publicly demonstrating how “we the descendants of the perpetrators show shame and mourning”—will be given material form through internationally respected architecture and symbolic spaces. The Jewish Museum emphasizes the gaping holes left in German and European society in the wake of the Holocaust, yet offers redemption to visitors as they move from the depths of Holocaust hell/death to the above-ground exhibitions that display Jewish contributions to global society. The Holocaust Memorial’s information center will represent the names, stories of trauma, and memories of victims and survivors and through its sculptural form will offer a space for transforming horror into hope. Even the Topography of Terror is interpreted as a Holocaust museum by public officials. As Thomas Lutz, head of the national Memorial Museum Department, described in 1997, “Foreign pressure results in this recent social interest in the Topography. When other countries ask about a Holocaust Museum in Germany, the federal government argues that the Topography—because it deals with the [National Socialist] crimes and German structures—could be a special form of a Holocaust museum, even if it does not have such a central position as do the museums in Washington and Jerusalem.”

The memory district’s location, access to the public, and visibility will also communicate an understanding of the nation: that the new Germany is open and has nothing
to hide. In this symbolic space, nothing will appear to be hidden from view. Information about the past will be clearly accessible through databases, tours, guides, and artistic forms. Yet through the establishment of these places of memory, the nation will not only repent for past crimes; through tourism and ceremonial performance, it will also be recognized by other nations as belonging to a Western global moral order. The memory district, in other words, materializes Schröder's cultural political agenda of normalization by representing Germany as a cosmopolitan, moral, and open society.

Schröder's neoliberal agenda is similar to those of other Western world leaders, including former president Bill Clinton, prime minister Tony Blair, and president Jacques Chirac, global figures who have apologized for past national crimes perpetrated by the state against its own citizens and other peoples. According to Elazar Barkan, within this post–Cold War order,

moral issues came to dominate public attention and political issues and displayed the willingness of nations to embrace their own guilt. This national self-reflexivity is the new guilt of nations. . . . It is the growth of both identities—the victims and the perpetrator, both as subjective identities—that informs this new space in international and national politics.16

Although world leaders continue to deploy the Holocaust to organize the past and contemporary geopolitical relations according to the universal categories of good and evil, and according to victims (symbolized by Jews) and perpetrators (symbolized by Hitler),17 as I suggested in chapter 5, claims to moral status and belonging to the “civilized world” are now accomplished through the recognition of, and compensation for, past national acts of injustice. In Germany, politicians present the Topography to foreigners “as an example for Germany’s dealing with its own history. Although some people think it’s not the best part of the new Berlin, nobody has dared so far to suggest getting rid of the Topography” (Andreas Sanders, interview, 2000). Through public apologies, financial compensation, and commemorative displays, national leaders in other countries have similarly acknowledged the inhumane treatment of citizens and social groups in internment camps, reservations, or sex slavery networks.

European debates in the late 1990s about war reparations for survivors and their families, for example, focused on the profits made by German corporations as well as Swiss banks.18 American law firms, the U.S. Senate, the American Jewish Committee, and the Jewish Claims Conference pressured Germany to compensate individuals who worked for large German corporations during World War II and were living in Eastern European countries without pensions. Most of the powerful German corporations, who saved an estimated 16 billion Reichsmark in wages (about DM 95 billion in 1999 standards), balked at demands for compensation; foreign pressure and later intercessions by Schröder resulted in a 1999 agreement to pay DM 10 billion (by German industry and the state) to survivors still living.19 Around the same time, international pressure was exerted on Swiss banks to divulge information about what happened to the so-called
Nazi gold (stolen and laundered money, gold, artwork, and other treasures) and bank accounts of Jewish clients. The neutral Swiss had to explore their past complicity with Nazi Germany and the institution of postwar banking policies that legally denied restitution claims by survivors and the families of those who died.

Although Schröder’s administration cannot be criticized for a nostalgic geopolitics of normalizing the past, as was the case under the former Kohl administration, there are problems with using Berlin to stage the nation as a moral and open society. Acknowledging national crimes and representing a cosmopolitan understanding of the Holocaust in a central location of the national capital equates visibility with clear-sightedness as well as moral foresight. It also represents the Holocaust as knowable through highly visible places of memory that are located in symbolic, yet assumedly transparent, spaces. Avery Gordon argues that such an emphasis on knowing about the past through vision, or hypervisibility, renders the hauntings that accompany any representation of difference and social injustice, and in this case of a violent national past, spatially invisible. Hypervisible spaces are temporally flat. They have no shadows, no ghosts. In a culture seemingly ruled by technologies of hypervisibility, we are led to believe not only that everything can be seen, but also that everything is available and accessible for our consumption. In a culture seemingly ruled by technologies of hypervisibility, we are led to believe that neither repression nor the return of the repressed, in the form of either improperly buried bodies or countervailing systems of value or difference, occurs with any meaningful result.20

Each performance of the city, each spectacular display, has both spatial and temporal effects. Because place making and memory as social processes cannot be contained in space or time, the creation of a new symbolic space in the national capital will have specific impacts on other places situated in other contexts and settings. As I explore in the following sections, the emergence of a memory district in the new capital has sent ripples through the decentralized network of memorial museums that were established in West Germany in the 1980s and expanded into the former East after unification. Those ripples, in turn, evoke yet other specters and possibilities in and through the space-times of the contemporary city.

Centralizing National Memory: A New Public Culture of Commemoration
Memorial museum experts expressed concerns about the emergent politics and symbols of the nation, of representing memory through large, architectonic, centrally located places. From their perspective, the nascent memory district of the New Berlin allows for no vantage point from which to engage in critical memory-work.

Critics of a centralized national memory suggest that it is an American approach to representing the Holocaust. According to Klaus Hesse, a Topography of Terror academic
staff member, "Until 1990, the memorial landscape in West Germany was regionally based, an integral part of the federal system. After reunification another trend developed: centralized places are now demanded. It's like a prayer wheel: they always say that something exists in Washington and we do not have it. . . . The trio of places [in the memory district] includes institutions that fulfill national demands and functions. It is a very new development, and the Topography will have to deal with that as well" (focus group interview, 1998). As I have suggested in previous chapters, some experts and educators argue that Germans must not only bear witness to victims’ suffering and pain at historic sites; unlike other citizens, they must confront their heritage as a society of perpetrators. For this reason, the representational strategies used in the United States and Israel are considered to be inappropriate by these German memorial museum experts. For Hanno Loewy, the director of the Fritz Bauer Institute in Frankfurt, "The problem is that here in Germany—as opposed to the United States or Israel—we have historic places [of National Socialist perpetration] everywhere. . . . There are hundreds or thousands of places, all of which are linked to [particular] histories. This despite the fact that in Germany there is no single place which can work as a symbol for the Holocaust—even the Topography of Terror is no symbol for the Holocaust" (interview, 1993). As Loewy suggests, a centralized memory district cannot represent the history of National Socialism at the sites where criminal acts took place (except, of course, at the Topography of Terror). At the very least, such a district is a problematic response to international norms that represent the Holocaust from the perspective of the victims.

