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# **USING MONUMENTS**

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Thesis submitted for the qualification of  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN ENGLISH LITERATURE

UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX

September 2015

STATEMENT

I hereby declare that this thesis has not been, and will not be, submitted in whole or in part to another University for the award of any other degree. However, this thesis incorporates to the extent indicated below, material already submitted as part of required coursework and for the degree of:

MA in Museum Studies

which was awarded by

New York University, 2008

Thomas Houlton,

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Elements of this thesis are based on the MA dissertation *Re-burying the Uncanny: The Cenotaph, the counter-monument and ways of Remembering in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century* (2008).

UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEXTHOMAS HOULTON DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN ENGLISH LITERATUREUSING MONUMENTSSUMMARY

This thesis examines monuments as cultural objects, and repositions them as points of intersection between psychoanalysis, society, art, remembrance and politics. Building on psychoanalyst D.W. Winnicott's work on object use, this thesis maps the disruptive nature of monuments, and their propagation of difficult or irresolvable questions.

The first chapter is a research trip diary which details a journey through Poland, Austria and Germany in search of Holocaust monuments. It is a piece of critical self-reflexion, a point from which the subsequent chapters stem, forming the point of interaction with the monuments as physical objects.

Chapter two examines the elusive presence of Rachel Whiteread's Memorial to the Austrian Jewish Victims of the Shoah. Using Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok's formulations on cryptonymy, this chapter explores the possibility that Whiteread's work is a false archive that disguises a hidden centre. This, it is suggested, could parallel a similar characteristic within Holocaust discourse.

The third chapter uses Winnicott's work on antisocial behaviour, object use and fear of breakdown. It looks at monuments that are used non-ritually (transgressively, playfully, sexually) and questions how much of our relationship with the monument is based around anxiety, rather than a legitimate protection of society from antisocial elements.

Chapter four examines the relationship between plants and remembrance. It focuses on Paul Harfleet's The Pansy Project, looking at the etymology of the word 'pansy' alongside its alliance to queer politics and history, and how the radical excess of queerness becomes, through its performance as a flower, a means of propagating remembrance beyond conventional forms.

The conclusion to the thesis makes a case for the necessity of a re-engagement with Winnicott's psychoanalysis, and an approach towards our monuments that is rooted in their thing-ness: public objects that can be truly public, with all the questions and difficulties that brings.



# CONTENTS

SUMMARY.....	3
CONTENTS.....	4
IN MEMORIAM.....	5
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	6
INTRODUCTION.....	7
CHAPTER 1: RESEARCH DIARY (AN IMAGINED HOLOCAUST) .....	48
CHAPTER 2: THE ELUSIVE MONUMENT.....	146
CHAPTER 3: THE USEFUL MONUMENT.....	190
CHAPTER 4: THE LIVING, QUEER MONUMENT .....	249
CONCLUSION.....	292
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	298

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## IN MEMORIAM

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# INTRODUCTION

A MONUMENT PURPORTS TO REFER TO THE PAST BUT IS ALWAYS  
CONTEMPORARY.<sup>1</sup>

CROSSING THE NARROW PLANK FROM THE CAIQUE THAT HAD  
BROUGHT US TO THE SHORE, ONTO THE SLIPPERY ROCKS OF THE  
GALLIPOLI BEACHES, WATCHING A GREEK SAILOR, DARK CURLY-HAIRED  
FILM STAR FACE, PICKING SPINY BLACK SEA URCHINS OUT OF THE  
SHALLOWS — TO EAT, THEY SAID. AND ALL THOSE YOUNG MEN, FROM  
THE 1914-18 WAR, BURIED UP THERE ON THE HILL.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> James Hamilton-Paterson, *Seven-Tenths: The Sea and Its Thresholds* (New York: Europa Editions, 2009).

<sup>2</sup> Marion Milner, *Eternity's Sunrise: A way of keeping a diary* (1987) (Hove: Routledge, 2011), p.5.

Monuments, as this thesis will go on to show, are cultural objects that are deeply concerned with the present time. Not only are they historical artefacts, markers of the past preserved for us to remember through, or commemorate with, they affect and influence our contemporary moment. As the opening quotations attest to, the monument is a cultural form imbued with significance, mapped out as it is between temporalities, hovering on the edges of our perception even as we notice it. The quotation from James Hamilton-Paterson's book *Seven-Tenths* (2009), a meditation upon the place of the oceans in our society and consciousness, details a visit he makes to the *USS Arizona* Pearl Harbour memorial in Hawaii. He observes that monuments 'purport' to refer to the past: through their inscriptions, physical age, aesthetics or concerns they seem to be marked as 'other' to our current moment. And yet, at the same time, they are 'always contemporary'. Hamilton-Paterson does not only mean that these are objects that exist in the here-and-now, visible and accessible, but that they are societally or culturally contemporary: they are existing, 'being' in the present.

How does that existence become 'noticed' by us, the people who demand, construct, pass by, remember at and *use* a monument? The second quotation, from psychoanalyst Marion Milner, points towards this mixture of past-and-present that Hamilton-Paterson suggests. Stepping off a boat, immersed in the sights of a new place as a tourist, Milner experiences an intrusion of the past prompted by the monument she notices perched on the hill above the beach: 'all those young men...buried up there on the hill'. The Gallipoli monument is not central to Milner's journey, nor does she afford it the rich description she does the handsome Greek sailor, or the sea urchins. Yet the presence of that monument, and the First World War it commemorates, enfolds itself into her narrative, eliding divisions between past and present, drawing attention whilst

managing to remain out of focus, removed. These qualities of monuments I open with (contemporaneity, elusiveness, vitality, intrusiveness) are by no means fixed or exhaustive: anybody could describe a monument in many different ways. But both quotations are concerned, primarily, with a presentness to the monument, a direct and immediate experience that at first might seem to go against our preconceived notions of them as being portals into the past, evocative markers of horrific traumas, historical scars, riven communities. As the simple title of this thesis suggests, I am concerned with *using* monuments. Not as places for ritual or backdrops for commemorative celebration, but as objects that are contemporary, vibrant and potentially disruptive.

In 2014 one London monument, visited by over five million people,<sup>3</sup> drew public attention in a manner almost unprecedented, becoming the defining image of centenary commemorations of the First World War.<sup>4</sup> Paul Cummins's and Tom Piper's *Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red* (2014) at the Tower of London, a public artwork commemorating the 888,246<sup>5</sup> British fatalities of the First World War, dominated the media. The huge public interest in the artwork, its striking form and visual presence, not only marked the beginning of the First World War centenary celebrations (due to last until 2018), but brought a renewed focus on the importance of commemorative public art in national discourse.

888,246 red ceramic poppies were 'planted' in the dry moat of the Tower of London over a period of four months, between 17 July and Armistice Day, 11 November

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<sup>3</sup> See Victoria Ward, 'Record Boost to UK Tourist Attractions', *The Telegraph*, 16/3/15, 06:00 GMT, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/earth/environment/tourism/11473602/Record-boost-to-UK-tourist-attractions.html> [Accessed 27/6/15].

<sup>4</sup> BBC News, 'Museum of the Year shortlist: The Tower of London', 19/6/15, 12.34 BST, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-33185935> [Accessed 28/8/15].

<sup>5</sup> This number is from the 2010 Commonwealth Graves Commission audit. See Historic Royal Palaces: Tower of London, <http://www.hrp.org.uk/TowerOfLondon/poppies/faq> [Accessed 27/6/15].

2014, to mark one hundred years since the first day of Britain's involvement in the First World War. At the end of each day, 'in the moat at sunset, names of 180 Commonwealth troops killed during the war were read out as part of a Roll of Honour, followed by the Last Post'.<sup>6</sup> The moat eventually filled up over time to form a literal sea of red, a highly symbolic gesture of lives lost, blood shed. Co-designer Tom Piper is himself a theatrical set designer, and the preserved sections of 'Weeping Willow' and 'Wave' are the most flamboyant elements of the piece. The plantings themselves were highly theatrical, done over time to create the visual effect of the moat slowly filling up with blood. The ritual of the Roll of Honour call each evening also played into a traditional pageantry of remembrance, typified by the playing of 'The Last Post'. The high profile planting of poppies by political figures and members of royalty ensured not only that publicity for the monument was maximised but that it became quickly incorporated into a state-sanctioned national discourse of remembrance, minimising any more disruptive questions it may be posing around personal sacrifice and nationalism.

The controversial dismantling of the monument, so that each poppy could be sold to raise money for six service charities,<sup>7</sup> pitted concerns of political popularity and

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<sup>6</sup> Historic Royal Palaces: Tower of London, 'Roll of Honour', <http://www.hrp.org.uk/TowerOfLondon/poppies/about-the-installation> [Accessed 27/6/15].

<sup>7</sup> See <http://www.hrp.org.uk/TowerOfLondon/poppies/about-the-charities> [Accessed 27/6/15]. Not only were the poppies themselves sold off in order to raise money for charity, some have since been privately auctioned online for hundreds of pounds, to wide condemnation. See Izzy Ferris, 'War veterans' fury as Tower of London poppy goes on sale for 20 TIMES its original value', *The Mirror*, 3/1/15, 13.58, <http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/war-veterans-fury-tower-london-4912253> [Accessed 29/6/15]. This action is not dissimilar to the auctioning off of both real and fake pieces of the Berlin Wall since its demolition in 1989. In 2008 a section was sold in Berlin for more than €7,800 (£6,150). See BBC News, 'Berlin Wall slab sold at auction', 20/9/08, 01.11 GMT, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/7626439.stm> [Accessed 29/6/15]. The economic worth of such artefacts, be they from monuments, battlefields or concentration camps, will always have both buyers and sellers, and those who see such transactions as inexcusable. There were also some reports of attempted thefts of the poppies from their delivery vans. See Rose Troup Buchanan, 'Tower of London poppies: Artist claims people are "breaking into lorries" to steal flowers', *The Independent*, 19/11/14,

tourist numbers against the original conception of the piece.<sup>8</sup> As a spokesperson from the Tower of London stated: 'the transience of the installation is key to the artistic concept, with the dispersal of the poppies into hundreds of thousands of homes marking the final phase of this evolving installation'.<sup>9</sup> Many politicians were quick to side with populist calls that the work be preserved or extended at the expense of its artistic intention,<sup>10</sup> an explicit sign of this monument being co-opted as a political platform. In the end two distinct elements from the work, 'Weeping Willow' [pictured below] and 'Wave' have been preserved. These will be toured around the country before being housed permanently in the Imperial War Museum, London.<sup>11</sup>

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<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/tower-of-london-poppies-artist-claims-people-are-breaking-into-the-lorries-to-steal-flowers-9870808.html?origin=internalSearch#> [Accessed 30/6/15].

<sup>8</sup> Néle Azevedo's First World War memorial sculpture for Birmingham's Chamberlain Square, erected 2 August 2014, was also designed to 'disappear'. The *Minimum Monument* consisted of 5,000 miniature ice sculptures of seated human figures, which were placed around the steps of the square by members of the public. Part of a larger network of similar sculptures, each figure intentionally melts into nothingness. See [http://neleazevedo.com.br/?page\\_id=6#en](http://neleazevedo.com.br/?page_id=6#en) [Accessed 29/6/15].

<sup>9</sup> Quoted in Mark Brown, 'Tower of London Poppies to be removed as planned on 12 November', *The Guardian*, 6/11/14, 12.38 GMT, <http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2014/nov/06/tower-of-london-poppies-removed-12-november-blood-swept-lands-and-seas-of-red> [Accessed 29/6/15].

<sup>10</sup> For example, see Antonia Molloy, 'Boris Johnson: "Keep Tower of London poppies installation open longer"', *The Independent*, 6/11/14, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/boris-johnson-keep-tower-of-london-poppies-installation-open-longer-9843169.html> [Accessed 29/6/15], BBC News, 'David Cameron "welcomes" Tower of London poppy debate', 6/11/14, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-29922659> [Accessed 29/6/15].

<sup>11</sup> Press Association, 'Parts of Tower of London poppy display reprieved', *The Guardian*, 8/11/14, 01.08 GMT, <http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2014/nov/08/tower-london-poppy-installation-reprieve> [Accessed 29/6/15].





It seems strange that, despite its huge prominence in the media, *Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red* does not, as a monument, fall into an easily-recognisable discipline or school of criticism. Part history, part aesthetics, part politics, part anthropology, discourse surrounding this work seems to have no natural 'home'. This is not peculiar to *Blood Swept Lands...*, but characteristic of all monuments. Despite their significant presence in human cultures and societies across the world, monuments as a distinct cultural product are remarkably under-explored and under-theorised. Whilst 'much work on memorialisation is, quite properly, still grounded in distinct disciplines...scholars from different disciplinary backgrounds pose different questions of memorialisation, its process, and the meanings it generates'.<sup>12</sup> Part of the strength of the monument as a form lies in its ability to be interdisciplinary in nature, slipping

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<sup>12</sup> Bill Niven and Chloe Paver, 'Introduction', in Bill Niven and Chloe Paver (eds.), *Memorialisation in Germany since 1945* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp.7-8.

between disciplines and categorisations. But in this thesis I want to examine the monument more specifically, as a text that, when read alongside works of critical theory, can produce distinctive, unexpected results that are grounded in its materiality as an object existing in the world, rather than an expression of a political position or ideology, or a representation (judged 'good' or 'bad') of a particular historical event or person. Rather than attending to 'memorialisation' (a topic more frequently covered), I am curious to explore the monument as a product of this process, an object that carries on existing once its original significance has been forgotten or superseded.

The poppies of *Blood Swept Lands...* that once filled the Tower's moat are now housed across the United Kingdom and further afield, forming their own individual points of remembrance, a monument that has been deconstructed. The photograph below shows my grandmother's poppy, which for her commemorates her father, who fought in the First World War. Even though removed from its original context in the moat, the poppy in this domestic setting is providing a continuation of the process of remembrance, albeit in a more private, less nationalistic or ritualised context. It is less controlled, lacking the context or scale of its original placement, but still carries an important mnemonic (and in this case highly personal) commemorative function.



Throughout its brief appearance as a public monument, and during its continued presence as a private one, *Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red* is fulfilling several uses: as national memorial symbolising the First World War; a specific installation in which each poppy symbolised an individual soldier killed; a theatrical, artistic work designed to provoke a sense of wonder, awe or contemplation in the viewer; a community project involving countless volunteers; a contemporary commentary on the loss of military personnel in conflicts such as Iraq and Afghanistan; a monument that already is seen as a defining 'moment' in the national consciousness (and which has been archived as a result of this importance); a continuing monument dispersed into people's homes where it gathers new, different meanings. *Blood Swept Lands...* may look like and be used as a non-traditional monument, but what about the policing of public behaviour around it? Visitors were not allowed to walk through the poppies (such privilege was

reserved for the volunteers and visiting dignitaries): the emphasis was on looking, not touching. This changes when we consider the monument's continuing existence in people's private homes where the poppies can be handled, touched, even broken or intentionally destroyed or modified.

The symbolism of the poppy, with strong links to the First World War and a prominent image of remembrance in the UK, is a transhistorical signifier of military sacrifice and loss, of dying for one's country: mass-killing on such a scale is in some way now justified by a strong, united nation. Jenny Edkins comments on this uneasy relationship between private and national mourning:

Private grief is overlaid by national mourning and blunted – or eased – by stories of service and duty. The authorities that had the power to conscript citizens and send them to their deaths now write their obituaries.<sup>13</sup>

By dismantling the work, and distributing the poppies into private homes, *Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red* performs an interesting counter-monumental move, almost a redress of the outpouring of national mourning, the 'stories of service and duty' that were made in its name during its period in the Tower of London moat. The mass killing on the First World War battlefields were then conflated with current military conflicts to create a strange hybrid narrative surrounding the monument of past sacrifice, present turmoil and aesthetic beauty. It is impressive that a monument commemorating an event that nobody alive can remember is a testament to this feat of postmemory.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Jenny Edkins, *Trauma and the Memory of Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p.1.