The trend toward centralization is also interpreted as undermining the national network of locally based historic sites and memorial museums. When commenting on the Holocaust Memorial, Stefanie Endlich, an art historian and expert juror for public art competitions, pointed out that "when you declare that you want to create the central, the national monument, that means that—like a magnet in a magnetic field—you are in the center, and everything else that is already there has to adapt, to change direction. This is a fatal claim. In reality the opposite was true [in Germany]: in the course of several decades, a landscape of memorials has developed with cooperation, communication, exchange of experiences, and so on, which is very positive and productive" (interview, 1998). Even Topography staff acknowledged the challenges of the centralization of memory after 1990. According to director Reinhard Rürup, "The Topography will be a big building in a central location that deals with the National Socialist era in a comprehensive way. Because of that, no matter how the development [of Berlin] continues, the Topography will have to take on some functions of a national Holocaust museum. . . . Second is the question of how the Topography relates to the historical development of a decentralized landscape of commemoration in Berlin, Brandenburg, and Germany. We think of the Topography as opening up this landscape, not replacing it. . . . We will also offer certain services for this landscape through the national Memorial Museums Department" (interview, 1998).

Although the Topography will function as a service center for the existing network of historic sites, centralizing memory has already had negative fiscal consequences on the decentralized landscape. Because there is one pot of federal money designated for
memorial museums, the establishment of new centralized places necessarily results in increased competition for limited funds, resources, and public attention with existing places. When projects such as the Neue Wache memorial or the Holocaust Memorial were approved after unification, Sachsenhausen director Günter Morsch argued that they “took money away from the Gedenkstätten” (interview, 1993). Others similarly argued that existing concentration camp memorial museums should continue to be the highest national funding priority, particularly in face of large budget cuts that accompanied unification and economic recession. The historian Arno Lustiger demanded that the DM 15 million budgeted for the Holocaust Memorial be allocated to existing national Gedenkstätten that, together, only had a total annual total budget of DM 8.8 million in 1995—down from DM 15 million in 1993.22

To stress the importance of existing memorial museums, a new Working Group for Concentration Camp Memorial Museum Centers in Germany was established in 1997.23 Under the Schröder administration, moreover, funding for national concentration camp memorial museums did increase in 1999. But the overall negative effects of centralization continue to be felt by existing memorial museums. Shortly after the decision was made by the federal government to provide DM 30 million for the Holocaust Memorial’s information center, Sachsenhausen director Morsch commented in 2000 that “I have to listen to politicians who tell me that money must not be the measure of commemoration. I’m starting to question their attitude, because we [at Sachsenhausen] are not important enough [to get financial support]. If they [at the Holocaust Memorial] get whatever they want, but we have to live with whatever they throw at us, then we are on the margins.”

Sachsenhausen provides a good example of the concerns expressed by memorial museum experts about centralization. It also demonstrates the problems with staging the nation through hypervisible spaces. Like other concentration camp memorial museums in the former East, Sachsenhausen’s buildings had to be preserved and restored; new research had to be conducted; existing archival materials, artifacts, and collections had to be properly protected; exhibitions reflecting contemporary historical research had to be created; and new pedagogical concepts had to be developed.24 As Morsch described shortly after unification: “I cannot express it adequately. Behind the facade of the Gedenkstätte there is decay, an academic disaster, chaotic collections. . . . The walls are disintegrating, the barracks are in bad condition—we estimate we will need to invest 20 to 30 million marks [for preservation alone]” (interview, 1993).25 Yet between 1993 and 1999, Sachsenhausen and Ravensbrück received only a total of DM 25.7 million between them from state and federal agencies, private investors, and public foundations.

The situation at Sachsenhausen is particularly troubling when one considers its national significance.26 Unlike the places of Berlin’s memory district—all of which were defined by Western cultures of memory—the postunification debates about Sachsenhausen demanded a working through of Eastern and Western histories and memory cultures by planners, politicians, historic preservationists, artists and architects, international and national survivor groups, and local residents from both Germanys. These public discussions were particularly intense because of the pasts to be confronted. Originally
created in 1936 as the "model" modern concentration camp, Sachsenhausen was also an SS concentration commando training camp. These camps, with the neighboring labor and satellite camps, served the political economy of Berlin during the Third Reich. After the war, Sachsenhausen functioned briefly as a postwar Soviet internment camp; later it was transformed into a GDR Mahnmal and Gedenkstätte, where GDR youth learned about the heroic struggle and suffering of communist resistance fighters. Unification resulted in historical research that emphasized these complex histories and different understandings of a concentration camp—as a place of perpetrators and criminal acts, and as a place of victims. Further, shortly after unification, mass graves from the postwar internment camp were discovered, resulting in the creation of a new category of victim at Sachsenhausen.

Yet Sachsenhausen has received far less international and media attention than the three central places of the memory district during the 1990s. Located in the realm of the Eastern "Other," media representations of Sachsenhausen were largely negative and sensationalized, reporting on neo-Nazi activities in Brandenburg and "Ossis" (former East Germans) who supposedly did not deal with their National Socialist pasts, rather than on the new concepts and debates about the memorial museum. Rather ironically, after unification, Sachsenhausen was displaced as a central, highly visible GDR place of memory and became a less visible national place of memory. Offstage of the performance of the New Berlin, Germany's haunted house was stained by decay and debris, confusion and anger, and desires to be rid of its violent heritage.27

Sachsenhausen, 2002.
Spuren and Zeugnisse: Traces, Evidence, Eyewitnesses

Concentration camp memorial museums are understood by most people as morally significant places because of their historic and authentic aura—a spiritual field resulting from the suffering of those who no longer live, which can be sensed by people in the present through memories, artifacts, history, and the moral obligation to remember past atrocities and acts of injustice. These historic sites are defined by their horrific imprints of death. They are political forums where, according to Morsch, “Everybody who wants to have an influence on the future development of Germany can exert influence. This is the ground on which you can stand because it is—as brutal as this sounds—a ground which contains bones and blood” (interview, 1993).

To communicate the value of these authentic places for humanity, historians, experts, and survivors classify them in terms of their materiality. Authentic historic sites are understood as material evidence, as traces or Spuren, and as testimonies or objective proof (Zeugnisse) of the horrors that transpired. They are sites of criminal acts and traces of violent acts against humanity. At the same time, these places are understood in very personal ways, defined by the touch of humans; they are where people left their last footprints, tears, and even hopes. For some of the living, these places are cemeteries, where their loved ones lie buried. These are places of cultural trauma, “the wound that cries out, that addresses us in the attempt to tell us of a reality or truth that is not otherwise available. This truth . . . cannot be linked only to what is known, but also to what remains unknown in our own very actions and language.” Yet the wound that cries out speaks a different story about the “reality or truth that is not otherwise available” depending on the listener and his or her relationship to the lives that went before, and the silences left in their wake. How place is constructed as trace, evidence, and testimony embodies those generational and personal relationships to the past, as well as the different desires that people in the present have to make these places speak.

The word Spur (literally trace) refers to what is left behind by humans. Spur denotes the physical and spiritual imprint of the human touch, and the connection of that touch across time and through space. For people in the present, the Spur is a marking that indicates past actions, (then) present movements, and future intentions of someone or some creature that lived in the past or occupied a particular space. Only people who arrive at a scene or search out a place find Spuren: the act of discovery constitutes their meaning as material traces. Detectives, historians, archaeologists, and forensic specialists and other experts who work with archives, fragments, and sites, for example, reconstruct past actions, such as criminal acts, through traces. Spuren may also imply secrecy: people may try to cover up their tracks to get rid of what they did or witnessed, or may leave fake evidence to confuse those who come later and want to know what happened.

It is through this sense of trace, as evidence of past crimes, that the ’68 and ’79 generations of Germans understand concentration camp memorials. They have assumed the role of detective in their search for the truth because the state and their parents—witnesses, bystanders, and later accomplices—silenced and covered up the evidence of past violence.
When you say that Germany is a society of perpetrators, you have to differentiate. It is not a society of Himmlers or Heydrichs. But they belong to it, and others belong to it; those who tried to make things better were very few, but they existed also.
—Interview with Reinhard Rürup, 1998

Yet the trace can be interpreted in a number of ways, not only as evidence left behind at the crime scene but also as a special message for a loved one or for those who come later. Spur, when used in a more positive spiritual sense, can be understood as symbolic footprints left for a future generation (as when used in the expression “to follow in someone else’s footsteps”) or can suggest a path or trail left in a scary place and time that can help others find their way later on. In this second sense, the human imprint left behind is understood by those living as a compassionate touch. These Spuren acquire a special spiritual status and may be interpreted as sacred relics. Such an understanding, together with the first meaning, is a more common interpretation of second generations and relatives of survivors and those who died as a result of Nazi persecution.

I saw an old lady who was a survivor from the United States. She herself was not in Auschwitz, but lost most of her family there. I saw this woman standing in front of the crematorium and approaching the oven. You could literally see how something formed in her throat, how she couldn’t breathe anymore. She gasped for air and then started crying. After she had cried she came closer to the ovens, touched them, looked through this hole, put her head in. She was no longer touching this oven as an instrument for murder, but touching it like a shroud, like a thing that touched the dead in their last minutes of living.
—Interview with Hanno Loewy, director of the Fritz Bauer Holocaust Institute, 1993

The word Zeugnis (evidence) refers to the material proof of past crimes. The detective in a court of law uses this evidence, including traces, to reconstruct what happened objectively: “Exhibit A.” But Zeugnis also refers to a testimony or firsthand account, and specifically to the act of bearing witness to past events. Only the witness (Zeuge) can utter the truth, the narrative form of evidence (Zeugnis), about what took place based on what he or she saw and experienced. Thus the term Zeugnis signifies both the material evidence and spoken testimony. It is associated with the moral demand by society to bear witness, to tell the truth, to reveal what actually happened through the act of testimony and judgment. The Zeugnis, in other words, is also created in the present through specific social roles, legal contracts, and institutional spaces. The witness, bystander, victim, and survivor must swear to tell the truth; the expert prosecutor and defense present a case; the jury and judge observe and adjudicate in an impartial court of law designed to find the truth.
I understand a documentation as a reconstruction of history that is very close to the sources: documents, photos, and reports by time witnesses. . . . These different sources have to be treated critically. . . . The documentation tries to reconstruct history from the material we have, and [we try] to stand in the background.

—Interview with Andreas Sanders, 2000

For survivors, authentic places are sites to return to without having to speak, to relive their traumatic recall of that which they can never fully know. According to Robert Jay Lifton, the survivor comes into contact with death in a bodily or psychic fashion, yet remains alive.32 These places know of their near experience of death and of the death of others. This special emotive connection is so intensely personal for survivors that for them, historic sites have become “a sort of home, however perverse that sounds. They have spent part of their lives there, and even though it may only have been a short period, it was one which they will never forget, one that is very important to them” (Morsch, interview, 1993). Just as some Holocaust survivors who write memoirs and diaries about their experiences “see themselves as traces of experiences, and their words as extensions of themselves,”33 so historic sites as Spuren and Zeugnisse are similarly understood as embodying belated encounters with death.

Yet the Spuren left by those who died and survived were quickly covered up and destroyed during and immediately following the war. Survivors pressured local authorities not only to establish memorials at these historic sites of suffering, persecution, and death to honor the dead; in many cases, they wanted to preserve the camps as material evidence that would corroborate their firsthand accounts and speak to future generations. Their encounter with death is embodied through place as material proof and testimony (Zeugnis) that can be seen and experienced by those who would come later. The visitor who comes to this historic site, although removed from the firsthand experience of what happened, can bear witness to past atrocities and understand calls of “Never Again!”

In the 1960s and 1970s, liberal- to left-leaning second and third post-Holocaust German generations of survivors, perpetrators, and bystanders began to interpret these sites, as well as their everyday settings, as tombs: “We stand upon graves.” They dug for the past and their relationship to the past. They tended to affiliate with antifascists, resistance fighters, and survivors, took seriously their demands to bear witness, and adopted the call of “Never Again!” For the children of perpetrators and bystanders, these places were Spuren of the crime scene. They acted as detectives, tracing the evidence, but also felt the moral duty to prosecute, to use the Spuren as Zeugnisse, as material proof for the past crimes committed by their parents, their relatives, their nation-state. Yet this was a difficult role to play, for while they looked for the trace of their ancestors, they were horrified by the possibility of finding a past message. Because their parents did not testify and kept silent about what had happened, the new generations had to find material objects, documents, and sites that would speak the truth.
I remember when I decided to become an educator in this field the fear I had when I began to look through archival materials. I kept searching through the documents, and especially the photos. It is an awful feeling not knowing whom you might find. I remember studying each photo, looking for the image of my father or uncle.

—Interview with German seminar leader and tour guide for the German Resistance Memorial Center in Berlin, 1992

The children and relatives of those who perished treated these places as sites of horror, the crying wound of trauma, and sacred relics. This was where their beloved relatives last left their human imprint. For them, these places stood for the silence that accompanied the loss of a loved one, or the inability to speak about the unknown, the violent events, by the survivor. The place was the location of a last possible message. It speaks to them through their imaginations, telling them what would have been said had their loved ones been allowed to live.