<sup>14</sup> Even if there is nobody left who remembers the First World War, there are many people who remember stories from and about their parents, grandparents and great-grandparents. These narratives form a postmemory network as well as a personal point of emotional interaction with the past event and the monument itself. The Holocaust is a unique postmemory event because proportionally there were so

Marianne Hirsch describes postmemory as:

The relationship that the 'generation after' bears to the personal, collective, and cultural trauma of those who came before - to experiences they 'remember' only by means of the stories, images, and behaviors among which they grew up. But these experiences were transmitted to them so deeply and affectively as to seem to constitute memories in their own right. Postmemory's connection to the past is thus actually mediated not by recall but by imaginative investment, projection, and creation.<sup>15</sup>

Hirsch's description corresponds to the space that *Blood Swept Lands...* occupies, a space of affect and illusion, where the success of the piece rests not in its ability to conjure actual memories of the First World War, but to create this space of powerful 'imaginative investment'. When Prime Minister David Cameron said that 'by displaying parts of the installation around the country and then permanently in the Imperial War Museum, we have ensured that this poignant memorial will be saved for the nation',<sup>16</sup> he is assuming a postmemory narrative that is meant to be stable and permanent. And it is interesting that Cameron's desire to incorporate *Blood Swept Lands...* as part of a political gesture ('we have ensured this poignant memorial will be saved') points towards the powerful critical, public and political investments made in this sculptural piece.

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few survivors of the concentration camps. See Marianne Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory: Visual Culture after the Holocaust* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012) and *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative and Postmemory* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1997).

<sup>15</sup> Marianne Hirsch, 'Homepage', *Postmemory.net*, <http://www.postmemory.net> [Accessed 29/6/15].

<sup>16</sup> Quoted in Press Association, 'Parts of Tower of London poppy display reprieved', *The Guardian*, 8/11/14, 01.08 GMT, <http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2014/nov/08/tower-london-poppy-installation-reprieve> [Accessed 29/6/15]. It is interesting that Cameron uses the word 'saved' to describe this action, as if the monument were being destroyed rather than dismantled and dispersed to homes across the country.



Critic Jonathan Jones, in an article written for *The Guardian*, is one of the few voices of dissent. This article, much lambasted by other papers, deplored what he viewed as the overtly simplistic nationalism of the piece. For Jones, *Blood Swept Lands...* fails because it does not explore or represent the true horror of the First World War. For Jones, 'the moat of the Tower should be filled with barbed wire and bones. That would mean something'.<sup>17</sup> In a follow-up article he clarifies his position, proclaiming that 'an adequate work of art about the war has to show its horror, not sweep the grisly facts under a red carpet of artificial flowers'.<sup>18</sup>

Jones's standpoint demands more from the monument (almost in defiance of its popularity: 'this is the real thing – popular art').<sup>19</sup> He directly compares it to works by Otto Dix and Wilfred Owen, both of whom fought in the war and who explore the horror of that conflict. For Jones, the abstraction of the monument is vague and disingenuous, whereas Dix and Owen confronted the brutal reality of the trenches. What Jones does not acknowledge (although he discusses his own postmemory of the First World War through his grandfathers) is that Cummins and Piper have little ability to create the kind of art that he wants to fill the moat: wouldn't it have been even more disingenuous for the artists to recreate a scene of devastation and horror that they themselves have never witnessed nor have any connection to? Dix's sketches were made just after the war; Owen was writing poetry in the trenches. That immediacy of experience, and the purpose of that kind of art feels not only very specific, but also something that is not

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<sup>17</sup> Jonathan Jones, 'The Tower of London Poppies are Fake, Trite and Inward-Looking – a Ukip-style Memorial', *The Guardian*, 28/10/14, 11:17 GMT, <http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/jonathanjonesblog/2014/oct/28/tower-of-london-poppies-ukip-remembrance-day> [Accessed 19/1/15].

<sup>18</sup> Jonathan Jones, 'History and all its grisly facts are worth more than the illusion of memory', *The Guardian*, 31/10/14, 20.23 GMT, <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/oct/31/world-war-one-poppies-memorial-cameron> [Accessed 30/6/15].

<sup>19</sup> Jonathan Jones, 'The Tower of London Poppies are Fake, Trite and Inward-Looking'.

quite monumental. Is it necessary for us to always have the barbed wire and bones shown to us, as if these are the baser truths of war that the field of poppies somehow obliterates?

This kind of aesthetic judgement upon the suitability of a memorial to accurately represent war is not new. William H. Gass, writing about monuments in 1982, takes a similar line:

An honest memorial to war would not be a regimented stitch of clean white crosses in a military cemetery, nor more rows of names cut uniformly into marble, a massive mausoleum full of flags or large grounds of landscaped cannon laid out in pleasant vistas where the cavalry charge was, with plaques which explain the terrain in words of half a syllable, estimate the weight of the bombs that fell, number the slain in the sunken road – **GEE! THAT MANY! WOW!** – but it would contain the muddy trench, the bloated corpse, the stallion lying by its bowels, blown-apart buildings, abandoned equipment, recordings of outcry.<sup>20</sup>

Both Gass and Jones seem to be advocating an art of verisimilitude, an uncompromising realism that is the only means by which a greater understanding of war can be attained. In this thinking the viewer must be placed in a position of extreme trauma to be able to comprehend the event being depicted, and the realism of that depiction equates with a greater 'truth' of the event. This viewpoint comes from T.W. Adorno's maxim that 'those clichés about art casting a glow of happiness and harmony over an unhappy and divided real world are loathsome because they make a mockery of any emphatic concept of art by looking only at perverse bourgeois practices such as the employment of art as a

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<sup>20</sup> William H. Gass, 'Monumentality/Mentality', in Kurt W. Forster (ed.), *Oppositions: A Journal for Ideas and Criticism in Architecture*, Fall 1982, No.25. (New York: Rizzoli), pp.139-140.

dispenser of solace'.<sup>21</sup> Art as something that gives solace, or makes any attempt to do so is, if we are to follow this line of thinking, bourgeois and insincere.

Characterising the poppies as a homogenous 'carpet of red', Jones ignores the dismantling of the monument and the distributing of the poppies across the country as being *part* of its concept. That these poppies may provoke the postmemory or story-telling that he himself uses in his own article<sup>22</sup> seems not to matter, perhaps because it goes against his reading of the monument as 'toothless'. Whilst Jones's desire for the First World War to be examined more dispassionately, more critically and with an unfiltered, unflinching gaze is commendable, he does not see that this monument has any place in that discourse, as a means to reach other images, testimonies or traumas.

Jones takes issue with what he perceives to be a wider creeping nationalism that *Blood Swept Lands...* somehow endorses,<sup>23</sup> possessing as it does 'a fake nobility'.<sup>24</sup> If there is any nationalism to the piece, it is arguably the result of whatever sentiments are being *projected* onto it, rather than any quality inherent or stable within the work itself. Robert Hardman in *The Daily Mail* provides a vitriolic response to Jones's piece, suggesting that the monument is *above* criticism:

Many will be astonished that anyone could politicise this magnificent project, any more than someone might quibble with the Cenotaph. Some chapters in the history of this country are of

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<sup>21</sup> T.W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, (trans. C. Lenhardt), ed. Gretel Adorno and Rolf Tiedemann (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul: 1970, 1984), p.2.

<sup>22</sup> 'This war has always been there, for me, in the background of family life'. See Jonathan Jones, 'History and all its grisly facts are worth more than the illusion of memory'.

<sup>23</sup> See Yasmin Alibhai-Brown, 'New Conformism is Spreading Across Britain', *The Independent*, 24/11/14, <http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/commentators/yasmin-alibhai-brown/new-conformism-is-spreading-across-britain-9880714.html> [Accessed 19/1/15].

<sup>24</sup> Jonathan Jones, 'The Tower of London Poppies are Fake, Trite and Inward-Looking'.



such a different order and magnitude that they transcend the petty squabbles of Left and Right.<sup>25</sup>

Unfortunately both critics show that the 'petty squabbles of Left and Right' are very much a part of this monument.<sup>26</sup> In contrast to Jones's characterisation of the monument as possessing a 'fake nobility', Hardman endows it with the power of transcendence, describing it as somehow occupying an otherworldly realm of existence in which there is no place for 'quibbling' criticism. *Blood Swept Lands...* manages to be both more and less than its own materiality, depending on which article you read.

What intrigues me about both critical viewpoints is that the monument itself has become entirely subjugated to wider discourses that are mapped onto it, rather than necessarily stemming from it. Whether reading about *Blood Swept Lands...* or the chequered history of the *Neue Wache* monument in Berlin, the voices of Jones and Hardman seem reproduced: a monument is either a catastrophic failure, a crass artwork that does a disservice to its subject matter, or a eulogistic triumph that is above criticism.

E. Ann Kaplan lists the questions we could, should or must consider when thinking about monuments such as *Blood Swept Lands...*, and the work we (un)consciously expect them to perform:

Should a memorial remind viewers of the terribleness of the catastrophe? Should it deliberately re-evoked the horror,

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<sup>25</sup> Robert Hardman, 'Why DO the Left Despise Patriotism? Sneering Left-Wing Art Critic brands the Poppy Tribute seen by Millions at the Tower as a 'Ukip-style memorial'', 30<sup>th</sup> October 2014, *The Daily Mail*, [www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2813473/Why-Left-despise-patriotism-Sneering-Left-wing-art-critic-brands-poppy-tribute-seen-millions-Tower-Ukip-type-memorial.html](http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2813473/Why-Left-despise-patriotism-Sneering-Left-wing-art-critic-brands-poppy-tribute-seen-millions-Tower-Ukip-type-memorial.html) [Accessed 25/1/15].

<sup>26</sup> For all Hardman's article claims that *Blood Swept Lands...* should be above politics, he is very happy to take sideswipes at the Left ('nothing gets this Leftie lot going quite like a poppy'), just as Jones refuses to ground his critique in the materiality of the object, instead focusing on a conceptual approach towards 'good' and 'bad' art.

emphasising aspects of human nature that cannot be denied? Or should it focus on the individuals lost, and what they contributed to society, in which case the memorial's main aim is to remember the victims, mourn their loss? Could a memorial be structured so as to enable a kind of national (or even international) 'working through' of the trauma? Who is the memorial for? Is it for people living now and within whose memory the catastrophe took place? Or should it be thought of as a pedagogical tool, providing knowledge about and experience of the tragedy for generations to follow in the hopes of preventing future occurrences of violence and hatred?<sup>27</sup>

Kaplan's piling of question upon question produces an effect that pulls the reader in several directions, and implies the monument too is under similar pressure. As she notes, it is almost anxiety-producing. Is *Blood Swept Lands...* bland jingoistic propaganda or a sacred object? Why must it be either one or the other? The monument, the object itself, seems to slip through the discussion 'unscathed' while the conceptual debate rages around it. It has somehow repelled attention, hiding in plain sight. We feel no closer to approaching it. In fact we appear to have travelled straight through it.

Robert Musil, writing in the 1920s, corroborates this by humorously claiming that the most visible characteristic of the monument is, paradoxically, its quality of *invisibility*:

They are erected, no doubt, with the aim of attracting public attention, but on the other hand they seem to be strangely impregnated against attention from the outside.

When you happen upon the well-known square, you sense them as you would a tree, as part of the street scenery, and you would be momentarily stunned were they to be missing one morning: but you

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<sup>27</sup> E. Ann Kaplan, *Trauma Culture: The Politics of Terror and Loss in Media and Literature* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2005), p.139.

never look at them, and do not generally have the slightest notion of whom they are supposed to represent.<sup>28</sup>

There are two uncertainties to Musil's narrative. The first is that the monument is in some way 'impregnated against attention from the outside', that although we can see a monument our attention is somehow drawn away from it, it is immune to our perceptive gaze: we might question whether we're looking *at* this kind of monument or in fact *beyond* it, to the event it is commemorating. The second is that monuments are capable, through their existence in a public space, to themselves become invisible: objects that we cease to notice. To return to Jones's critique of *Blood Swept Lands...*, one could never accuse this monument of taking up a traditional monumental form, becoming as it now has a shattered, transient public object, fragmented between households. Its partial removal from the public sphere has largely ensured it does not suffer the same fate Musil ascribes to traditional monuments.

For Musil, lack itself becomes an active agent in public space, something he throws at the feet of contemporary culture: 'it is easy for them [monuments] to stand around quietly, accepting occasional glances; we have a right to ask more of our monuments today'.<sup>29</sup> Monuments here become signifiers of the complacency of culture that Musil perceives as holding back our societal development. He urges us to 'inevitably come to the conclusion that they [monuments] make demands on us that run contrary to our nature'.<sup>30</sup> They are to be associated with a kind of amnesia, or a dulling of critical senses. Musil likens their invisibility to that of a painting hanging on a wall: something we cease

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<sup>28</sup> Robert Musil 'Monuments' (1927), in *Posthumous Papers of a Living Author* (trans. Peter Wortsman), originally published in German as *Nachlass zu Lebzeiten* (Hygeine, Colorado: Eridanos Press Inc., 1987), p.61, p.62.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p.63.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

to look at. As far as he is concerned, ‘anything that constitutes the walls of our life, the backdrop of our consciousness, so to speak, forfeits its capacity to play a role in that consciousness’.<sup>31</sup> For Musil, everything in consciousness must be consciously, constantly perceived, otherwise it is redundant, or not performing its role as a ‘useful’ art object.

Although Musil’s tone when writing about monuments is wry,<sup>32</sup> a sense of unease lies at the heart of his essay. Monuments for Musil are active things, capable of repelling attention, deflecting it ‘like water droplets off an oilcloth, without even pausing for a moment’, they “‘de-notice” us, they elude our perceptive faculties’.<sup>33</sup> Is there something about the undulating carpet of red in *Blood Swept Lands...* (which Jones comments is hiding the bones and barbed wire of war beneath it) that is performing a similar trick on the viewing public? Was it too, like an oilcloth, repelling our attention onto something else (the ‘nation’ perhaps?) that caused us, despite all the media attention, to ‘de-notice’ this monument? Has Musil exposed a tension surrounding monuments as a distinct group of objects?<sup>34</sup> E. Ann Kaplan’s list of contradictory questions would seem to suggest so: here is as a cultural object that is not only expected to fulfil numerous (often contradictory) roles, but that seems to possess certain innate qualities surrounding its own visibility. Does Musil’s formulation, however much it seems to speak truthfully, help us get closer to thinking about the monument: an object that we notice when it’s gone, that pushes us away yet demands our attention?

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<sup>31</sup> Musil, p.62.

<sup>32</sup> For example: ‘You notice a not-at-all-tiny metal plaque on which, engraved in indelible letters, you read that from eighteen hundred and such and such to eighteen hundred and a little more the unforgettable So-and-so lived and created here’. Musil, p.61. Musil’s intent, even in translation, is to mock the old establishment, the accepted signposts to culture and tradition. He views monuments as complicit in keeping alive this deeply political, stifling tradition.

<sup>33</sup> Musil, p.61, p.62.

<sup>34</sup> Similar to, yet different from, public sculpture, gravestones or architecture.

Monuments have, of course, always existed as part of human culture, since at least Neolithic times.<sup>35</sup> The position that they occupy, at once private and public, temporal and lasting, seems designed to ensure, as Clive Seal has termed it, 'a social presence outlasting the body'.<sup>36</sup> Many of the monuments which continue this 'social presence' well past a human lifespan still hold a cultic status thousands of years after their construction.<sup>37</sup> Products of a different time, they still, inconceivably, linger on, providing a continuous intrusion of the past into the present. This intrusion often goes unnoticed by us, because we are so familiar with it, part of what Musil was getting at when he compared monuments to old pictures on the walls. Unlike lived architecture, which is often demolished or repurposed, monuments remain largely as preserved, recognisable fragments, unchanged (except by the weather) for hundreds of years.<sup>38</sup> And even though a monument is not necessarily a burial, its parallels with ruins, gravestones and mausolea are apparent.<sup>39</sup> Neolithic structures, be they dwelling-place or tomb, are archaeologically difficult to tell apart,<sup>40</sup> a characteristic shared by other monuments, particularly Victorian mausolea.<sup>41</sup> As James Stevens Curl reminds us about

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<sup>35</sup> See Richard Bradley, *The Significance of Monuments: On the Shaping of Human Experience in Neolithic and Bronze Age Europe* (London & New York: Routledge, 1998); Miles Russell, *Monuments of the British Neolithic: The Roots of Architecture* (London: Tempus Books, 2002).

<sup>36</sup> Clive Seale, *Constructing Death: The Sociology of Dying and Bereavement* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p.34.

<sup>37</sup> The Great Pyramid of Giza, or Stonehenge in Wiltshire are two of the most recognisable examples.