As human survivors began to pass away in the late 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, the meaning of these places as Spuren and Zeugnisse shifted. There was an anxiety that the “real” past, defined by firsthand experience, would become replaced by the fake, the fictional, and the ephemeral. The fear of loss stimulated the production of films, memorial sites, and images. In recent years, the memoir and oral testimony have become especially important Holocaust representational forms as the children and relatives of survivors, scholars, filmmakers, and others feel an urgent need to chronicle and record stories about incomprehensible events that continue to haunt a larger public. Yet these contemporary Holocaust productions also created other anxieties: that representation, the fake, would replace firsthand knowledge, the truth. As Geoffrey Hartman explains, by the mid-1980s, most Americans and Europeans were born after the beginning of World War II, and for them,

knowledge about the war and the Holocaust comes primarily from history books and the media rather than from personal recall or contact with individual survivors. This is a turning point, then, and a crucial one. Education and ritual must supplement personal experience; and these, in less than one more generation, may have to carry the entire burden of sustaining the collective memory.34

In such a context, authentic places have become even more important and valuable. While they are still understood as Spuren (evidence, material relics, footprints from the past) and Zeugnisse (proof and testimony of past crimes), they are now also constructed as eyewitnesses (Zeuge) that will be left for future generations. Place, as metaphysical subject—the last survivor—and as the “real” and authentic material site, is a trace defined by the future. It is defined by the mourning for that which no longer is present and through the knowledge that places will remain to bear witness after human survivors
have passed away. Places, as Spuren, Zeugnisse, and Zeuge, are understood as belonging to humanity's cultural heritage and for that reason are funded, preserved, and protected by local, federal, and international institutions and private donors. Accredited historians and other experts list these historic sites as landmarks in international or national registries, and international groups claim them as religious or sacred icons of their past.35

The meaning and materiality of authentic historic sites therefore are specific to the social and affective relationships people have to the past and the ways those pasts are located in the spaces of the present and desired future. Place as eyewitness or survivor materializes the capacity to survive human mortality by offering continuity between generations to bear witness to the past. Yet as Andrea Liss argues, the demand to bear witness to criminal acts becomes complicated with third, fourth, and subsequent generations because of the increased distance to these representations of the past.36 Yet third and fourth generations bear witness through their imaginations as well as through their bodies. They come to these places to understand the past through historical and artistic representations, but they also come to walk the same paths as inmates, to see the preserved and reconstructed artifacts, to experience the silence.

Rethinking Claims to Authenticity
For German educators, historic sites provide evidence of the past through existing material artifacts and their unique locations in historic networks of power. Morsch notes, for

Jewish barracks, Sachsenhausen, 2002.
example, that unlike other concentration camp memorials, Sachsenhausen has a relatively large number of original buildings that were built during the National Socialist period, which makes it an important historic site in Germany and Europe. So while "the impact the place has depends on the visitor—he or she brings expectations with him or her... visitors orient themselves to certain relics [Spuren] trying to integrate them into an overall picture and become impressed by the aura of these relics. The relics are the real exhibits" (interview, 1998). Moreover, Morsch describes how educators "use this authenticity to tell what has happened... In Station Z [where the crematoriums are], the history of the concentration camp and extermination is told. We begin with what happened at Station Z and then come to the more general questions of concentration camps and extermination... In addition you also come to understand the different phases of the history of the camp and realize that in the different phases extermination varied" (interview, 1997).37

Memorial museum educators point out that Spuren confront the limited understandings visitors have of how concentration camps historically functioned, and that through these relics the complex histories and geographies of the rise of fascism, the structures and functioning of dictatorships, the use of subtle techniques to realize terror, violence, and genocide, and other historical processes can be explained. Morsch attributes visitors' lack of historical knowledge to the so-called globalization of the Holocaust. American visitors in particular "criticize us for our silence about the Jewish catastrophe [at Sachsenhausen]. This is an absurd argument, because we have [the exhibitions in] the Jewish barracks here. Their comments indicate how the murder of the Jews has become
synonymous with the history of National Socialism. If we point out that only 15 percent of the inmates at Sachsenhausen were Jews, then people call us revisionists. . . . Visitors complain that we try to hide something” (interview, 2000). These biases are troubling, argues Morsch, if part of the reason to come to these places is to learn from the past and prevent such a system from being realized again.

One of the most significant German contributions to the international politics of memory has been an insistence on confronting the past through local places and the documentation and historical mapping of spatial networks of terror and genocide. Yet Sachsenhausen, too, is a place of memory defined through the global Holocaust tourism industry. By classifying a place as an authentic historic site, experts locate it in a moral hierarchy that is, in part, also defined by tourism economies. They also claim the expert status and social role of detectives who uncover the traces of the crime scene and represent it as evidence to a larger international public. In the process, experts fix authentic places in Cartesian space and historical time and classify them as objective, material evidence. As I have suggested, however, there are multiple, nuanced, and ever shifting social relations, temporalities, and emotional relationships people have (and will continue to have) to these places, which result in a number of ways that their materiality is constituted as Spuren, Zeugnisse, and Zeugen.

When experts state that they are concerned about the impacts of the centralization of memory and the globalization of the Holocaust, they articulate more than educational concerns, even though these concerns are valid. They also assert authority over how these places should be defined in contemporary Germany. Authenticity is a relational and normative concept that acquires meaning through specific contexts, sites, and users. When people make places as stable material traces of the past, they give form to their search for a timeless identity, for a mythic sense of self. These sites are understood as subjects and relics that are socially valuable in a moral sense because they provide a material means to mourn and remember; they house traumatic memories. Understandably, these places are considered special; their unique and historic aura, their human imprint, offers contemporary and future generations educational and research possibilities. However, when classified as authentic and contrasted to artificial places, these sites become flattened out temporally and affectively. Rejecting global capitalism, tourism, and popular culture as a means of constituting the morality or reality of these memorial museums is a rather limited way to think about place. It denies simultaneous locations and interconnections to other people and places in multiple times and spaces.

**Haunting Presences: Places of Memory**

In the summer of 2002, I ran into a school group of American university students who were studying in Berlin and had chosen to make a day trip to Sachsenhausen. I asked some of them what they thought about the new exhibit close to where we were standing, known as the Jewish barracks. They didn’t have much to say about this specific exhibition; they hadn’t realized that the barracks had been reconstructed in 1961 by the GDR (with original materials) or that in 1992 two male arsonists burned down part of
the building. They assumed that it all was original from the Nazi period, including the damaged area of the building from the recent fire, which was incorporated as part of the new exhibition. Three women stated that they were going to spend time going through the exhibition because they wanted to see as much of the prisoner camp as possible. They were using the new audio tour to learn about Sachsenhausen and about everyday life in the camp. One woman, with tears in her eyes, said that the books, information from school, and films could in no way come close to the experience of being at a historic camp. Another said she hadn’t known that Sachsenhausen was so close to Berlin because one of her school instructors had stated that there were no concentration camps in Germany. She said she was going to learn all about Sachsenhausen, go back home, and tell her instructor he was wrong.