<sup>38</sup> It is worth bearing in mind the distinction here between monuments which were always designed as such (for example the Great Pyramid) and monuments which were originally 'lived in' architecture, but which now have taken on a monumental status, such as the Parthenon in Athens or Coliseum in Rome.

<sup>39</sup> In *The Revival of Death* (London: Routledge, 1994), Tony Walter traces the shifting of burial practices over time: 'In early Christianity, believers were buried in mass graves awaiting the resurrection, with only the richest and holiest resting in individual tombs near the high altar. The Renaissance created the individual tomb that celebrated the earthly works of the male and the fertility and maternal qualities of the female. By the nineteenth century, these individual tombs began to express the grief of the survivor as well as, or instead of, the achievements of the deceased'. See Tony Walter, *The Revival of Death* (London: Routledge, 1994), p.15.

<sup>40</sup> See Bradley, pp.148-150.

<sup>41</sup> See James Stevens Curl, *The Victorian Celebration of Death* (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1972), pp.13-26.

Victorian family plots, 'the family grave, like the family house, became a mark of substance'.<sup>42</sup>

The monument therefore seems to be an enduring remainder of something else that has decayed. Certainly the dead human body, but also, as the monument's own life extends, a particular moment in human history. Richard Bradley writes that this sense of the monument as a remainder, an extension of the domestic (possibly where private and public grief commingle), conceptually dates to at least the Neolithic period:

Why should they [monuments] have had such a powerful impact on human consciousness? Part of the answer may be suggested by the ways in which the long barrows developed. The original prototypes may have been the abandoned houses of the dead and the idea of building a mound might have been suggested by seeing the ways in which such buildings decayed. That is to say, the basic conception arose from the day-to-day experience of living in a world steeped in symbolic significance.<sup>43</sup>

Rather like Musil's idea that monuments repel the very attention they seek out, so Bradley's theory of a barrow being built to mimic a decaying home throws up a similar paradox: that a monument is being used to capture a symbolic experience relating to death, abandonment, decay. And that this symbolism owes much, of course, to what is living or alive. So even though barrows were constructed as separate burial chambers, they were modelled on the living architecture of the home. Like the Victorian mausolea there is a feeling that they must be spaces in which the dead too may be able to live.

Whilst offering this potential for infinity the monument also seems to be, like the photograph, a preserved moment in time. For Bradley the Neolithic landscape was 'a world which knew its own antiquity and had its own conception of a future: a world in

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<sup>42</sup> Stevens Curl, p.25.

<sup>43</sup> Bradley, p.162.

which particular locations had become the pivot of communal life and in which particular people were buried according to their understanding of that scheme'.<sup>44</sup> This same symbolic attachment to place can be seen wherever we erect monuments: markers of something that *has* happened, but which we are not yet ready to let go of. This allows the monument today to enable, perhaps through its geographical fixity,<sup>45</sup> a point from which a particular time or event can be grasped.

The discourses surrounding *Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red* are not unusual when it comes to commemorative public works of art: monuments occupy highly contested conceptual and emotional ground, as E. Ann Kaplan has shown by her list of questions. Robert Musil is a thinker whose essay on monuments is both illuminating and thought-provoking, from which I have digressed to Neolithic burials in the space of a few pages. This is not to be deliberately quixotic, but rather to demonstrate the difficulty of producing anything like a chronological approach to monuments themselves: they are temporal objects that seem able to fall out of time. As Musil has suggested, they demand attention whilst also deflecting it, being able to hide in plain sight in our squares, public buildings and cemeteries.

But as the recent controversy surrounding statues of Cecil Rhodes in South Africa shows,<sup>46</sup> monuments have the capacity to become reactivated sites of protest or revolution. Rhodes (a figure of white imperial supremacy in South Africa) was used, via

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<sup>44</sup> Bradley, p.163.

<sup>45</sup> In the majority of cases. I shall discuss more ephemeral and dispersed monuments in Chapter 3.

<sup>46</sup> See Justin Parkinson, 'Why is Cecil Rhodes such a controversial figure?', *BBC News Magazine*, 1/4/15, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-32131829> [Accessed 2/7/15], Aislinn Laing, 'Cecil Rhodes statue pulled down in Cape Town', *The Telegraph*, 9/4/15, 17.48 BST, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africaandindianocean/southafrica/11525938/Cecil-Rhodes-statue-pulled-down-in-Cape-Town.html> [Accessed 2/7/15], David Priestland, 'The University of Cape Town is right to remove its Cecil Rhodes statue', *The Guardian*, 13/4/15, 14.39 BST, <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/apr/13/cape-town-remove-cecil-rhodes-statue> [Accessed 2/7/15].

his monuments, as a means of addressing South Africa's current post-Colonial and post-apartheid political narrative. Pierre De Vos from the University of Cape Town law faculty has written that the students' demands to remove the Rhodes statue was about more than banishing the controversial statue from the main university square. Vos sees it as a symptomatic gesture made in part 'to recognise the uncomfortable strangeness of our country, a country hovering halfway between a past from which it cannot escape and a future its citizens are too scared, filled with self-doubt or complacent to re-imagine and recreate in their own image'.<sup>47</sup> Vos, strangely mimicking Musil, writes that South Africans are perhaps only just beginning to *notice* the traces of apartheid still dominating their society: that in a way the Rhodes statue has only just been recognised for what it is, whereas before it has been passed by, perhaps uncritically, thousands of times. As David Priestland wryly notes, 'what is truly surprising is that the monument has survived for so long'.<sup>48</sup>

Vos recognises that the statue forms part of a highly symbolic recent past, one that 'still physically shapes and economically structures the environment in which we live'.<sup>49</sup> And Justin Parkinson reminds us that 'the reason Rhodes's statue sits at the centre of the University of Cape Town's campus is that he bequeathed the land on which it was built'.<sup>50</sup> As can be seen with the Rhodes statue, the erection and erasure of monuments simultaneously chart a politics of representation, power and seamliness: what is publicly acceptable and what is not, who or what can be commemorated or

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<sup>47</sup> Pierre De Vos, 'The Rhodes to introspection', *Daily Maverick*, 25/3/15, 08.05 (South Africa), <http://www.dailymaverick.co.za/opinionista/2015-03-25-the-rhodes-to-introspection/#.VZUHf-thi0X> [Accessed 2/7/15].

<sup>48</sup> David Priestland, 'The University of Cape Town is right to remove its Cecil Rhodes statue'.

<sup>49</sup> Vos, 'The Rhodes to introspection'.

<sup>50</sup> Parkinson, 'Why is Cecil Rhodes such a controversial figure?'.



celebrated, and what must be erased.<sup>51</sup> But a profound question remains: does the removal of such a statue actually remove the complex associations or uncomfortable histories it evokes?

Vos's article points towards the multilayered history of South African apartheid, even more so through its present political situation being so tainted by its colonial past.<sup>52</sup> Any act of remembrance therefore, comes up against this difficult, entangled past: 'you cannot return South Africa to a mythical, idealised place before colonialism or Apartheid'.<sup>53</sup> This place of memory, then, is one worth considering in more detail: monuments never seem to provoke a simple narrative of remembrance, however much they are intended to do so. And their removal does not necessarily simplify that narrative, although it does make it less visible.

These concerns surrounding memory and narrative that underpin any consideration of a monument have been written about for centuries. Aristotle's essay 'On Memory' views memory as a tool to be used: 'when someone is actively engaged in memory, he perceives in addition that he saw this, or heard it, or learned it earlier; and earlier and later are in time'.<sup>54</sup> Aristotle draws the distinction between what we perceive in the present and what we recall from before, writing that 'memory is not perception or conception, but a state or affection connected with one of these, when time has elapsed'.<sup>55</sup> This might explain how we can create monuments or hold remembrance services for events so long in the past, or how the Rhodes monument became 'noticed'

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<sup>51</sup> The mass-destruction of communist monuments following the breakup of the U.S.S.R. in 1991 is one such example.

<sup>52</sup> Justin Parkinson reminds us that there are statues to Cecil Rhodes all over South Africa, and other African countries, as well as at Oriel College, Oxford. The Rhodes Scholarships to Oxford also still bear his name. See Parkinson, 'Why is Cecil Rhodes such a controversial figure?'.

<sup>53</sup> Vos, 'The Rhodes to introspection'.

<sup>54</sup> Aristotle, 'On Memory' (trans. R. Roabji), in J.L. Ackrill (ed.), *A New Aristotle Reader* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004), p.207.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p.206.

at the time it did: the passage of time is, according to Aristotle, required to afford us this re-accessing of a perception of an object or image. It seems suggestive to me that a monument, such as one to Cecil Rhodes, through its aesthetic look, can provoke with its image a remembrance (personal or political, a postmemory or a collective memory) that is imaginatively charged. Aristotle writes, 'it is the objects of imagination that are remembered in their own right, whereas things that are not grasped without imagination are remembered in virtue of an incidental association'.<sup>56</sup>

This imaginative work is central to any understanding we have of how monuments function: how they are perceived both singly and collectively, and how they are able to evoke events from which they are themselves temporally or physically removed. Aristotle terms this as being an image that we possess, 'that one must think of the affection, which is produced by means of perception in the soul and in that part of the body which contains the soul, as being like a sort of picture, the having of which we say is memory'.<sup>57</sup> Perhaps the monument is able to provide us with this picture.

Samuel Johnson, writing in *The Universal Chronicle* in 1759, sees memory as an essential intellectual pursuit for the health of the mind, and by extension the soul. In 'The Burden of Memory', he writes that 'memory is the primary and fundamental power, without which there could be no other intellectual operation'.<sup>58</sup> For Johnson, as sentient human beings, we are in possession of remarkable cognitive faculties, ones which are irrevocably tied to a sense of memory. But this essential pursuit is also, as Johnson describes it, a curse, where 'good and evil are linked together, and no pleasure

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<sup>56</sup> Aristotle, p.207.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Samuel Johnson, 'Article No. 44' ['The Burden of Memory'] (17<sup>th</sup> February 1759), in "The Idler" series for *The Universal Chronicle* (1758-1760), in Denise Gigante (ed.), *The Great Age of the English Essay: An Anthology* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2008), p.148.

recurs but associated with pain'.<sup>59</sup> Memory here is the great leveller, 'the hero and the sage are, like vulgar mortals, overburdened by the weight of life, all shrink from recollection, and all wish for an art of forgetfulness'.<sup>60</sup>

Recollection becomes here a form of mental anguish as well as strength: forgetfulness is sometimes to be desired, or practised like an art. Johnson's observation that 'no pleasure recurs but associated with pain' is no idle yoking of 'good and evil'. These opposites are presented by Johnson to convey their distinct admixture, their impossibility of resolution. Just as Jonathan Jones would have wished for *Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red* to be *less* nationalistic, it would be impossible for it not to represent some kind of nationalism, or for nationalists not to exploit the monument for this purpose. Just as the figure of Rhodes divides opinion, so a monument cannot recall a triumph without also recalling a defeat, whatever its inscription.

Fifty years after Johnson wrote his essay on memory, William Wordsworth makes an early contribution to what we could term 'monument criticism' with his 'Essay Upon Epitaphs' (1810), in which he provides a careful rendering of the conscious act of remembrance when it takes material form. Wordsworth is interested in the epitaph as a remainder, something which continues on after the body perishes, tracing the intertwined relationship between the dead body and what is done to commemorate it, and what purpose this serves:

To raise a Monument is a sober and reflective act; that the inscription which it bears is intended to be permanent and for universal perusal; and that, for this reason, the thoughts and feelings expressed should be permanent also – liberated from that weakness and anguish of sorrow which is in nature

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<sup>59</sup> Johnson in Gigante, p.150.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

transitory, and which with instinctive decency retires from notice. The passions should be subdued, the emotions controlled; strong indeed, but nothing ungovernable or wholly involuntary. Seemliness requires this, and truth requires it also: for how can the Narrator otherwise be trusted? Moreover, a Grave is a tranquilising object; resignation, in course of time, springs up from it as naturally as wild flowers.<sup>61</sup>

Wordsworth makes explicit the connections between time, memory and the erection of a monument. Here the monument and the 'permanent' epitaph upon it act as a means of easing grief, creating an improving, conciliatory, seemingly cultural product. This reflects Wordsworth's own conception of poetry as 'emotion recollected in tranquillity'.<sup>62</sup> And although writing about epitaphs, Wordsworth's linking of the physical monument with its textual inscription, and the necessity for controlled emotions whilst doing so, stem from the same commemorative impulse, one which views the monument as serving a particular use or purpose, designed and erected to meet a particular end.<sup>63</sup>

Whilst we could take issue with this 'noble' approach to the monument, the notion of quiet reflection, a captured moment in time reflected back to the present, still speaks to the desired effect of many monuments, either by design or use. Indeed the seemliness of *Blood Swept Lands...* proves this concern is still uppermost in public discourse. The poppies, similar to Wordsworth's 'wild flowers', spring up as a mnemonic symbol that indeed mimics the reflective mood Wordsworth describes and what Jonathan Jones calls 'toothless'. It is a kind of seemliness or tastefulness that along with its moralistic undertones has some stake in monument discourse: like the epitaph, our

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<sup>61</sup> William Wordsworth, 'Essay Upon Epitaphs' (1810), in Paul M. Zall (ed.), *Literary Criticism of William Wordsworth* (Regents Critics Series) (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1966), pp.103-4.

<sup>62</sup> William Wordsworth, 'Preface to *Lyrical Ballads, with Pastoral and Other Poems*' (1802), in *Selected Poems*, ed. John O. Hayden (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1994), pp.449-450.

<sup>63</sup> Romanticism could indeed be seen as a direct antecedent to our contemporary modes of commemoration, built as most are around selfhood and memory.

grief, our thoughts, can be channelled around a specific object, allowing us the tranquil space in which to recollect the emotion.<sup>64</sup>

But where do these concerns leave studies of monuments in more recent times? Aside from Robert Musil's essay, one of the earliest examinations of monuments as distinct cultural objects is his fellow Austrian Alois Riegl's 1903 article 'Denkmalcultur' ('Monument-Culture'). This piece, the first attempt to classify monuments as objects in and of themselves (separate from ruins or gravestones), is a response to what was at the time a surfeit of monument-building projects in Germany around the cult of First German Chancellor Otto von Bismarck.<sup>65</sup> Critic Karl Scheffler, writing in 1919, perceptively notes that 'the monuments to Bismarck in the years before 1914 are not in reality dedicated to him; these are monuments which the nation erected for herself and which refer to Bismarck solely as a pretext'.<sup>66</sup> Once again monuments purportedly about a single event or person become incorporated into a wider nationalistic, state-sanctioned discourse of legitimacy and power.

Riegl's attempts to categorise the different types of monument (artistic, intended, ruinous) soon runs into difficulty, because so many monuments transgress categories, being able to encompass many formal attributes. For Riegl an 'artistic' monument (usually a building or structure of some kind) may be preserved for its aesthetic qualities

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<sup>64</sup> Tranquillity is perhaps the most-used term to describe the function of a monument or "reflective space", and is often cited as the "goal" of monumental sites: to achieve reflection, peace, harmony through which extreme suffering, trauma or terror may be thought about. The Cenotaph, with its inscription "The Glorious Dead" and contemporary memorials, such as the National September 11 Memorial and Museum/World Trade Center Memorial, echo these same concerns. See <http://www.911memorial.org>.

<sup>65</sup> See Serguizs Michalski, *Public Monuments: Art in Political Bondage 1870-1997* (London: Reaktion Books, 1998), particularly Chapter 2.

<sup>66</sup> Karl Scheffler (1919) in *Bismarck-Preussen, Deutschland und Europa*, exhibition catalogue (Berlin 1990), p.458, quoted in Michalski, p.66. The proliferation of statues to Queen Victoria throughout the post-Colonial British Empire (and within the British Isles) is another example of a series of monuments that are much more about an ideal or expression of power than they are about the individual being commemorated.

above any historical importance (although he acknowledges how fraught with difficulties any kind of aesthetic judgement is on past structures); an 'intended' monument is one constructed specifically to commemorate a particular person or event (such as the Bismarck statues); a 'ruinous' monument is one that should be preserved simply because of its age, not because of any artistic or commemorative value (for example an unremarkable yet well-preserved ancient structure).<sup>67</sup> *Blood Swept Lands...*, for example, is a monument that manages to be radical in form, but which in its symbolism and reception has been termed by some as nationalistic and conservative. It also straddles the division between a piece of public art and a monumental sculpture to a historical event, a problem Riegl himself encountered, writing that 'the differentiation of "artistic" and "historical" monuments is inappropriate because the latter at once contains and suspends the former'.<sup>68</sup>

Riegl's contribution is to begin to consider a monument's artistic value as something separate from its historic value. This begins to complicate Wordsworth's survivor-centric view of the epitaph/monument as being 'for a satisfaction to the sorrowing hearts of the Survivors, and for the common benefit of the living'.<sup>69</sup> Riegl suggests that not only can an aesthetically unpleasing or unremarkable monument have historic qualities that make it worth keeping, but that the reverse is true: a monument to an unremarkable event or person can have great aesthetic worth. Riegl's task is undeniably pejorative, based around a particular set of cultural, political and aesthetic criteria. Nonetheless, he recognises the duty of care and preservation we have over our

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<sup>67</sup> It is worth noting how closely Riegl's formulations have influenced modern-day preservation codes.

<sup>68</sup> Alois Riegl, 'The Modern Cult of Monuments: Its Character and Its Origin' (1903), trans. Kurt W. Forster and Diane Ghirardo, in Kurt W. Foster (ed.), *Oppositions: A Journal for Ideas and Criticism in Architecture*, 'Monument/Memory', Fall 1982: 25 (New York: Rizzoli), p.22.

<sup>69</sup> Wordsworth in Zall, p.96.

monuments, and that some guidelines need to be discussed to decide what we keep and what we destroy.

But, rather than pushing towards a conceptual framework, Riegl cannot help but get lost in the difficulties of teasing these criteria apart:

Apart from the art-historical value, there is also in all earlier art a purely artistic value independent of the particular place a work of art occupies in the chain of historical development. Is this 'art-value' equally as present as the historical value in the past, so that it may claim to be an essential and historically independent part of our notion of monument? Or is this art-value merely a subjective one invented by and entirely dependent on the changing preferences of the modern viewer? Were this the case, would such art-value have no place in the definition of the monument as a commemorative work?<sup>70</sup>

Riegl is right to question whether we have any claim to make artistic pronouncements when we ourselves are trapped in an artistic and cultural moment. He is also right to ask what place aesthetics should have in a commemorative work, and how exactly we should use it to judge a monument. As *Blood Swept Lands...* shows, the historical significance of a monument can be used to 'trump' any critiques of its form or aesthetics. Returning to Kaplan's list of questions, should a monument be a reminder of an event, a work of mourning, a site where trauma can be 'worked through'? Is it meant to address the concerns of the present, 'or should it be thought of as a pedagogical tool, providing knowledge about and experience of the tragedy for generations to follow in the hopes of preventing future occurrences of violence and hatred?'.<sup>71</sup>

Bill Niven and Chloe Paver note in their introduction to *Memorialisation in Germany Since 1945* (2010) that 'the "messiness" of memorial activity derives...from the

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<sup>70</sup> Riegl in Foster, p.22.

<sup>71</sup> Kaplan, *Trauma Culture*, p.139.

fact...that memorial culture does not only consist of “memory contests” of the kind that produce a clear winner and a clear loser: on the contrary, competing memory discourses often co-exist without directly clashing, even where they come into contact with one another’.<sup>72</sup> These wide-ranging concerns ghost any monument-discourse, and form protracted, entangled arguments that are only just beginning to be critically examined in greater detail.

There are some excellent articles and books about specific monuments or sites, for example Albert Boime’s ‘Perestroika and the Destabilisation of the Soviet Monuments’ (1995),<sup>73</sup> or Peter Carrier’s *Holocaust Monuments and National Memory in France and Germany since 1989: The Origins and Political Function of the Vél’ d’Hiv’ in Paris and the Holocaust Monument in Berlin* (2005). Some critics such as Quentin Stevens examine monuments from an architectural perspective, looking at questions of design, form and function,<sup>74</sup> whilst others include the monument only as part of a wider examination of an artist’s work, for example Charlotte Mullins’s *Rachel Whiteread* (2004). Artists such as Bill Fontana, Sanja Iveković, Jenny Holzer, Yivgeny Fiks, Paul Harfleet, Krzysztof Wodiczko and Jochen Gerz explicitly use monuments in their practice.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Niven and Paver, ‘Introduction’, in Niven and Paver, p.8.

<sup>73</sup> <http://www.albertboime.com/Articles/96.pdf> [Accessed 10/9/2014].

<sup>74</sup> See for example Quentin Stevens, Karen A. Franck and Ruth Fazakerley, ‘Counter-Monuments: The Anti-Monumental and the Dialogic’, in *The Journal of Architecture*, 17.6 (2012), pp.951-972.

<sup>75</sup> See Bill Fontana, *The Sound Sculptures, Acoustical Visions and Ideas of Bill Fontana*, <http://www.resoundings.org> [Accessed 15/3/15], Sanja Iveković, *Sweet Violence* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2011), Davie Joselit, Joan Simon, Renata Saleci, *Jenny Holzer* (London: Phaidon Press, 1998), Yivgeny Fiks, *Yevgeniy Fiks*, <http://yevgeniyfiks.com/home.html> [Accessed 13/10/14], Paul Harfleet, *The Pansy Project*, [www.thepansyproject.com](http://www.thepansyproject.com) [Accessed 8/1/15], Krzysztof Wodiczko, ‘Projections’, in *Perspecta*, Vol. 26, ‘Theater, Theatricality, and Architecture’ (1990), pp.273-287, Andreas Hapkemeyer, Marion Hohlfeldt, Brigitte Unterhofer-Klammer, *Jochen Gerz: Res Publica* (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 1999).



Writings on the Holocaust obviously include a great deal of work on monuments, with a recognisable field of scholarship growing around Holocaust memorials, as shown in Harold Marcuse's 'Holocaust Memorials: The Emergence of a Genre' (2010).<sup>76</sup> There is also a huge overlap with work being done in trauma studies, as with Jenny Edkins's *Trauma and the Memory of Politics* (2003) and E. Ann Kaplan's *Trauma Culture: The Politics of Terror and Loss in Media and Literature* (2005). In these instances monuments are part of wider explorations into trauma studies, and very rarely form the main focus: as with the discussions around *Blood Swept Lands...* they seem to be a point of access into a broader concept or discussion.

Of the works which place monuments as their main focus, Serguizs Michalski's *Public Monuments: Art in Political Bondage 1870-1997* (1998) is still one of the most comprehensive and well-researched monographs on the monument as a cultural phenomenon and historical artefact, and Bill Niven and Chloe Paver's edited collection *Memorialisation in Germany since 1945* (2010) is wide-ranging in its scope. James E. Young, possibly the most influential thinker in terms of monument discourse, remains a touchstone for many writers (including myself), with his monographs *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (1993) and *At Memory's Edge: After Images of the Holocaust in Contemporary Art and Architecture* (2000) marking a crucial intervention into the politics and aesthetics of Holocaust monuments. Young's discussion of the so-called 'countermonuments'<sup>77</sup> (coined by Young to identify monuments which have a form perceived to be more radical than, or counter to,

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<sup>76</sup> Harold Marcuse, 'Holocaust Memorials: The Emergence of a Genre', in *American Historical Review*, Vol. 115 (February 2010).

<sup>77</sup> See James E. Young, *At Memory's Edge: After Images of the Holocaust in Contemporary Art and Architecture* (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 2000), pp.90-151, and 'Memory and Counter-Memory: The End of the Monument in Germany', in *Harvard Design Magazine*, Fall 1999, No. 9, pp.1-10.

traditional memorials) has been taken up by many subsequent writers, and is a term I analyse more closely in the third chapter of this thesis. Adrian Parr's work *Deleuze and Memorial Culture* (2008) is exceptional for its synthesis of critical theory, philosophical thinking and the monument.<sup>78</sup> Gillian Rose's *Mourning Becomes the Law* (1996), is still one of the foremost works about the Holocaust, philosophy and commemoration 'without guarantees, for the good of all',<sup>79</sup> and informs much of my approach to the subject of monuments and how we think about them.

What became clear throughout the writing of this PhD was that my interest lay not in taking up one particular side or another (an art-historical approach versus a trauma studies approach, for example), but in trying to achieve a synthesis of approaches that was grounded, first and foremost, in the materiality of each monument.<sup>80</sup> By developing a phenomenologically rich description of the monuments explored in this thesis it is my hope to expand the field of writing that focuses on them as a subject for enquiry, not just as an additional component to a larger trauma studies

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<sup>78</sup> Parr's project views the monument as a potentially utopian object, 'one where culture inhabits the disruptive dimension of traumatic memories, which also entails a little bit of forgetting, while simultaneously bringing forth a sense of agency'. See Adrian Parr, *Deleuze and Memorial Culture: Desire, Singular Memory and the Politics of Trauma* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008), p.3. For Parr, the memorial can provide a joyous futurity, capable of balancing tensions between present and past, invoking trauma and a 'utopian memory thinking', which she cites as allowing us to think 'about how the social field conceptually, imaginatively, and materially grasps and labours over the socio-political contradictions collective trauma exposes' (p.3).

<sup>79</sup> Gillian Rose, *Mourning Becomes the Law: Philosophy and Representation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p.62.

<sup>80</sup> For many writers, the concept of the monument seemed enough to justify writing on it: countermonuments in particular have been written about by many people (cribbing from James E. Young, one of the few critics who witnessed their development and construction at first hand) who have clearly never visited the sites, because these monuments are now buried, their burial seen as a foreclosure of their current existence. For example, even though Richard Crownshaw and Noam Lupu write about Jochen Gerz and Esther Shalev-Gerz's Harburg countermonument, both do so, *qua* Young, in largely historical terms. To me this approach negates the continuing presence of the monument, however 'invisible' it may now be. See Richard Crownshaw, 'The German Countermonument: Conceptual Indeterminacies and the Retheorisation of the Arts of Vicarious Memory', in *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, Vol. 44, No. 2 (2008), pp.212-227 and Noam Lupu, 'Memory Vanished, Absent, and Confined: The Countermonumental Project in 1980s and 1990s Germany', in *History and Memory*, Vol. 15, No. 2 (Fall/Winter 2003), pp.130-164.

or memory studies narrative. It is my hope that through this more phenomenological approach monuments can be used rigorously, as legitimate texts that create intersections in critical and cultural theory, promoting dialogues that are by their nature wide-ranging and interdisciplinary. This thesis is structured around a series of these enquiries or critical experiments: putting certain monuments with certain thinkers and modes of writing in an intertextual exchange.

Through a detailed discussion of monuments alongside Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok's work, and Donald W. Winnicott's writing, it is my aim to expand the potential for how these particular psychoanalytic theorists are currently being used in discourse, and to make a broader claim of the continuing applications of psychoanalysis as a critical means of approach. Queer theory, a school of thinking itself undergoing reassignment and something of an identity crisis, is my starting-point for a synthetic, enfolded approach whereby monuments, literature and eco-criticism can inform each other in a Winnicottian manner that reclaims non-binarity or oppositional thinking.

The work of D.W. Winnicott has particularly influenced my thinking about how to approach monuments as cultural, psychic objects that are part of wide trajectories of societal change. I explicitly work with Winnicott in my third chapter, but my whole approach to monuments has become charged with his interest in dismantling oppositional thinking,<sup>81</sup> looking for a third way between two opposing binaries, rather than falling down on one side or the other. This, as Winnicott himself acknowledges, is a

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<sup>81</sup> As the questions posed by E. Ann Kaplan suggest, and as my discussion of *Blood Swept Lands...* and the Cecil Rhodes memorials showed, monuments are often viewed as occupying a distinct 'either/or' position. It is my intention, certainly in chapters two and three of this thesis, to examine the monument from a 'both/and' position, one that is perhaps more complex, harder to navigate and write about, but potentially a more useful approach. It is this approach that Winnicott, writing about delinquency, the potential space or the fear of a breakdown, exquisitely explores in his psychoanalytic writing: a position that is in fact one of tension and irresolvability. Part of this thesis is concerned with foreclosure and permanence, and how an acceptance of destruction as well as a resistance to resolving complex questions.

complicated critical stance to take, one that is often undervalued as a method of enquiry, possibly because its results are less dazzling or certain.

As Thomas H. Ogden notes, Winnicott's 'most valuable clinical and theoretical contributions are in the form of paradoxes that he asks us to accept without resolving, for the truth of the paradox lies in neither of its poles, but in the space between them'.<sup>82</sup> To push this point: I feel it is not impossible to trace a distinct 'queering' of the accepted hierarchies of psychoanalysis in Winnicott's work, urging his reader as he does to look at things from this tension of this third way, between the paradox, what I would argue is a distinctly queer position to take. This acknowledgement of the similarities between Winnicott's psychoanalytic position and a queer theory approach allows Winnicott's work to chime with theorists such as Judith Butler, who in *Undoing Gender* (2004), states that 'I would like to start, and to end, with the question of the human, of who counts as the human, and the related question of whose lives count as lives'.<sup>83</sup> It could be very rewarding to open up our own thinking about the overlaps between queer theory and Winnicott, particularly on a methodological level, and with regard to the significance of the potential spaces of both queer experience and queer writing.

What Winnicott brings to my thesis is what Mary Jacobus terms his unique 'elision of creativity and culture', which 'installs magical thinking...as an aspect of the socio-cultural sphere'.<sup>84</sup> In short, Winnicott advocates the use of fantasy or creativity not as a means of escape but as a means of approach; a way of allowing us to approach difficult

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<sup>82</sup> Thomas H. Ogden, 'The Mother, the Infant and the Matrix: Interpretations of aspects of the work of Donald Winnicott' (1985), in Jan Abram (ed.), *Donald Winnicott Today* (London, New York: Routledge, 2013), p.46.

<sup>83</sup> Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender* (New York, London: Routledge, 2004), p.17.

<sup>84</sup> Mary Jacobus, *The Poetics of Psychoanalysis: In the Wake of Klein* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) p.96.

conceptual ideas surrounding experience and reality. As Adam Phillips writes: ‘fantasy is not a substitute for reality but the first method of finding it’.<sup>85</sup>

The first chapter of this thesis is an edited version of the diary of my research trip to Poland, Austria and Germany, the experience of which formed the basis for the more theoretical questions that I tackle in the remaining chapters. What begins as a seeking out of Holocaust memorials becomes a much more personally challenging journey around sexuality and risk – and the discovery that, however much a visitor likes to think they can ‘consume’ a monument or the historical moment it represents, there will always be some kind of experience outside of this, an experience that is personal, ungovernable and sometimes dangerous. Whilst the final sections of the diary might make for strange reading, the echoes around homosexual desire, personal safety and private/public space felt so relevant to both Paul Harfleet’s *The Pansy Project* and discourses surrounding Peter Eisenman’s *Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe* that it proved central to the arc drawn by my research. On reflection it seemed more than a coincidence that when faced with concentration camps, gas chambers and monuments struggling to convey the scale and devastation of human suffering, my personal, physical reaction was one of excess and sexual risk.

Although unaware of it at the time, my ‘rituals’ of starvation and over-eating before and after each monument visit point to a similar discomfort brought about by the sites and the real or imagined histories behind them: in Nürnberg, for example, I pushed beyond all reasonable boundaries of hunger because of an overriding need to ‘get through’ the experience, to come out of the other side. Similarly with Auschwitz my reaction was to ‘get through it’, even if that meant starving along the way. It’s hard not

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<sup>85</sup> Adam Phillips, *Winnicott*, (1988) (London: Penguin, 2007), p.84.

to extrapolate this behaviour to a kind of empathetic mimicry, the rhythm of need and excess linked to the knowledge of what happened in the camps. These rhythms of privation and excess were themselves enfolded into each return journey from these sites: a return which was markedly uncanny, because so few people have ever made it, compared to the numbers that went in the opposite direction. It is the kind of survival in the face of this kind of repetitive action, one that searches for some location of the survivor between the experiences of death and living, that Cathy Caruth describes:

Trauma consists not only in having confronted death, but in *having survived, precisely, without knowing it....* Repetition, in other words, is not simply the attempt to grasp that one has almost died but, more fundamentally and enigmatically, the very attempt to *claim one's own survival*.<sup>86</sup>

This diary can, I think, be read as a struggle for psychic survival and personal identity in the face of overwhelming traumas, traumas that were experienced 'second-hand', but were nonetheless accessed through a memorial landscape existing between the past and present, the real and imagined worlds. The diary marks the point from which all my theoretical work stems: it is intrinsic to this thesis, for there would be no thesis without it.