Ultimately, it is the visitors who assess, create, and validate the authenticity of places of memory. As Topography academic staff member Andreas Sanders mentioned in 2000, “Every visitor brings the present with him, his individual experiences and perceptions. The visitor has to answer the question why this [place] is important himself—I do not have to tell him why—because he was the one who decided to visit the exhibition.” Tourists visiting places of memory in Berlin describe them in terms of their expectations and prior knowledge, highlighting what they did not expect to see or what was frustrating. Some Internet “tour guides” for Igougo.com (who are mostly North Americans), for example, were surprised, perhaps disappointed, that the Jewish Museum was not a Holocaust museum, a response that indicates the influence of the global, largely American-based Holocaust industry. But what they highlighted, what they seemed to see and remember, were the spaces they couldn’t figure out (a complicated building) or
Guide pen name: becks
Category: Activity
Date of Entry: 10/3/2002
Name: Jüdisches/Jewish Museum
Address: Lindenstrasse 14
City: Berlin
Type of Museum: Cultural Museum

What it's like:
The Jewish Museum was designed by Daniel Libeskind and is a very modern and complicated construction. The passages zig-zag and represent a torn Star of David. The layout is full of symbolism and represents complicated philosophical ideas related to the loss of Jewish culture through the holocaust. Frankly speaking this worked better in a video program on this very interesting building that I saw prior to visiting the museum. In reality I found the layout at first a bit complicated and confusing, although very friendly and abundant multilingual staff are willing to point you in the right direction.

The museum surprisingly doesn't focus on the holocaust but rather on the history of Jews in Germany. The first exhibition area is on Jewish life in medieval Germany, especially in the city of Worms with interesting multimedia displays. From there displays are progressively more recent and trace the role of German Jews in public life as well as major contributions to arts, literature, music, science, commerce, and law.

A large section focuses on various Jewish customs and their development from ancient times into modern practices. I found this section particularly interesting in explaining some of the finer details of concepts that a non-Jew is only vaguely familiar with from films and television programs.

The section on the Nazi era was somewhat smaller than I expected but still comprehensive. Unfortunately circumstances forced us to spend less time here than we were planning to, but still had time to see some interesting displays of the harrowing times.

Visiting the Jewish Museum can in no way be described as an enjoyable experience—the subject matter is simply too disturbing. However, I'm very happy that I did go. Beforehand I had my doubts, but in the end I found the presentation excellent and the information well balanced as far as I could see. I didn't see anything that looked like propaganda, denial, or blame. It is wise to travel light when visiting this museum, as you have to go through airport style security. Bags and coats must be checked in. In addition it is a fair walk from the subway station but well worth it.

http://www.igougo.com/planning/journalEntryActivity.asp?journalID=13059&EntryID=21726&n=j%Fdisches+%wF+jewish+Museum
the narratives they didn’t anticipate they would read (exhibits about Jewish culture). What becomes for them striking about this place, then, also offers an opportunity to rethink what they thought they already knew about the past, about the city, about Germany, and even about the Holocaust.

North American tourism companies, not surprisingly, emphasize a cosmopolitan Holocaust memory, such as the metaphysical category of evil as represented by Nazis. The Topography of Terror, for example, is highlighted by the presence of the SS and Gestapo through partially correct historical information about underground bunkers, torture cells, and horror. “Tripadvisor” states: “Free tours are offered of these old Nazi bunkers, which house exhibits on the torture the SS often inflicted on prisoners.” The American Automobile Association (AAA) listing: “The grim Topographie des Terrors (Topography of Terror) occupies the site of the former Nazi secret police headquarters, where prisoners were interrogated and tortured. Photographs trace the emergence of Nazism, and a nearby viewing platform overlooks the enormous Regierungsviertel (Government Quarter), where the Third Reich had its administrative offices.” Canadian “travelcanoe” writes: “A short walk east [of Checkpoint Charlie] and you will discover one of the few remaining sections of the Wall. Behind it, one should take a free walk through Topography of Terror, located in the ruined bunkers where people were tortured by the SS. Photos and displays recount some of the Nazi horror, but the text is only in German. Tours are available.”

These sensationalistic ways of classifying the Topography of Terror, however, may collide with visitors’ experiences of confronting the historical information and docu-

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Guide pen name: travel2000
Category: Activity
Date of Entry: 10/31/2000
Name: Topography of Terror Foundation
Address: Budapester Strasse 40
City: Berlin

What it’s like:
Website: www.topographie.de. This is an outdoor exhibit, trailing the terrors of the Nazi’s and the happenings in the Gestapo (the headquarters being the building next to this exhibit). Look out for parts of the Berlin Wall at the back of the exhibit. It is on the site of the Gestapo Prison, where reports of mass murders were sent and compiled. This is ground zero. Don’t make the mistake we made—start at the right entrance, and stop by the information trailer to purchase a history brochure. Everything is in German so you need some information to understand it. Though it’s in chronological order, I wish I could understand the captions.

http://www.igougo.com/planning/journalEntryActivity.asp?journalID=3010&EntryID=4889
ments on display, shattering (and perhaps making them rethink) the voyeuristic reason for coming—the desire and pleasure of experiencing that which is disturbing and horrific within the safe and predictable spaces of tourism. The narratives of some Igougo.com guides, for example, tell other (virtual) tourists to go to the Topography not to “have fun” but to learn about the past. As guide “Tyguy” wrote in 2001:

This is one of the most unusual museums that I’ve been to. It’s actually an outdoor history lesson built on the location of a former Nazi bunker/HQ and gives the history of the rise and fall of the Nazi party through text, photos, and maps. It’s written in German, so if Sie sprach kein Deutsch, you should buy the guidebook in your language from the information trailer (they’re available in English. As for other languages, you will have to ask yourself). It is a somber experience, especially when you consider you are standing in the area of Berlin that was the center of the Nazi command. As for content of the information, the guidebook wasn’t as comprehensive as what is written on the displays.

If you are in Berlin only to party and have a good time, this site might not be for you. I give it a high recommendation, not as a site to seek out like you would the Eifel Tower or a famous dance club, but because if you are in Berlin and visiting the other historic sites, it will add to your travel experiences. Also note—the Berlin Wall is directly behind the Topography of Terror.44

These post-Holocaust generations of visitors interpret Berlin’s places of memory intertextually, in relation to representations that circulate globally and through their repetitive consumption. Andreas Huyssen argues that “no matter how much representations of the Holocaust may be fractured by geography of subject position, ultimately it all comes down to unimaginable, unspeakable and unrepresentable horror.”45 Yet it is not only representation, and the tension between knowing and not knowing, that explain the post-Holocaust generations’ repetitive attempts to understand (and re-represent and consume) the past. Rather, they also attempt to understand affectively—through their bodies and places—the inability of survivors and eyewitnesses to speak about past events, for, as Michael Perlman writes, part of being human “is the capacity to know, to imagine, death as physical reality and as metaphor.”46

Places of memory can thus provide transgenerational representational and experiential spaces through which visitors can intersubjectively identify with past lives and with living survivors, as well as confront their understandings of what they think they know of that trauma.47 This is another reason why the dichotomy between the “real” (material, located site) and artificial place is problematic. For post-Holocaust generations, the past can only be known through postmemorial and personal relationships to the “un-representable.” Places of memory haunt because they cannot be easily classified in time and space. People come to these places because they may wish to bridge past, present,
and future lives. Sometimes the collision of imaginations, representations, bodies, and experiences in these places may encourage post-Holocaust generations to think differently about their personal and social hauntings.