Perhaps most influential to me in thinking about the place of a personal diary within an academic thesis is the work of psychoanalyst Marion Milner and her book *Eternity's Sunrise* (1987). In it Milner approaches the problems of memory and

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<sup>86</sup> Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History* (London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), p.64. Caruth is here commenting on Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*.

recollection, of being a tourist, and of having unexpected reactions to sites and places where she feels that a different response is required, one she cannot give. Milner visits Greece several times, and each time is confronted by different experiences, or 'beads', separated by years. By writing these experiences down as accurately as she can, and by analysing them, Milner asks what personal experience, what a lived moment, can look like. For Milner this means self-reflection, analysis and openness, a willingness to question and not to blindly 'consume' what as tourists we are told to consume and how. It is a work of creative imagining as much as recollection and transcription.

For example, Milner's experiences of the Parthenon, which begin with detachment and end years later in profound appreciation, are a reminder that places and architecture do not necessarily 'give' us what we expect, nor do we always react to them in the 'correct' way. For Milner her initial reaction to the Parthenon is problematic because she knows this is not what is expected of her: she is meant to be feeling something she feels she is not. But on a later visit it is only by looking *away* from the Parthenon, towards the Erectheum temple, that Milner can turn back to the colossal structure and feel 'this is it, this is eternity'.<sup>87</sup> It is only by seeing the 'pillars that are maidens' that Milner finds that 'there had suddenly come a feeling of strength rising up the back of my neck and head, as if I too were supporting a pressure from above'.<sup>88</sup> It is through this act, her own personal, physical investment in the weight of the Parthenon, that she can move from 'knowing' its beauty to 'feeling' it.<sup>89</sup> As Milner describes it: 'I could stand and look at it and feel the weight of the pillars, their hugeness and the

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<sup>87</sup> Marion Milner, *Eternity's Sunrise* (1987) (Hove and New York: Routledge, 2011), p.25.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., pp.8-9, pp.22-23, pp.24-26.

weight of what they support, any one stone could crush me utterly'.<sup>90</sup> This comes close to what my own sense of encountering or approaching a monument can mean. What Milner is saying is not just that the Parthenon is huge (she had already known that), but that she *felt* its hugeness, something that incorporated her own physical being in a manner which was both empowering and threatening, sublime, the kind of affect that many people describe upon experiencing the vastness of Auschwitz. Interestingly, it is an experience that comes, for Milner, through looking at another object entirely: by looking *away* from the Parthenon, not *at* it.

This speaks to the section in the diary relating to Leonardo Da Vinci's *The Lady with the Ermine*: nothing to do with the Holocaust or remembrance, or so it appears. And yet the Da Vinci painting, coming as it did in my research trip between Poland and Austria, felt as resonant as those two places, essential to the narrative. Perhaps it comes back to history, and that surrounding these monuments are working cities with multiple cultural and historical strands tracing through them. At the end of the day the Holocaust forms only a part of this interwoven history, something attested to by Jérémie Dres's graphic novel *We Won't See Auschwitz* (2012) in which (as the title indicates) Dres and his cousin undertake a tour of Poland to discover their Jewish heritage, but consciously decide not to visit the concentration camp. This act frees the narrative from some of the complex questions of postmemory Auschwitz raises: it allows Dres to focus on the Jewish present in Poland whilst also addressing the Holocaust in an extremely sensitive way. He too chooses to look away in order to then focus more clearly on the present reality of what being Jewish in Kraków is like.<sup>91</sup> For myself, looking on the Da Vinci only a day or so after Auschwitz was inexplicably affirming, the painting expressing a vitality or

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<sup>90</sup> Milner, p.25.

<sup>91</sup> See Jérémie Dres, *We Won't See Auschwitz*, trans. Edward Gauvin (London: SelfMadeHero, 2012).



resonance so different to the concentration camp that it made the other even more sharply defined.

Not all of the monuments I visit make it into the critical chapters of the thesis, simply through limitations of space. There is much more theoretical work I would like to do around specific sites, particularly Treblinka or the München monuments. As it is I focus on Rachel Whiteread's *Memorial to the Austrian Jewish Victims of the Shoah* in Chapter 2; Jochen Gerz and Esther Shalev-Gerz's *Memorial Against Fascism* in Chapter 3; and Paul Harfleet's *Pansy Project* in Chapter 4. *The Pansy Project* is unusual because I did not knowingly see or visit it as part of my research trip: due to its multi-geographical, temporary nature it is difficult to track down, and this elusiveness is the point of the piece, that it is stumbled across (similar to Gunter Denmig's *Stolpersteine* project, which I unknowingly encountered in Hamburg). The more I investigated *The Pansy Project* the more it seemed to form a natural opening out of the thesis towards interconnected questions surrounding the ecological, temporal and historical space (the intertextuality, if you like) that a monument can occupy if we are prepared to let it.

Chapter 2 begins with what is apparently a very recognisable monument (and one of the most well-known of the twenty-first century), Rachel Whiteread's *Memorial to the Austrian Jewish Victims of the Shoah* (2000), in Vienna. Challenging previously-held readings of the monument as an explicit library of Jewish stories, I explore the complexities of this piece as an archive, one that is, potentially, forever barred to us, an unreadable, untranslatable narrative. Focusing on the work of Nicholas Royle, Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok, I trace the particular encryptions of this monument and the potential for it to represent a foreclosure rather than a continuation of history: showing us precisely what we can never access. I speculate whether the monument becomes a

crypt-container for the so-called 'exquisite corpse' of the Holocaust itself, and if Whiteread's work is in fact a critique of the perpetuation of remembrance (or the futility of recall) in light of such a devastating event.

In Chapter 3 I begin by considering the position of graffiti or vandalism in monument-discourse, and the 'appropriate behaviour' that is expected at monument sites.<sup>92</sup> As I show by examining Peter Eisenman's *Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe* in Berlin, visitor use does not necessarily follow architectural intention. When monuments are used in ways contrary to their design, even opened up to the possibility of their destruction, how 'useful' is the regulation of such transgression, if it is what the community is demanding from the monument or enacting upon it? Here I draw heavily on D.W. Winnicott's thinking around object-use, and his essay 'Fear of Breakdown'. It is by tracing his examination of objects and the holding environment that I re-examine the so-called 'countermonuments'. By using Winnicott as a frame of reference, I show that such a distinction is both arbitrary and unhelpful, and that the value of countermonuments lies in their manifestation of what is an impulse at the heart of all monument-use: destruction of the object. From this I hypothesise that the usefulness of the monument is, in fact, one that needs continual reassessment, and that we need to be more open to changing or destroying monuments that are no longer proving useful to their communities, or creating new ones.

Chapter 4 sees my thinking become more synthesised with historical and literary theory and the potentially rich intertextuality of the monument, starting as it does with the ephemeral *Pansy Project* by Paul Harfleet. This project, which involves the planting

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<sup>92</sup> In June 2015 the high-profile arrest and detention of two English schoolboys for picking up some items from the ground at Auschwitz illustrated just how such 'transgressive behaviour' is viewed and punished by state apparatus. See BBC News, 23 June 2015, 'British teenagers freed after Auschwitz theft apology', <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-33237625> [Accessed 24 September 2015].

of pansies at sites of homophobia, forms a new kind of interconnected, transitory memorial, an intervention that queers both how we memorialise and who we should be memorialising. By following this alternative narrative that runs parallel to the 'permanent' monuments I wish to complicate any neat sense of what a monument may or may not be, but also to examine the monument as a nexus of cultural and literary texts, as well as the possibilities for living plants as mnemonic objects, aside from their traditional use in funeral and burial rites. *The Pansy Project* is a monument that I believe occupies a queer, hybrid position, in defiance of nationalist or state-sanctioned narratives, intersecting across queer, social and literary histories.

One of my aims in this thesis is to approach these monuments from a point of view that is as critical as possible, resistant to any potential sentimentality. As F. Robert Rodman writes about Winnicott, 'he regarded sentimentality as a weakness to be guarded against. That is to say, natural aggression must be given its due'.<sup>93</sup> It is this acknowledgement of the aggression or anger surrounding many monuments and the events that they commemorate that needs to be given as much critical notice as the nobler, more Wordsworthian sentiments of tranquil reflection. It is only by holding both these opposites together, by refusing to resolve these tensions, that I believe we can allow our monuments to work for us.

### A Note on Terminology

The reader will note that the terms 'monument' and 'memorial' are used almost interchangeably throughout this thesis. This is a conscious decision on my part, based on my own lack of conviction of a discernable or discrete difference between the two:

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<sup>93</sup> F. Robert Rodman, 'Introduction', in D.W. Winnicott ed. F. Robert Rodman, *The Spontaneous Gesture: Selected Letters of D.W. Winnicott* (1987) (London: Karnac Books, 1999), p.xxiv.

often what is called a memorial can also be called a monument, or contain monumental elements, and vice versa. A fuller examination would be needed to determine if there is any productive distinction to be made between the two terms, and whether it helps our thinking to taxonomically divide this field into 'monuments' doing one thing and 'memorials' doing something else. I hope the reader forgives my wanton interspersal of the two terms.

## CHAPTER 1

### RESEARCH DIARY:

# AN IMAGINED HOLOCAUST

THE ONLY LIVING, ALTHOUGH MUTE, WITNESS WHICH HAS ALWAYS  
BEEN PRESENT IN THIS PLACE, IS THE ELM TREE.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Juliusz Deczkowski pseudonym "Laudański" (1924-1988), imprisoned at Pawiak Prison, Warsaw 1941-1942. From an information board at Pawiak Prison, Warszawa.

Berlin31<sup>st</sup> May

I perched on one of the bar stools in the station café in Brussels and ate my lunch: baguette with ham, cheese, salad, egg and too much mustard mayonnaise. My body was sweating from the large rucksack weighing me down at the back and the smaller one balanced precariously on my front: I had packed too much, worried about the weather, about taking the right books, about forgetting anything. When I eventually arrived in Berlin Hauptbahnhof it was along with the driving rain.

I was met by an old friend, Beatrycze: Polish, but now living in Berlin with “these crazy Germans”. It took us forty minutes to find my hostel, by which time I was drenched and had moved far past hunger. It had been a long time since the sandwich. Beatrycze, umbrella in hand, had led us this way and that, getting irate at the Germans who professed to not know where the street we needed was. Even the mapreading took some time. Beatrycze didn’t seem to mind, she was enjoying being out on a Thursday and talking to “an interesting person, not the bullshit self-righteous mothers in the playground”. When we found the hostel, the man behind the desk grudgingly gave Beatrycze special dispensation to enter its men-only domain. Beatrycze loudly proclaimed, “It’s nothing I haven’t already seen, darling.”

The gay hostel was disappointing. I don’t know what I’d been expecting, but this group of tourists didn’t inspire confidence. Despite prominent naked ‘Boys of Berlin’ photographs on the walls it couldn’t disguise what it was: a middle-class hostel that probably enjoyed far less “naughty times” than the average YMCA. We headed straight out to a bar, where we stayed until Beatrycze’s last U-Bahn home. She gave me some tips on Poland, wondered why I wanted to visit Holocaust sites, and expressed nothing

but continuing disdain for the Germans: “If I hadn’t fucking married one there’s no way I’d still be here.” I returned from the bar to find the hostel empty and smelling of hair gel and cologne. Realising I still hadn’t eaten, but now too tired to do so, I checked train times to Warszawa then turned in.

1<sup>st</sup> June

Back at Hauptbahnhof I bought a ticket to Warszawa, a long-overdue croissant and coffee, and sat down in a carriage compartment that was looking very jaded post-Perestroika. As the train drew out into the countryside I felt anxious. The former East German forests, bleeding into decaying Polish towns, seemed strangely poignant, like all of mainland Europe: the benign sidings, goods trains and warehouses inevitably conjured (probably false) historical connotations. I looked out intermittently, finding the greenness stifling, and tried to absorb some Polish phrases, but it was too difficult to concentrate. At some point I fell asleep and woke just as the train was entering the grey Warszawa suburbs.

### Warszawa

1<sup>st</sup> June (continued)

Warszawa’s weather was not much better than Berlin’s: overcast, with a cool wind, the raised hand of rain hovering above everything. The city, on the brink of hosting Euro 2012, was packed, and I felt weighed down by my lack of language. I made it to the hostel, which lay in a secluded courtyard near the Politechnika Metro, close to the embassy district and also handy for Centrum, the parks and Stare Miasto (Old

Town). I dumped the rucksacks, glad to be rid of them, and unpacked. I left one bed in the room for Saoirse's arrival in a day or two.



On the hostel's recommendation I went to a Czech restaurant underneath the MDM hotel at the end of Marszałkowska, forming one side of Plac Konstytucji. The plaza ('Constitution') was constructed for Communist victory parades and grand ceremonial functions, and Marszałkowska went in a straight wide line all the way up to Centrum, the Pałac Kultury i Nauki forming the other end to this Communist boulevard. These buildings, built in 1952, have a classical severity, a grand scale of beauty similar to Haussmann's Parisian Boulevards. The colonnades with their shallow steps are sociable and elegant, the buildings massive, set back and well-proportioned, yet still retaining human dimensions. The heavily carved *bas relief* sculptures of workers and families were there, large and severe, but at ground level, in reach, touchable, easily grasped. It



seemed to me, in that moment, to make sense, that kind of Soviet Communism, its early ideals, its architectural goals.

The Czech restaurant was fast food by any other name, although perhaps 'regional fast food' was a better moniker. It had that familiar capitalist atmosphere of overdone 'homely' interiors with loud music, large portions, cheap prices and young, uninterested waiting staff. I had a Tyskie beer and a chicken kebab, which arrived on a huge wooden platter and would have easily fed two people. I ploughed through as much as possible, worried that I'd ordered a meal for two by mistake. But then I noticed a thin blonde young woman tucking into the same and I didn't feel so bad. Her friend was chewing on an enormous steak and the two of them were drinking their litre-sized Tyskies with straws. I was only on quarter litres. Most of the locals were drinking the same thing in the same way, cradling the pitchers on the table and sipping through the straws like it was a milkshake, rather than rough lager.

I wandered back with the dusk. The weather had cleared, and the electric billboards of distant Centrum were lighting up against a summer sky of pink and lilac. The moon, nearly full, hovered like an insect between the white towers of St. Saviour's Church. It looked like a fairytale, two minaretted towers, white render, delicate swirls and carvings, enough to make you stop and look twice to appreciate its peculiar beauty.

2<sup>nd</sup> June

I woke up to the strange quietness of a city on a weekend. Across the hostel garden some teenagers at the Liceo were engaged in a dance class, their bodies chopped by the window frames. I heard doors banging somewhere, the thrum of a builder's drill and the chatter of Polish from the courtyard. I was already putting off my

planned visit to Holocaust memorials, the whole reason I was here in this hostel.

Something about the anticipation of what I might or might not find delayed me, made me want to defer for as long as I could that moment when I would actually have to start seeking out these places I would rather have avoided. I thought I'd start with the Jewish cemetery first, as if to begin with physical human remains would be in some way easier, more familiar.

I wandered to MITO Art Café near the hostel, behind Hotel MDM and the Czech restaurant. It had white walls, modern décor, art books, wifi, and could have been in any city in the world. I ordered a latte and a croissant in apologetic English and sat in the window on a white plastic chair. I drew out the coffee and croissant as long as possible. I finally made my way to Politechnika Metro and headed up to the Jewish cemetery, getting off at Dw. Gdański.

I was barely out of the Metro before I became distracted by Arkadia, a vast shopping mall which squatted before a gigantic roundabout, in a no-man's land of dual carriageways, trees, light industry and distant apartment blocks. It was a good mall, an upper-class mall (not high-end, but upper). Nice. Gentrified. I wondered why it was so busy, then remembered it was Saturday. It was comforting and familiar, but different, not quite the same as malls back home. Even the beds of plastic flowers with their bright colours and vivid layout, their hyperreal quality, marked them out as coming from a different aesthetic ancestry.



I looked in every shop window, even wandered around some shops without any intention of buying anything. I went round the large supermarket just looking at the products on the shelves: which ones were the same as ours and which were different. I leaned for a while on a railing looking down onto the concourse below, and was told off in Polish by a security guard for taking photographs. This is what spurred me to finally leave and drag myself down towards the Jewish and Catholic cemeteries, next to each other.

I soon spotted the eight-feet-high cemetery wall topped by a dense canopy of trees, with the tops of mausoleums poking up above it. I followed the wall past locked gates (perhaps it was closed?), a church (which also appeared to be shut), funeral parlours, headstone carvers and roadside flower sellers. All of a sudden I came upon a fantastical gateway carved in sandstone. It was asymmetrical. On one side stood the giant foreshortened figure of a Roman soldier, his proportions squat and chunky,

despite being ten or twelve feet high. It looked like a cave or slit, rather than a cemetery gateway. The gates were open, and I plunged in. It felt like entering an underworld, passing through that giant stone entrance and finding myself in a dark, protected space of trees and gravestones.



This part of the cemetery, near the church and gateway, is the oldest. The trees are fully mature, ancient. The tombs and stones are high Catholic European Gothic: ornate structures of their own internal logic. Grey and black ravens kept watch. The ravens' caws were the only sound, muffled by the trees and stones, their lazy glides mastering the vast wood.

Graves were everywhere, trees everywhere, until my eye hit the high cemetery wall and swerved back again. The long vistas of the paths stretched to nothing, so vast was the site. It was a city of the dead, each grave unique, stating its wealth and difference, its aesthetic credentials mapped out in filigree, bronze, marble, granite, iron, copper, gilt, glass. Classical mausolea jostled with Gothic stele, kitsch medieval



throwbacks hugged against fluid and stumpy art nouveau tombstones or elegant black obelisks inlaid with portrait plaques. Crosses were everywhere, and in places the life-size, uncannily rendered figures of angels, wings outstretched, were caught in eternal prayers for the eternally dead. I longed to be here alone, at night, with a flickering lantern, with a raven, going from grave to grave, speaking Polish with the long since dead.

As I walked down the paths the cemetery grew more contemporary. The trees became smaller, more spaced out, the graves less fantastical. I came to a part of the cemetery wall that had fallen down and was obviously in the process of being rebuilt. I saw, through the large gap, into the Jewish cemetery, which I hadn't realised had been lurking on the other side of the wall. If possible it seemed even darker, the trees even more densely packed, wild, overgrown with ferns and saplings.



I longed to cross the nothing distance and creep into the Jewish cemetery but something held me back; I felt I would be transgressing too much, defiling something, ignoring protocol. So I continued through the Catholic cemetery to an exit at the far end, which culminated in the modern graves, busier with local mourners clasping bright flowers to their chests. There were older women in headscarves, some kneeling, tending brightly coloured flowers planted on the graves. A line of elderly men sat on a bench near the gate, brown hands clasped on walking sticks in affable silence. Silently a white-haired woman moved between the trees, a wicker basket held under one arm.

From the back entrance I found myself spat out from the quiet wood into passing cars, light industry, old Soviet blocks and rising modern ones. I followed the line of the cemetery wall again, knowing I would come to the entrance to the Jewish cemetery eventually. Before that I came across the Protestant cemetery, part of the same outer wall but like the Jewish cemetery sealed off from its gigantic Catholic counterpart, rooms of the same house. This felt more familiar: the quieter iconography (no photographs or *bas relief* portraits here, no weeping Virgin Marys), the less adorned grave architecture. I was struck how much of this I'd absorbed unconsciously from being a child (without ever being religious): how there was something about the Catholic aesthetic that I felt to be wrong, almost embarrassing. One tomb had a pair of skull and crossbones on its bronze doors. It made more sense to me than a life-sized statue of Jesus.



The area outside the cemeteries, on this side, was strange. It had the aura of no man's land. It completely lacked identity, as if being this close to hundreds of thousands of dead people could itself create a dead atmosphere.

Eventually, almost back to my beginning, I found the entrance to the Jewish cemetery. From walking this section of the perimeter it seemed easily as large as the Catholic one. I tried the solid grey gates of sheet metal. It was closed, and a notice pinned to the wall showed Saturday as a closed day. Of course, the Sabbath. I was glad now that I hadn't trespassed. Not only would it have been disrespectful, I wouldn't have been able to get out this way. I would have ended up trapped, walled-up in the Jewish cemetery.

On the corner of the cemetery wall was a brass plaque showing the Ghetto and the cemetery's position in it. It drew me up short, to see the vast space of the cemetery

that I'd just walked around transposed to tiny bronze, and then the even larger size of the Ghetto surrounding it. 'Ghetto' implied smallness. The Warszawa Ghetto had clearly been the size of a small city. It had taken me hours to walk round one section of this map and it chilled me to think of how long a walk around the Ghetto wall would have taken.

By now I was starving, so I trudged back to the mall and ate a tepid panini sandwich. I knew I should seek out some other monuments, so began walking south, into the footprint of the old Ghetto.

I reached Umschlagplatz Monument first, and was struck by its almost apologetic (yet undeniably enigmatic) presence. Wedged into a large-scale street of Soviet apartment blocks, its greenish white marble complete with voids and black marble details was striking.





It was a space of nothing or blankness, incapable of articulating the deportation of the 300,000 Jews from that spot to extermination in Treblinka. Perhaps that wasn't surprising. It was certainly an embodiment of lack, of void, but it felt contrived to me, oddly reminiscent of 1980s hotel lobbies. A *bas relief* of a splintered forest above the entrance made me pause. I found it a curious symbol.



I walked to the hill, a 'bunker' hidden within the jumble of apartment blocks and green spaces, in the shadow of Kościół parafialny św. Augustyna (St. Augustine's Church), the only structure standing after the Nazis razed the Ghetto to the ground in 1943. This hill marked the original height of the Ghetto rubble, before being built upon by the Soviets. Nowadays it's just a mound being ridden over by kids on mountain bikes. I'd already noticed, in this Soviet housing estate, how uneven the ground was, how they'd just stuck the buildings on top of the rubble, digging down rather than clearing it fully.

The more I walked around, the more the Ghetto's size impressed itself upon me, insistently revealing itself. How many people? 450,000. Razed to the ground. Burnt. And now, ordinary Polish people going about their daily lives. Hardly a trace of Jewishness anywhere, except a street with the name "Mordechai". As if they had never existed.



The famous Warsaw Ghetto Memorial was surrounded, disappointingly, by fencing, as it was part of the new Polish/Jewish Museum, an out-of-place building that looked like a conference centre or concert hall in curved glass. To me it seemed another addition to a bland, corporate international architecture that, like the mall, could exist anywhere. The Ghetto Memorial, one of the first structures completed after the war, seemed dwarfed now by the glass monolith behind the hoardings. The other monuments in the area seemed almost apologetic, little cracks of history allowed to

break through into the everyday. History felt far away here, despite it being only a spade's depth.





I walked down to the reconstructed old town, Stare Miasto, passing the Warsaw Heroes Monument on the way. This huge column is topped by a gigantic figure of a sword-wielding Nike, breasts bare to the elements, her face demonic and glamorous. The Stare Miasto itself, rebuilt by the Soviets in 1952 to replicate the original buildings from before the war, felt strangely authentic. It reminded me of Nordic cities; the same scale and colours, proportions, without that Flemish penchant for filigree, or the Italian bravura of perspective. It was strange to me, looking at these carefully crafted buildings, fake in their mock antiquity, how much time, effort and money it must have cost the Soviets to rebuild Old Warsaw in this way. And that this was worth the expense, or justified. Whereas less than half a mile away whatever Jewish heritage the city had possessed – houses, synagogues, shops – had been unceremoniously buried, even though the Ghetto had been well over twice the size of the Stare Miasto.



It was a relief to be amongst fellow tourists for the first time, rather than wandering half-empty residential districts or overcrowded shopping malls: here everybody was out with their cameras, relaxing, buying prints from the market or postcards or sitting in cafés drinking beer. I could feel myself loosen a little, felt less obviously out-of-place. Circuitously I came across the Warsaw Uprising Monument. Once again I found myself unmoved.



I admired its artistry and scale, its dynamism, but it fell short of the horrifying narrative by some way, and felt too much like a piece of theatre to be entirely engaging. Nearby boards sketched out the particulars of the 1944 Uprising, and I was shocked at how the Red Army and the British had stood by whilst Warsaw burnt.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Although the allies had flown air drops, the Red Army had kept its position on the outskirts of Warsaw and had refused to be drawn into the conflict. The German army decimated the Polish resistance and lay

I walked back towards the hostel through Stare Miasto and became swept up in the Euro 2012 fever that was flooding the whole country, as Poland was hosting the tournament. Football-shaped lanterns hung above the main road with promotional banners. The crowd was getting denser, and I could hear megaphones and horns further ahead, as if there was a parade. It became clear that it was not a parade but a demonstration by right-wing Polish Nationalists, some with masks, all in black. Police were moving tourists along, although I noticed they left the demonstrators alone. Homophobic groups stood alongside the nationalists, with hate-filled slogans and anti-gay preachers screaming down the megaphones in rapid Polish. The mood was hostile and mad, and I hurried along dropping my eyes, wishing to catch no attention. I was going to head towards Centrum but the police were directing traffic away from there, and there seemed to be more crowds. The noise coming from Centrum either meant a football parade or more nationalists, and I didn't want to be around either. Instead I turned down Al. Ujazdowskie, passing high-end shops, groups of youths, well-heeled Polish couples out for Saturday socialising in expensive bistros, shopping-laden American tourists. The road unexpectedly opened out to reveal a white round church in its centre, copper dome cut out against the now-black storm clouds.

I headed to a corner bar near the hostel on Marszałkowska. It was large inside, white, with a jumble of furniture. The staff were all very hip, the beer 9 złoty a pint, and the music a mix of jazz and '80s. I stayed for five beers and read. I realised I'd walked

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waste to much of the city, including the Jewish Ghetto. 'They started destroying the insurgents' strongholds. In retaliation for the insurrection German units began a program of mass extermination aimed at Warsaw's civilian population. Soon, the city became an inferno and the resistance started to weaken progressively in the insurgent held areas.... More than 40 thousands [sic] Polish insurgents and about 180 thousands [sic] civilians were killed or wounded. A large number of allied pilots flying air-drops missions [sic] were also killed. On the German side, an estimated 25 thousands [sic] troops were killed, wounded, or missing in action'. [English information board, Warsaw Uprising Memorial, Krasiński Square, 1989].

too far and eaten too little, and felt mentally drained. Thinking was proving difficult. I felt relief that my first visit to monuments had been alright, I had survived. But I'd not expected how difficult it had been to begin the visit in the first place.

3<sup>rd</sup> June

I made my way to Pawiak Prison. The foundations of the once-largest prison complex in occupied Europe, it sticks out from the apartment blocks around it with its great bronze tree reaching upwards, its bleak stone courtyards and shattered gateway forming strange architectural voids. The prison basement forms the museum, housing an exhibition on the history and inmates of Pawiak, as well as reconstructions of the dank, tiny cells.



This was my first taste of what it would be like, visiting sites of torture and genocide. I spent over an hour in the small underground rooms crammed with documents and objects. It shocked me how much of the Jewish extermination was known by the Allies (certainly from 1942 onwards), and how concerned, but also powerless, the Churchill government had been. Like most English children, I'd learned about the Second World War through Anderson shelters, dig-for-victory, air raids, rationing, my grandparents' stories and old photographs. But here lay a city and its people brought to within an inch of total annihilation. Pawiak was testament to this. Boards were covered with photographs of prisoners, most of whom were shipped to camps, dying between '39 and '44. Only about six people survived. All the photographs were similar to ones of my grandparents, black and white studio shots, typical of the period. In amongst these was the occasional concentration camp identity shot, shaved and brutal.

And these were not Jews, not necessarily. Many were intellectuals, priests, scientists, politicians, soldiers (some Communists, some radicals); what could be called the educated Polish. What became clear was Hitler's profound understanding of communities: execute these leaders early, annihilate families, flood Warszawa with swastikas, focus everything upon the Jewish scapegoats, gradually brainwash the population. This seems to have failed in Poland. Fear cowed many people into capitulation, but it also makes them braver, reckless – as the prison warders who helped their fellow Polish prisoners or the Warsaw Uprising show. They were all Polish, against the Germans. It made me think back to the Nationalist marches of the day before.





I looked at the Pawiak tree many times over a long period of time. For the first time – when I was a prisoner helping the gardener. Then it made nearly no impression on me....Germans dressed in SD uniforms tortured the prisoners in this square. They whipped and kicked them and, shouting crazily, made them crawl on the black ash and cinder left from the boiler room. At this square the Nazis, yelling ‘Schnell! Schnell!’ drove the

prisoners onto the trucks which transported them to  
extermination camps and places of execution.<sup>96</sup>

The Pawiak tree had stood in the prison yard for many years, and as Juliusz Deczkowski recounts, was the site of torture and humiliation, the final departure place to the camps for the Polish political prisoners. But after the blowing up of the prison in 1944 and the destruction of the nearby Ghetto, the elm tree was one of the only trees left standing in the swathes of rubble. It became a survivor tree, on which epitaph plates of the victims of Pawiak were placed. But eventually the tree started to die: before this happened the whole plant was cast in bronze in an extraordinary act of memorialisation. It is extraordinary because it is simply a tree which survived and became a living monument which its bronze twin now perpetuates. The plaques are re-cast every year by the same metalworking family, free of charge. The force of the symbolism of the tree moved me to tears.

So too did the story of the museum's inception; how the ruins were voluntarily dug out of the rubble in the 1960s by ex-prisoners, in an inversion of the forced labour they had themselves endured on the same site. This museum, staffed by the friendliest volunteers, started by ex-prisoners, had a feeling (as few places had, I realised, so far) of community, of need. Which is perhaps why some of the monuments had failed to move me, had felt corporate or distant. They were paid for by Jewish expats or government offices, representing communities that were no longer present in Warszawa. This felt very different.

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<sup>96</sup> Juliusz Deczkowski, pseudonym "Laudański" (1924-1988), imprisoned at Pawiak Prison, Warsaw 1941-1942. From an information board at Pawiak Prison.

I left the prison, glad of the sun and suddenly hungry: I hadn't eaten since MITO that morning, and it was now after 3pm. Round the corner, on the wall of one of the old Soviet blocks, was a commemoration of the visit of Pope John Paul II to Pawiak in 1983, where he had knelt before the then-living tree and prayed. One of the locals had placed a window pot with colourful flowers in front of the plaque.



I walked to Ratusz/Arsenal, then caught a tram to Praga, in search of food and living people. I found my way to the zoo, which was thronged with families. I stood and watched the imprisoned Russian bears in their concrete pen, positioned outside the zoo itself, next to the tram stop. The male bear spent much of his time gauging the eight-foot gap between the spectators and himself.

Nothing in Praga satisfied me. I didn't want to pay to go in the zoo as the bear pen was too upsetting, more things being imprisoned. The rest of the eating places weren't right, somehow, although I was well aware that I'd once again gone far beyond hunger. I now began to understand how people grew to live off vodka and cigarettes. Sometimes food seemed in peculiarly bad taste.

4<sup>th</sup> June

Once again I found myself deferring my re-visit to the Jewish cemetery. I felt an anxiety inside me, a desire not to go, not to look. A fear. I didn't know whether it was because I had already caught that strange glimpse of the cemetery on my first day, or if the thought of walking amongst real dead Jewish bodies was bringing things too close, too real from the abstract ideas I'd already had about my trip. Pawiak had also affected me, and perhaps what was beginning to worry me more was a repetition of feelings, or even worse, an escalation of them as I exposed myself to more and more difficult sites. Still, I retraced my steps from the previous day and made my way once more to the cemetery gates.