Fieldnotes

"Extension to the Berlin Museum" (later known as the Jewish Museum),
Berlin Kreuzberg, August 1997 [with later reflections]

Another construction fence in the center of Berlin. A small crowd of people in their twenties to forties has gathered outside it. A thin, stylish woman wearing trendy glasses emerges from behind the fence, and a dense line quickly appears at the barrier. The air buzzes with chatter. I am looking, taking notes, trying to take in who is here. People start offering to buy tickets, asking for extras, but no one responds. (Tickets were sold out at the INFOBOX almost as soon as they became available earlier this summer.) Some grab their bikes angrily and ride away. Others aggressively ask the woman to be let in. She follows the rules, only lets in those with the tickets.

After we are inside, she closes the temporary opening to the fence, and we hear the collective moan of those left outside. Behind the fence I feel secretly happy to be part of this group, one of the lucky few that had a ticket for the Showcase Berlin (Schaustelle Berlin) tour of Daniel Libeskind's unfinished building. I read a lot about this building and its conceptual design in architectural journals, scholarly articles, and newspapers and wanted to see how the ideas took material form. Before unification, Libeskind’s design, the first of his to be commissioned, was quite controversial; some critics argued that the jagged layout and metallic materials evoked SS lightning bolts. As soon as the building was completed, however, local residents came to understand this place as one of the most powerful statements about social memory in the city. People began going on tours of the empty building and were so moved they felt it should be left empty as the Holocaust Memorial.

We follow our guide into the baroque pale yellow Berlin Museum and walk through a hallway where we find a set of recently built stairs descending into darkness. As we walk down the stairs, we are not sure where we are or where we are going; we just know that we have entered the space of a building that has already become a Berlin landmark even though it is not yet open. At the bottom of the stairs, our guide introduces herself and systematically describes the complex ground floor of the museum and spatial layout of the building. Her matter-of-fact tone matches the cool, damp floor of the untreated concrete we are standing on. Only later, after moving to the floors above ground, does she engage visitors’ questions and attempt informal conversation. At some point in the tour, a national television news camera crew joins us, and we all become quite aware of our presence as “behind-the-scenes tourists” through the media’s cameras, through our collective gaze of the staging of the city.

As we walk over planks and wires jutting out of the floors, we notice the angular walls and ceilings, and the irregularly shaped bands carved low into the walls to be
used for exhibition space. We listen to our guide describe the conceptual design for the underground level. Libeskind developed his concept by creating imaginary lines of connection between the homes of prominent Berliners, historic sites of Jewish culture, and important events in the city, a geography that connected past and future. “Between the lines” of this zigzagging ground plan, he organized the interior spaces and volumes of the building around five spatial voids, empty rooms that signify the disappearance of Jewish culture in the city and the contemporary legacies of the “presence of absence” in the city and the nation. These conceptual ideas are expressed through the movements and tensions of interior/exterior spaces and intentionally violate traditional architectural ideals of rooms, windows, spatial layout, and functional design.

The fluorescent lights overhead cast a bluish glow onto our bodies. We come to the end of one corridor and quietly enter a room that is completely dark, standing behind an extremely heavy door. I feel an instinctive need to crouch to protect myself from the heavy weight of an unknown volume of darkness rapidly collapsing on me from above. We have entered a void. As my eyes adjust to narrow bands of light coming from a couple of slitted windows five or six stories overhead, the darkness
changes its motion. Now moving upward, the darkness dissipates somewhat, and I look at the shape of the room with its angled walls of different heights and widths; I tentatively begin to stand upright.

After coming out, our guide tells us that this space was the end point of the Axis of

Darkness [later renamed Axis of Holocaust]. Next we find the Axis of Continuity (and Hope), which brings us to a stairway. As we walk up two floors, we learn more about the conceptual design and the difficulties the building has posed for museum experts. I become fascinated by the irregular geometric gashes that punctuate the walls, providing uneven lighting through angled slats of glass, and walk away from the group. As I look out of these “windows” I note that the view of the city is always partial. I find “internal windows,” thin bands of glass in narrow corridors that ask me to look inward, to catch a glimpse of the darkness of the voided voids, those empty rooms that can never be physically entered, can never be known.

I notice others walking on their own, traversing the motion of the building underfoot and around them. No two walls or floors come together at a ninety-degree angle. The slanting floors remind me of articles about the temporary use of these rooms by groups such as the Batshiva Dance Company. Until directors figure out a way to create spaces that house exhibitions of artifacts, bodily displays interact with the movement of these spaces as part of their performance. Wandering through these empty rooms, people began discussing what kind of exhibitions could be created given the unusual sculptural nature of the building’s interior space. They also raised the question—current then in the media—about exactly what history should be presented there: the history of Jews in Berlin, or of Jews in all of Germany, or of Jews in German history, or of Jews in a larger European history. By being in the very spaces where those questions would be materially resolved, we gained a sense of authority, an imagined sense of expert knowledge whereby one could say, “I was there while the building was being built and these questions being debated.” Through the experience of being in a place yet to be finished, the time of this transitional period (of “Berlin-being-built”) was located in our bodily and sensory memories of this building.

The camera crew and news journalists pull me away from my observations and note taking and ask me and my fellow researcher, Rhodri Williams, why we were taking such detailed notes, and of what. Were we also journalists? “No,” we said, and explained that we were scholars conducting preliminary research about the Schaubuhne Berlin tours. They took notes of us taking notes of the tourists, the guide, and the tour. And we took notes of their taking notes of us.

We walked back down to the basement level and along the Axis of Exile, which took us outside to the museum’s Holocaust Memorial. After touching and wandering through the tilted stelae, the Garden of Exile, people stepped back to look again at the tall, zinc-paneled and riveted building and began to chat in small groups about what history the museum should represent. The journalists selected a few of them to interview as others watched them being filmed. Still others asked our guide technical questions about the building or personal questions about what it was like to work with Libeskind. Through the tour, the empty building became a historical trace of the present-past city defined by the spaces of a present-future city, or New Berlin.

[2002: Even now, this tour remains one of the most vivid and striking memories of the city for me. I was disappointed when I revisited the museum after it opened. The interior spaces were painted, bright, polished, and overly interpreted with directional signs,
maps, and museum assistants. Temporary walls covered up some of the irregularly shaped walls, windows, and uneven floors to create (false) “normal” rooms for exhibition. But then again, my expectations were quite high: I wanted the unfinished building to be there for me when I returned to Berlin so that I could speculate about the city’s future and watch others do the same. I was disappointed because the new material form of the museum covered the powerful social hauntings evoked through my bodily experiences of being in this building and navigating these unmarked spaces. By folding empty spaces into the interiors of a building—by making empty crypts—Libeskind powerfully represented the futility of trying to represent the unknown in space and time from the position of post-Holocaust generations.