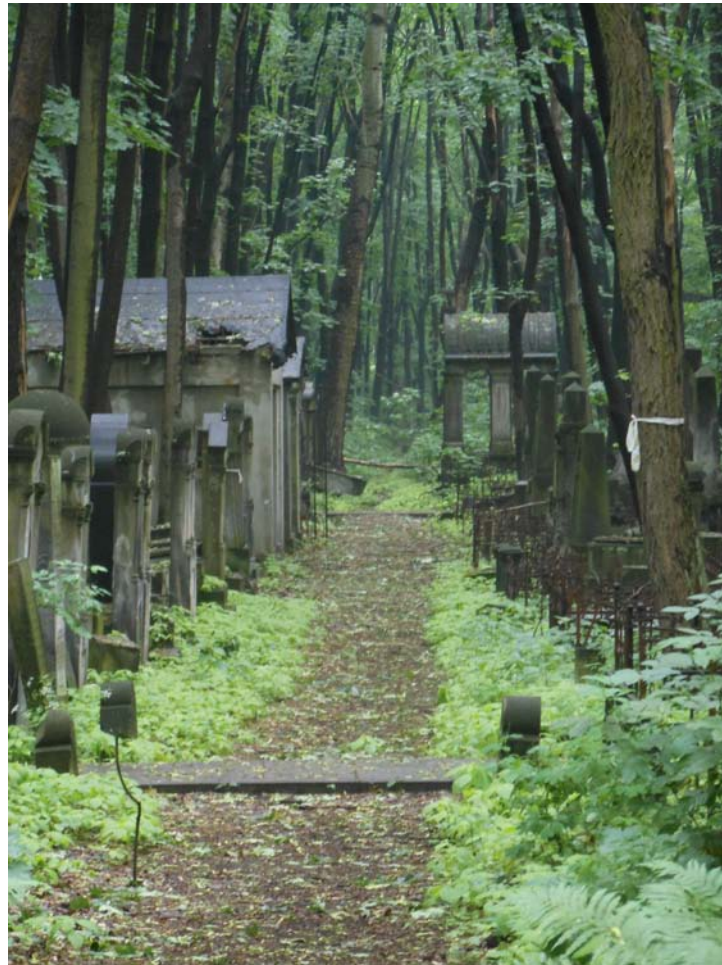
The weather was chilly with little promise of sun. Rain spattered around the air like paint being flicked from a child's brush. The cemetery looked as shut as it had been on Saturday, iron gates firmly closed. But a push on the handle and I found myself inside an entrance courtyard with some huts with kiosk windows, one staffed by a Jewish man with his skullcap-covered head clamped to a mobile phone. I hovered outside the window wondering if I needed to pay or whether I should get a skull cap to wear, but the man in the booth couldn't have seemed less interested in my presence, so after some more loitering at the window I plunged off into the cemetery, putting my hood up

so that my head was at least covered. I was pleased not to be wearing a skull cap, it would have felt disingenuous.

I had thought that the Catholic cemetery was gothic and impressive. In this cemetery it was as if everything had been stopped by an unseen hand. The air was thick with saplings sprouting from the graves, young trees shooting up, some with trunks no wider than an arm. There were few paths as such, instead wet tracks encrusted with large glistening snails, cramped with ferns and seedlings, grass and creepers. There were no flowers, and the canopy above threw everything into a pall-like gloom, as if I too were under a shroud. The graves and tombs were as numerous as the trees, if not more so. They filled almost every space, like jagged teeth. Some stood in rows, upright, but many more were twisted, slanting, broken, black or stained. Some even appeared to have bullet holes in them. The deeper into the cemetery I went the darker the canopy became, the denser the undergrowth, the more numerous the headstones. I felt as if I were the first person to set foot there. It was truly eerie, to be in the company of so many bodies but to be the only living one amongst them. Unlike the Catholic cemetery there were no mourners here: after all, there was hardly anybody left to mourn these Jewish ancestors.

Every so often I turned back and saw through a vista of the path I'd come down (leading to nothing) the backs of the graves, all facing east, their rough dark backs making them seem even more uniform, more natural, stone-like, not man-made or man-marking at all. And everywhere, erupting out of them, the trees, at least two for each grave it seemed.





The woods heard only the sound of ravens and my occasional camera click, or my feet snapping a twig. The sounds around me were hood-muffled, and at times I tucked the edges behind my ears so I could hear the silence more clearly. A sudden commotion from the ravens overhead heralded the arrival of a small Siberian fox, oversized ears twitching from behind a headstone. We looked at each other and I felt a wild magic, as I always do in the presence of foxes. The fox seemed curious, but unconcerned. Nature was not letting go of this place. Soon it darted away on missions of its own, and I lost it quickly in the profusion of stone and tree trunks.



It seemed to me that these were the lucky Jewish dead. They had gravestones, a resting place. Even if they had no mourners, no living progeny, at least they were still in Warszawa, their city. Many inscriptions were in Hebrew and Polish, many names Polish,



even if the surname was Jewish. To me it seemed that this was where young Jewish children should visit, not Israel. This seemed to be where the ancestors were, a European Judaism where home and homeland were not necessarily the same, but where they could co-exist nevertheless: it had been possible then to be both Polish and Jewish. Now it seemed it had to be one or the other. Things had gone wrong here, horribly wrong. I felt an overwhelming sadness at the loss of place.

I left the cemetery feeling drained from walking amongst the dead, as if I had been the only witness to them. I caught the bus to the airport to meet Saoirse, who was coming out for a week. I was looking forward to company, another person. She stepped out of the arrivals gate and as we embraced I caught her scent of cigarettes and perfume. She was wearing a beige mac and a Russian scarf of brightly coloured flowers on a black background. She had been to Poland before, interrailing ten years ago, so she was curious to see what changes there had been. We got a taxi back to the hostel, then headed out again to see the Warsaw Uprising Museum.

The museum was vast, exhausting and rowdy with school parties. I was glad to feel the press of people around me, to have a friend to talk to as we wandered through the exhibits and pressed our ears against the Living Monument, a giant monolith from which emanated the sounds of a heartbeat.

After leaving we found the few remaining fragments of the Ghetto wall, preserved in the middle of a gated Soviet apartment block. In the pavement outside was one of the many metal plaques which marked the extent of the original Ghetto wall, almost totally demolished apart from these few remnants.

The gate to the apartment complex was open, and we went through it, feeling like trespassers. There, in a quiet courtyard was all that was left of the once huge



structure: fifteen-feet high and made of dark red brick, the wall sat like a wedge, an unpleasant rearing-up of the past. And was, also, just a wall. I stood looking up at it, imagining how many people, children, had done the same (on both sides), imagining (sometimes hearing) what was happening on the other side.



5<sup>th</sup> June

We caught the train to Małkinia, the nearest station to the site of Treblinka concentration camp. The train was similar to the one I'd caught from Berlin: compartments, a Soviet skeleton clothed in Perestroika fabrics. I was acutely aware, as we passed through forests of silver birch, pines and beech, over metal bridges spanning wide brown rivers, that this was a journey hundreds of thousands of people had taken,

never to return. Packed in airless boxcars, journeys of days across the Reich, from as far away as Greece.

Małkinia railway station is about an hour and a half from Warszawa Centralna, a halt with huge sidings to one side (a remnant of the Nazi infrastructure), with great rusting footbridges spanning the tracks. There were no obvious buses or taxis, so we wandered to the tiny ticket office where a plump wrinkled woman with a pronounced underbite told us (in Polish and pointing) to take a seat, she'd ring for a taxi to Treblinka. We sat down in the green and cream room. The woman scratched her upper lip with her bottom teeth and smiled cheerfully at us through the glass, occasionally motioning for us to stay seated.

The taxi pulled up, a '90s Volkswagen estate (an ironic car choice, I thought) in good nick, with a spruce, weather-beaten, tanned driver in his late fifties or early sixties. He had some English. We reaffirmed Treblinka as our destination, but where else would tourists to Małkinia be going? The town itself is small: collections of miniature apartment blocks and older wooden houses, modern homes, shops and pharmacies soon giving way to wooden homesteads and small plots of agricultural land in amongst larger farms and fields, and plenty of woodland. We passed over a new bridge covered in fresh tarmac (the guidebook had said it was wooden, why the change?), which rapidly degenerated into a narrower road of patched concrete. The taxi driver sped along this with obvious practice, chatting into his mobile phone as his free hand flicked the steering wheel this way and that. It was a busy goods route, and we constantly passed by speeding lorries, with neither the taxi driver nor the lorry lowering their speed. The road entered a national park and the agricultural land was almost entirely replaced by

forests of Scots Pine. We turned off the road down a smaller and even narrower cobbled track indicated by a concrete signpost as the road to Treblinka.

The car park and ticket booth for the camp felt like any car park in any 'beauty spot' in the north of England: a wide bay for buses, corrugated iron toilets, the smell and scattering of pine needles, a shed-like kiosk. There were no cars or buses, and the place seemed eerily deserted. The kiosk was staffed by a friendly tanned man, also in his fifties, who seemed to have a permanent smile fixed to his twinkly face. The taxi driver said he'd come back for us at 14.20 for the 14.45 train, which gave us over three hours. We purchased our tickets from the kiosk, and the smiling man pointed our direction, where the path wound into the pine trees. We started, feeling like we were on a nature trail. We even sprayed ourselves with insect repellent. We realised that we were (and would remain) the only people there. There was nothing to see but the pinky bark of the trees and the lush green of the woodland floor and canopy. Noises were limited to boots creaking, birdsong, Saoirse clicking the occasional cigarette into life.

Around a bend appeared stones listing the Treblinka dead (800,000 Jews, 10,000 Poles), and, marking the old camp boundary, the presence of six-feet high monoliths placed at intervals, running a path through the trees that seemed to go on into infinity. Vistas between the trees spoke of ghostly railway lines or roads, long since abandoned. From one side of the stones appeared larger-than-life concrete "sleepers" symbolising the course of the lost railway track. We followed the sleepers up to a sloping platform jutting out from the slight incline of the rise we were walking along, above the sleepers. With these broad stone and concrete strokes scenes were painted in my head, suggested, sketch-like: wagons conjuring steam, noise, crowding on the platform. Languages shouting across each other. Ghosts.



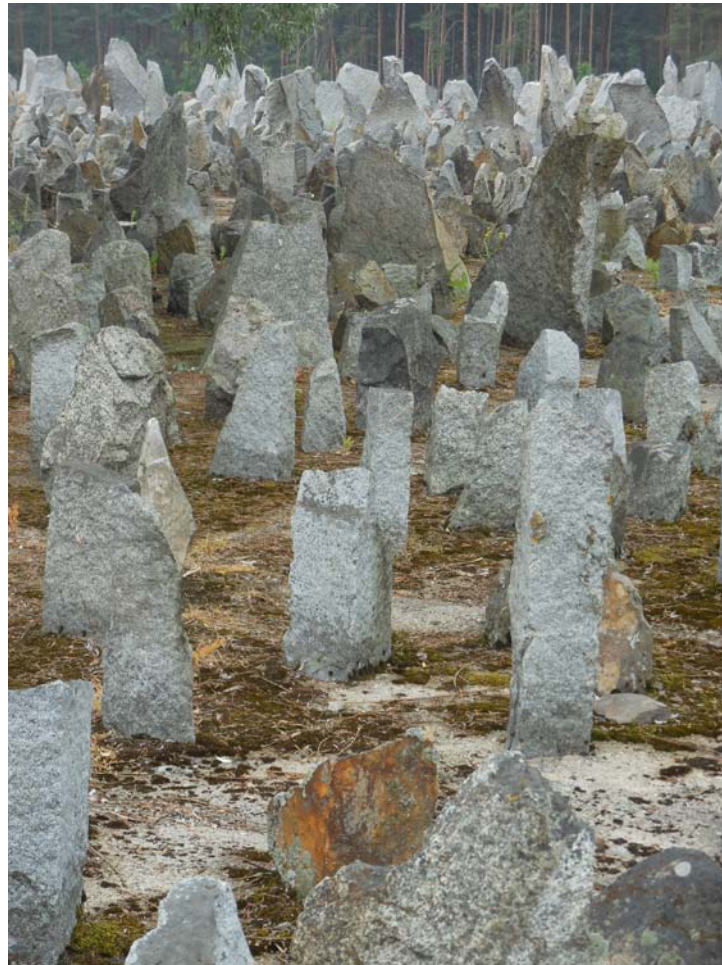
Immediately to the left of the platform the trees were interrupted by the continued incline of the rise, now grassed, and on which stood four-feet high stones carved with the names of countries from which the victims of Treblinka had come: Poland, Belgium, Czechoslovakia and so on. These guardians lined the path leading up the rise to the site of the extermination camp proper, the crown of the hill marked with a tall monolith about fifteen feet high. It resembled a squat mushroom, its split pillars topped with larger slabs, which seemed to be carved with jumbled stones but which proved, on closer inspection, to be carvings of faces and hands. Surrounding the monument and stretching away from it lay a field of stones of varying sizes (but none more than four feet high) set into a vast concrete arena.



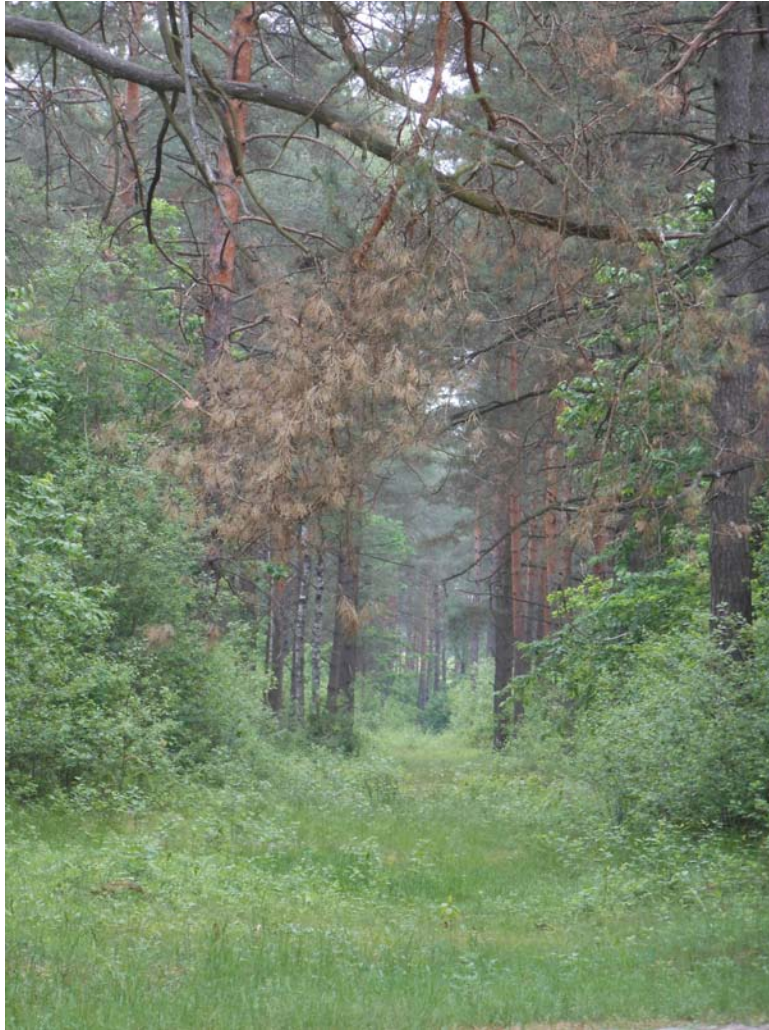
The sheer number of stones brought home the grim overwhelming history of the place. To walk through the stones, to navigate them, was tricky, painful if misjudged. The edges were unfinished, raw, jagged, hard, sharp, unique, body and grave and symbol of grave. Their aesthetic parallels with the Jewish cemetery, trees rearing up from a scattering of stones, smaller stones placed on the stones of the graves, at the base of the monolith, were striking.

Lone weeping trees broke up the space of the old compound, and in the middle of the swirl of grass and stones, behind the monument, was an interpretation of the gas chambers, molten stone metal slabs sunken into burnt grass, solidified in their charnel whorls, black and metallic bones alchemied into (because of?) something evil. Here was a kind of heart to things. Photos on metal boards near the treeline showed the original extermination camp, the SS officers' barracks, the diggers carving out industrial-sized mass graves.





We left in silence to walk to the penal colony of Treblinka I, about two kilometres down the so-called Black Road. The flies and midges were getting worse the deeper we went into the camp, into the forest, and Saoirse wore her Russian scarf over her head, peasant-style. We were silent on the Black Road. The forest surrounded us, pine trees everywhere, wild blue lupins the only flowers. The road was cobbled in pink granite. Somewhere out of the depths of the wood crooned a cuckoo, a sound neither of us had ever heard before. It followed us for the rest of the time we were there, this unseen cuckoo, its calls sometimes close, on our shoulders, then far away, ghost sounds.



We came to the gravel quarry first, glimpsed through the forest and scrub. I was staggered by its size and scale. All dug by hand, by prisoners, over only a couple of years. It was vast. We then came to a large concrete platform with metal railings, where the machinery for the quarry used to be, and the whole arena opened out before us. The scale was frightening. Once more the imagination of memory, (false) remembrance, picturing a scene filled with cries, the deafening metal-on-stone noises of heavy machines, pickaxes, shouts, gunshots. No room for a cuckoo, but guttural clichéd movie Nazi sounds. German German German. Deutsch Deutsch Deutsch.