Places of memory, even when they work as tourist attractions, can challenge traditional understandings of their social performances and in the process create new kinds of social spaces and relationships to the past. Stih and Schnick’s proposal for Bus Stop! for example, engages tourism practices to create a mobile, living memorial through which past, present, and future inform the experience of visiting a historic site. The social and personal hauntings that went into the making of places like the Topography of Terror are still powerfully experienced even when (re)located in the tourism spaces of the nascent memory district. As former managing director Gabriele Camphausen reflected in 2000, “We did not expect such an increase in the number of visitors. The location has become very attractive, and I think the open-air exhibition has a lot to do with that. Especially because we are so close to the new center of Berlin. We have more visitors from foreign
countries. We benefit from the tourism boom and from the 'New Berlin' marketing and vice versa. The marketing would not be successful if there weren't more than the [new urban centers at] Potsdamer Platz. Wilhelmstraße, Potsdamer Platz, Topography—this has become 'the' tourism route."

Despite the stagings of a hypervisible Holocaust memory in the center of the city, the emergence of such a cultural district draws attention to the inherent problems of celebrating the mythic construct of the nation in the “land of the perpetrators.” The ways that the three places of the memory district will shape the city and understandings of the nation in the future will be defined not only by their perceived social and international presence but also by the ways their meanings will continue to be contested and interpreted by locals and tourists. The Topography’s presence in the center of the city, at the site of past and contemporary imagined new Berlins, works to question the dominant discourse of German national identity embodied in the corporate and consumer landscape spectacles nearby. It, too, is part of the New Berlin. While academic staff of the Topography point to the contradictions that accompany their new centrality (including being “used” by politicians, trying to maintain respectability for other smaller memorial centers, and trying to use their visibility to pursue memory-work), they also note that politicians and even the general public have begun to realize that Germany can no longer suppress its history of National Socialism. The haunting presence of the past lives at places like the Topography create ripples and fissures in the smooth surfaces of the cosmopolitan and tourist city. “Ghosts ... haunt the places where cities are out of joint; out of joint in terms of both time and space.”

In ten years, when all the construction sites are finished and everything is beautiful, all of a sudden there will be that open wound in the city. I think that this is better than any attempt to design it, because so far there is no adequate form to translate the Holocaust in an artistic way. I think you can only do that by walking on these traces, by reconstructing it for yourself.

—Interview with Andreas Nachama, managing director of the Topography, 1993

Places of memory are made to evoke ghosts, localize emotions associated with hauntings, and establish cultural practices that delimit social relations to the past. Yet the ghost that returns to haunt is not the dead, according to Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok, but rather a phantom that “bears witness to the existence of the dead buried within the other.” What haunt and return to speak are the silences of those who went before us, their shameful secrets, their undisclosed sufferings, and their unspoken knowledge of violent events. Ghosts work transgenerationally to signify the losses and hopes entombed in others, even though the presence of those secrets, and desires defies our ability to know about them and may lead to yet other traumas. Ghosts make us aware of the losses resulting from violent events, yet they also remind us of our inability to really “know” about those past losses.
Ghosts are “radically heterogeneous,” to use Abraham and Torok’s words. While the unconscious may be relieved by “placing the effects of the phantom in the social realm,” the ghost will continue to haunt until the unspoken yet powerfully present tombs of the parents, loved ones, or even the state—the shameful secrets, unfinished business, unspoken deaths—are laid bare. So we make places to house these ghosts, to try to understand our inheritance of cultural loss and trauma. We return to these places to feel haunted. We make places of memory to get near those gaps and in this way become closer to those who went before us and to those who may come in the future.

Fieldnotes

The New Berlin, June 17, 2002

I decided to walk to the Topography of Terror from Unter den Linden along one of the new tourism routes. I headed south on Wilhelmstraße, taking photos for this book, and noticed (again) how this stretch had changed since the last time I was here: the sleek British Embassy, new shops and restaurants, and clear Plexiglas signs about the history of the “Wilhelmstraße Mile”—the National Socialist government quarter—had been added to the existing postwar landscapes of GDR high-rise apartment buildings in the area. Further south and to the west, a series of foreign embassies and federal ministries were under construction or newly built. Beyond them were the new business centers and skyscrapers at Potsdamer Platz.

A new memorial caught my eye; it was dedicated to the GDR workers who protested the construction of Stalinallee in 1953. The memorial is in front of a historic building in Berlin, the former National Socialist Air Ministry (Luftwaffe) building, which, after the war, became the GDR House of Ministry. After unification, it housed the East German privatization company, Treuhandanstalt, for a number of years, after which it became the new federal Finance Ministry. This building was “reused,” like some of the other older buildings in the city, because of the enormous unanticipated expenses of unification, moving the capital to Berlin, and the economic recession in general. Otherwise, the politicians in Bonn wanted to build all new buildings, perhaps in an attempt to ignore the historical presence of Berlin.

I continued to walk to the corner of Niederkirchner Straße, formerly Prinz-Albrecht-Straße. Five red tour buses drove by in less than five minutes on a Sunday summer afternoon. In this short stretch between Wilhelmstraße and Stresemannstraße, tourists can see the Berlin Parliamentary Building, the Wall, the Topography of Terror, and the former Nazi Luftwaffe building.

I turned east onto Niederkirchner Straße, walked along the Wall, and turned south into the Topography of Terror just before the Martin Gropius Bau. A vendor loudly offered his wares—water, ice cream, pictures—and yet I had come to know this area as quiet and rather empty, a feeling I still have when I am in the terrain, looking at the temporary exhibit, or watching other people walk across this area. But maybe that is part of my attachment to (and nostalgia for?) this place, a place that I always return to
when I'm in the city, a place that I tell my friends to visit if they come to Berlin. I watched people read the information sign about the Topography of Terror and joined them in the unearthed foundations and historical exhibition below, leaving the vendor behind.

It is still hard for me to imagine what the Topography of Terror will be like in the future, after the Zumthor building is finally finished. I looked in the temporary trailer that serves as an information center, and noticed tourists—many of whom were Americans—asking questions and picking up the audio tour (which is free, in multiple languages, and available until 8 p.m. in the summer). I stayed in the trailer for a while, looking at the new CD-ROM. I leafed through the visitor book, filled mostly with signatures of visitors from various countries. Most comments were very positive. One stated: "The Topography of Terror is too important a place for this to be its current state." Another declared: "Germany can do better than this!" (Were these visitors responding to the last part of the exhibition about the funding crisis in 1997?) I took special interest in entries written by several Americans about September 11, 2001.

5/11/02: What goes around comes around. Watch out Arab World—the Americans are awake.

6/14/02: To any Americans passing through this exhibit—think about the early days of the Reich, as they took away the rights of all German people. Then think about what is going on at home in the name of counter terrorism. Insert the word "Arab" for "Jew"—or any group or nationality. Please understand that this was written by
a New Yorker—but one who believes that people who want power will use any situation, any excuse to grab it. We are so fortunate to have our freedom. Do not give it up.

I went back outside and noticed another wooden construction fence in the middle of Berlin. Instead of protecting an empty lot, this fence surrounded two large looming cement walls that will become the Zumthor building. Like the fence at the Holocaust Memorial lot in 1997, this barrier was effectively used as a public space. It was made into a transitional protest site by the Active Museum in 1997. Today it was an exhibition space for the collaborative work of seven students from the Department of Communication Design at the Art College Berlin-Weissensee “who developed statements, comments and visual interventions” about racism, exclusion, and right-wing radicalism in contemporary Germany. “The debate on right-wing radicalism and xenophobia which we see as societal problems needs to take place in public. The project wants to raise people’s attention for this topic at a much-visited place, the historical center of Nazi-terror. We want to contribute to the beginning of a (re)thought-process.”

Their project was called “Anschläge,” a word that has two meanings in German: attacks against someone, or putting posters on a wall. Running parallel to the Topography’s open-air exhibition, yet located above ground, on top of the grass, parts of the exhibition focused on the legal definitions of refugees and foreigners in Berlin’s Social Security Offices, or words used in everyday German language to signify “strangers”: Ausländer, Fremde, Aussiedler, Asylbewerber. Adjacent collages of words and images from the Internet, newspapers, and legal documents questioned the role of media in reproducing intolerance. What would “propaganda” look like today? How does the
media contribute to a lack of tolerance in society? One section took advertising and political language phrases from the Third Reich and juxtaposed them with present-day equivalents. Images and texts from radical right-wing Internet sites were interspersed with phrases from Internet lingo, such as “cookie.”

In another part of the exhibit, a series of biographies and pictures were posted on the fence that represented the more than one hundred victims of right-wing violence in Germany since 1990. A leftist skinhead beaten to death by a right-wing skinhead group. A homeless person pummeled. A Turkish person harassed. Life-size portraits were accompanied by the person’s name, age, occupation, and the circumstances of his or her death. Some people were not identified; these victims without a face were represented by blank spaces. Postcards from several German cities were interspersed to confront the image of a “cosmopolitan Germany.” Mirrors printed with the words for perpetrator (Täter), victim (Opfer), and bystander (Zuschauer) punctuated these pictures and biographies so that the tourist would see his or her reflection and shifting identity in them. Visitors became spectators of themselves, a somewhat clichéd but effective approach that encouraged people to read the posted biographies (both at this exhibit and at the Topography exhibit below) differently.

This was a different new Berlin from the spectacle advertised by city marketers. Walking through this space, citizens and visitors were asked to look critically at their performances in the staging of a Weltstadt, to relate their everyday urban experiences to those of others living in the past, present, and future. In doing so, some individuals may have experienced a momentary shock of recognition, an awakening to the not yet conscious knowledge of the “what has been” in the now.


66. See also Stefanie Endlich and Thomas Lutz, eds., *Gedenken und lernen an historischen Orten: Ein Wegweiser zu Gedenkstätten für die Opfer des Nationalsozialismus in Berlin*, 2nd ed. (Berlin: Landeszentrale für politische Bildungsarbeit, 1998); Young, *At Memory's Edge*.


72. Heidegger drew from Nietzsche's typology of monumental, antiquarian, and critical historiography to argue that the current state of being would make one view of the future more meaningful than others. See Pamela Shurmer-Smith and Kevin Hannam, *Worlds of Desire, Realms of Power* (London: Edward Arnold, 1994), chap. 3.

### 6. Memory in the New Berlin


6. The Brandenburg Concentration Camp Memorial Museums Foundation oversees the work for Buchenwald, Ravensbrück, and Sachsenhausen memorial museums, all of which are located in the state of Brandenburg in the former GDR.
7. In 2002 the Jewish Museum had 650,000 guests.
8. In addition to visitor books, there are numerous Web page descriptions. See, for example, http://www.tripadvisor.com/Attraction_Review-g187323-d190535-Reviews-Topography_of_Terror-Berlin.html; http://www.igougo.com/home.html.
9. For general information about the Jewish Museum, see http://www.jmberlin.de/.
11. As I described in chapter 4, the idea for a memory district was also a response both to suggestions by Chancellor Schröder’s cultural minister Michael Naumann to establish a Holocaust museum, which threatened the future existence of the Topography, and to the increased projected costs of the Zumthor building.
15. Marita Sturken makes a similar point when scholars, war veterans, and others describe the Vietnam War Memorial in Washington, DC, as a “healing wound.” See her Tangled Memories: The Vietnam War, the AIDS Epidemic, and the Politics of Remembering (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 72–74.
18. For an overview of restitutions for historical injustices around the world (including Germany), see Barkan, Guilt of Nations. For a discussion of reparations in postwar Germany, see Herf, Divided Memory.
19. Between DM 5,000 and 15,000 per survivor was paid, mostly to families in Russia, the Ukraine, Poland, and the Czech Republic, in exchange for legal closure on future compensation claims.


25. When Morsch explained this funding situation to me, he emphasized that other cultural institutions, such as the German Historical Museum, had an annual budget of DM 25 million and that local Heimat museums had higher budgets than did Sachsenhausen.


28. Based on personal interviews with numerous consultants, the term “aura” was explicitly used in association with the category of “the authentic.” See Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” in Illuminations (New York: Schocken, 1969).

29. Morsch has tried to open out the category of “authentic” to include the multiple layered pasts of concentration camp memorials (including their National Socialist and Cold War periods) but has been met with harsh criticisms by other historians.


33. James Young, Writing and Rewriting the Holocaust: Narrative and the Consequences of Interpretation (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990), 24.
a discussion of survivors' (in)ability to witness the deaths experienced in the camps, see Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz*.


35. When more than one group is interested in claiming those places, they may become contested symbols of memory, as the recent contested histories of Auschwitz, Dachau, and Sachsenhausen well demonstrate. See Andrew Charlesworth, “Contesting Places of Memory: The Case of Auschwitz,” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 12 (1994): 579–93.


37. In the future, visitors will also learn about the national SS school at Sachsenhausen where officers were trained to become concentration camp commandos throughout Germany and Europe. At the stone quarry labor camp, an archaeological history park is being developed. Prisoners who worked there and at the nearby tile factory helped produce the stones that would build Hitler's new Berlin.


39. The women explained their strategy to work through the camp; each took a turn listening to an audio station and then would explain to the other two what she heard. They also took notes on what they saw; one woman said when she saw me taking notes earlier that day, she began to do the same so she wouldn't forget all the information she was learning.


49. Museum directors tried to commission a number of conceptual artists to design the
museum’s interior exhibition spaces, but they felt that those artistic interpretations would confuse visitors by adding another layer to an already densely textured space. The primary target audiences for the museum include families with children, international tour groups, and local residents. Directors decided to create more traditional exhibition spaces until they figure out ways to integrate the spaces of the building with their exhibition designs. The spaces of voids are nonetheless central to the museum exhibition design (Berlin artists, personal interviews, 1998; Ken Gorby, former assistant managing director, Jewish Museum, interview, 2000).


53. Project team *Anschläge*, English exhibition flyer.

54. The exhibit was sponsored by the Berlin Senate for Urban Development, the Topography of Terror Foundation, and the Student Council of the Art College Berlin-Weissensee. For information, contact bauzaun@anschlaege.de. Information about the exhibition was available in a one-page flyer (in English and German) at the Topography’s information trailer. According to the flyer, the exhibit was open from May 8 to June 23, 2002.