Running off the Black Road lay another track, another vista through the trees leading to, it seemed, a meadow. There was more mixed woodland here, deciduous

trees crowding the borders, the pines towering darkly behind them. Little clearings to either side of the path were marked, simply, with wooden Alpine signs saying (in Polish and English) 'Storeroom', 'Headquarters' and so on. The path then wound and ducked to open out into the arena-like meadow, the site of the penal camp. Similar wooden signs were there, along with archaeological 'foundations' (standing proud of the meadow, far too new): 'Women's Barracks', 'Kitchen', 'Cellar', 'Latrine' – some of the names.

Sometimes only a line of wall was left, the bottom course; in other places a mound; the cellar and kitchen store below-ground, Roman-looking, well-preserved. Some barracks had the concrete slab floor still in place, weathered by frost. In amongst all this, covering it, lay the meadow: harebells, daisies, clumps of thyme, beetles, bees, butterflies, a breeze waving everything, the tall grasses, the tassels on Saoirse's dark shawl.



It seemed peaceful, idyllic. But the treeline was so regimented, arrow straight, that it didn't take much to imagine barbed wire. There was something about the



hiddenness of this site, its nestling in the forest, that gave it an eerie sense of menace, more so than the extermination camp. It was heavy and oppressive in the meadow, nature's unconcern the root of its uncanniness.

Further down the Black Road the execution site, small fields of crosses in the pine trees, had little power, except by association. This space was peaceful, because of its terminal nature. Here were graves, here was a rest of sorts, an ordered, more familiar (but no less tragic) death. The use of crosses to mark the graves (rendering the abstract sandstone monument redundant) gave the site a kind of glade-like order, at the end of things. There were no ghosts here, although beyond the trees, within the endless forest, who knew? There could be other graves, other sites, other executions, shadows, you didn't know, you couldn't know what you would come across, eventually, stumbling through this forest following the cuckoo's call.

We were silent on the journey back. I wondered how often the taxi driver had done this trip, how often he'd met with the same response: talkative tourists on the way out, silence on the way back. The taxi driver himself was keen to talk (perhaps to take our minds off things) and explained how the new bridge (paid for by EU money from Warszawa) replaced the wooden bridge, which had been a 'temporary' structure put in after the war to replace the bridge the Nazis had destroyed on their retreat from Treblinka, part of their cover-up (and denial) that the site had ever existed. Stories were that when the Allies had reached Treblinka they'd found a Ukrainian farmer tending cows on the site, claiming he'd been there throughout the war – he'd been installed at the last minute by the Nazis. The taxi driver also showed us ghosts of the old concentration camp railway line, leading from the main station. We thanked him and

bought our return ticket from the same cheerful lady at the station ticket office. On the way back to Warszawa we both slept like the dead.

## Wrocław

6<sup>th</sup> June

Early train to Wrocław. Meet Beatrycze's friend Kacper. Hostel. Synagogue. Churches.

Video game exhibition. Euro 2012. No sponsorship, Starbucks Coffee has become  
\_\_\_\_\_ Coffee. Cigarettes on benches. Beatrycze (talking about). Bridges.

Breweries. Covered market. Gherkins with dill and garlic. Flower arrangements.

Cherries. Strawberries. Beer. River Wistula. Kacper showing us the cruising spots by the river. Churches. Bells. Boats. Plum and raspberry soup with pasta. Beetroot soup with boiled eggs and dill. Sweet jam. Dumplings in butter and sugar. Sweet cherry soda.

Polish food is pink. University. Gnomes. Butcher's row (Beatrycze). Beer. Cottage cheese and baked potatoes. Steak tartare with egg and mustard and bread. Beer. Strawberries.

Flowers. Beer. Vodka. Eurovision. Beer. Beer. Vodka. Beef and egg in gelatine. Beer.

Cherry brandy drunk on the street. Basement bar. Vodka, raspberry liqueur and black pepper. Upstairs to Jakub's flat. He owns the bar. Jakub is handsome. He is the most

beautiful man we've ever seen. He has a cat, a fish, a boyfriend and a picture of the

Mona Lisa with her boobs out. Lemon vodka with elderflower. Cherry brandy with

grapefruit juice. Talking with Jakub. Trying not to stare into his eyes. Bison grass vodka.

Back down to the bar. Kacper takes us to the gay club. Gay club shut. Kacper swears. Bar near hostel. Buzzing. Beer. Vodka. Kacper very drunk. Beer with four vodka shots in it.

Swallow vomit down and drink more, pretend nothing amiss. Dance to Alicia Keys's

'New York'. Getting light. Kiss Kacper on the street. Fight breaks out next to us. Get back

to hostel. Throw up vodka and gelatine. Pass out. Alternate feeling nauseous with Saoirse, who trembles. Sing Madonna. Kacper picks us up in his car, still drunk. He hasn't slept, stayed out all night. Mad. Wrocław station beautiful. Hangover hits like waves. Train from Wrocław to Kraków. Hot journey. Nausea. Rolling countryside. Industrial Katowice. Mountains. Forests. Saoirse sleeps. Very little speaking.



## Kraków

7<sup>th</sup> June (continued)

We were staying in Kazimierz, the old Jewish quarter south of the Old Town. The buildings reminded me of Barcelona in their unkempt, 'true' style of wornness – nothing too glossy for tourists here. We went to 'Nova' Bar on the busy Plac Nowy. Throngs of people were sitting out, candles on all the tables, in all the windows, as the hot air

settled. The bar was modern, in a retro warehouse style, and we had beer, dumplings and pork schnitzel. Tomorrow was Auschwitz.

8<sup>th</sup> June

My rucksack was full of everything I thought I'd conceivably need. I was worried about getting lost, finding myself marooned, separated from Saoirse, unable to function. The thought of going to then returning from Auschwitz was strange enough. We found ourselves on an overcrowded minibus bombing through the Kraków suburbs into rolling agricultural countryside. The bus was extremely hot. I was on an aisle seat with no legroom, two women standing in the aisle right next to me, making me feel claustrophobic. I would have stood for them, but I couldn't straighten up in the narrow confines of the bus and couldn't face an hour and a half like that. Saoirse and I both put our headphones on and tuned out: she looked out of the window, I fell asleep with 'I'm In Love With A German Film Star' playing.

I woke up just before Auschwitz, surprised to find that the town of Oświęcim was not only large but also extremely close to the camp. The bus dropped us a short distance from the car park, and I was stunned by how many coaches there were: after the isolation and silence of Treblinka this seemed wrong to me, because it was the kind of scene I associated with visiting a mall or theme park or sporting event. Somehow I had not pictured Auschwitz as having a car park, let alone one that looked so, well, *touristy*.

Everywhere there were school groups, pensioners, parties of Chinese and Japanese, nuns, priests, families, students. What seemed peculiar to me, in amongst this mixture of nationalities, was a lack of any Jewish visitors, at least obviously orthodox ones. Fast food stands and kiosks were dotted around. I almost expected to catch the

scent of candy floss and hot dogs. We entered the ticket office building, which looked like a Nazi railway station inside. It was low-ceilinged and small, filled with noise and chaos, clatter and chatter, bodies everywhere. I was told to leave my rucksack in the cloakroom so down I went into the old cellars of the building. I handed it to three Polish women who were chain-smoking, playing cards and counting money at a table behind a thin grubby curtain dividing the cloakroom from the counter and lobby. It put me in mind of ferry crossings to the underworld, or the Roman legionaries gambling under the Crucifixion.

Back upstairs the queuing for tickets had become even more intense, and we missed the English tour by fifteen minutes and had to wait another forty-five for the next. Neither of us could face the wait in the *mêlée* of the ticket hall, so we escaped outside with our headphones and audio tour device. I wondered if it were some kind of deliberate means to get visitors in a “concentration camp mood”: pack us into a tiny space, label us according to language – we were wearing yellow stickers to indicate ‘English-speaking’ – test our physical and mental endurance, disorientate us, confuse us and make us perform meaningless tasks like queuing, bag-checking and waiting. And paying, the handing over of money.

Once outside I smoked two cigarettes in quick succession before realising that it was midday and I was famished: I got a cheese sandwich, Sprite and a Mars bar from the ticket hall kiosk and sat on a bench with Saoirse, who wasn’t hungry. We were near the exit, and we noticed the quiet expressions of people leaving the camp, compared to the noise of the ticket hall.

At 12.30 we assembled again for the English tour and were admitted through the turnstiles into the camp itself. I didn’t know what I’d been expecting, but this seemed

strange: where was the railway line, the familiar tower with its arched gateway? Here we were in what was, to all intents and purposes, a prison barracks. I saw 'Arbeit Macht Frei' (smaller than I'd imagined) above the entrance, a little way across the patch of green in front of where we were standing, in the open courtyard. Beyond lay the familiar barbed wire with concrete posts and the curved (beautiful in their simple design) floodlights. All around us stood the nineteenth-century brick-built barracks buildings.

The guides split the group into four smaller ones. Saoirse and I hung back, ending up in the last and smallest group headed by a sprightly Polish woman in her sixties with ash blonde asymmetrical hair, wearing bright pink glasses, a crisp white blouse and grey trousers.



She informed us we'd be three to four hours, news that shocked me. The headphones were to help us hear her more clearly, the audio device a transmitter for the microphone she was attaching to her blouse. In the end she held it up to her mouth instead, painted pink to match her glasses. We would all be able to hear her, have her voice coming directly into our ears, without distraction, no escape. We were, at present, in Auschwitz I – Auschwitz II (or Birkenau) was a short distance away across numerous railway lines that lead through Oświęcim. That was "the famous bit".

For me to go into detail about the facts and figures, the history, the politics, the set-up of Auschwitz, would be redundant. As the many bookshops on the site attest to, there is no shortage of literature on the subject. To even begin to describe it in detail is almost impossible. It is a subject made much of in literature, the "unspeakable" nature of the Holocaust, the breakdown of language at sites like Auschwitz. But I felt it wasn't a case of a simple language breakdown, whatever that in fact means. In Auschwitz there is not so much a lack of words, but rather a proliferation. Language seems to grub and breed on this site, it does not sit quietly, respectfully by, refusing to work. Of course it is challenged and strained, found lacking, mired in tired clichés or ridiculous metaphor. The searching for words, for word-thoughts, when touring the site, becomes almost a game in one's head. All fall short, not because of any inherent problems with the words themselves, but because there isn't just one that will do. Even Holocaust (from the Greek 'burnt whole') feels curiously euphemistic, just as Shoah (from the Hebrew for 'catastrophe') struggles to convey both the breadth and depth of this single event spanning years, stemming from multiple cumulative actions.

To look upon the rooms in Auschwitz, filled with human hair or shoes, baby clothes or brushes, elicits words at a rate of at least a million per minute, like a

kinescope of juddering thoughts and text-movements that are thrown up in huge, confetti-like clumps. It takes hours, days, weeks, possibly forever, for them all to settle.

It is perhaps the constant leap in scale our minds are required to make: from the intimacy of a single person's comb to millions of gassed, burnt bodies.

I find myself beyond words like 'good' or 'evil', 'memory', 'forgetting', 'love', 'hate'. The scope is unimaginable but also easy to imagine. It is not hard to imagine a boxcar full of people without air, without light, terrified. Nor is it hard to imagine the horror of a gas chamber, what that space might feel like. It is then the multiplication, the replication of these single acts across a temporal and geographical network, from the first arrest in Yugoslavia to the final cinders in Auschwitz. This almost cosmic view of the event, as vast in scale as the view of Birkenau from its watchtower, reflects this. It is too vast, the numbers are too great to take in. They become defined by train platform, cargo load, bunkhouse, chimney, gas chamber. With such information the brain begins to behave in a 'traumatic' manner, to shut down, to cease to take in information about the Death Wall (made of timber, to stop ricocheting bullets), the standing cells, the infamous 'showers', the packing of seven hundred people into one bunkhouse, the ghostly railway platform now empty of bags, herded cattle-people, of Germans in uniform. At its peak it unloaded thirty-thousand people a day.











Photos of dead people in striped uniforms line corridor walls, looking out at us with stares of the starving, the half-dead, the 'drowned' as Primo Levi would call them. I see one uniform in a glass display cabinet with a pink triangle and it undoes me slightly: that would be me in that uniform, those were my people, my connection. There it was, the force of mass extermination, its power, its effectiveness, how a dead man's uniform from over fifty years ago can make you shiver on a warm day because you know that you too would have been wearing that uniform.

Birds sing in Auschwitz. The days can be beautiful, hot with a slight breeze. Atmospheres are hard to pin down, shift from comparative peace to despair, to death and extreme pain, then back to peace again. The context of knowing it is a gas chamber you are entering is unnecessary, your body has no desire to stay there, and your mind has already fled. The ruined Birkenau gas chambers, gaping skulls splintered into the

earth, brick-lined pits where never-connected showerheads were found, speak and spew nothing but foul words.

Language floats above Auschwitz in a cloud, a pall, a miasma of tongues.

Language is here, as the surprisingly moving plaques at the end of the site make all too clear. The words are there for the conjuring, ready to condense. Their lack is not their fault, for everything is there: intractable, entwined, brutal. It is like hearing and looking and touching, imagining, but also being complicit as consumer, as victim, as guard, as doctor, as truck, as brick, as gas, as rail, as barb, as concrete, as ditch, as wire, as bird, as wood, as tile, brought to this nexus, this meeting of tracks, this concentration. I don't think buying a postcard from the shop makes us less complicit.







We caught the shuttle bus back to Auschwitz I, Saoirse and I exchanging few words. We finally got some food (crisps) and sat in the sun waiting for the bus. I felt shell-shocked, heavy, weighed down. Crying seemed inappropriate, too insincere. The bus came, and was filled to overflowing with people with return tickets (which we didn't have). I realised we hadn't bought return tickets to either Treblinka or Auschwitz. We decided to make our way to the train station instead.

Oświęcim station was in that Communist tradition of concrete and glass, and I was glad of it after all the wood and brick of Auschwitz, supposedly homely materials. I thought back to the rows and rows of chimneys at Birkenau, fossilised trees, all that was left of the wooden huts. There was a Kraków train at 17.20, and luckily it was already in the station, more like a tram than a train. Saoirse was full of nervous energy, her feet tapping, her eyes bright. I was silent. We didn't speak and both put on headphones: Saoirse listened to R&B and I had on Goldfrapp's *Seventh Tree*. The little tram-train was

half-empty, only another couple from Auschwitz were aboard, as well as a few locals with shopping or on their commute home. The tram-train started up with a whirring electric sound, and soon I passed out, unconscious, for an hour.

I woke just as the sun was easing its way towards set. The sky was blue, holding brushed-in white clouds. Our journey was along a ribbon of medium-sized villages, smallholdings and farms, rolling hills (flat and gentle), fields, rivers, woods. Older women were stooping in large vegetable patches, bright scarves on their heads and patterned aprons around their figures, weeding potato fields, ploughing vegetable crops by hand, feeding chickens, geese or ducks, or, sometimes, simply sitting on their back porches, green watering can indicating a break from work, enjoying the setting sun. Villages appeared with ornate church spires, coppered, gilded, sometimes alongside orthodox domes, the houses in biscuit colours (beige, brown), red or mint green, traditional black wood. The train stopped at all the little one-platform halts, where trickles of locals hopped off and on, occasionally sounding its horn at children playing on bridges over the rivers, walkers or cyclists on paths running alongside. Everyone was outside, the gardens showed children on trampolines, playing football, in sandpits or raised round pools. Lawns were being mowed, evening walks taken, outdoor meals being eaten, barbecues begun. Nearly all the gardens had vegetables, nearly all had fowl: all had flowers, bright, somewhere. Birds flocked across green fields, deer stood in scrubland, their antlers and ochre colours reminding me of gazelles. Everything was in extreme peace, in industry, in a harmony with the land that I felt was lost back home, in wealthy England. It's easy to eulogise about such things, in a middle-class way, to romanticise hard work in others. But on such an evening it was almost impossible not to: it *was* romantic, it *was* beautiful the way the sunlight fell, the way the birds flocked,

the way the deer stood, the way the rivers flowed, the way the people worked, the way the train moved and stopped, paused and continued, on and on, like a flag forever unfurling.

It was over two hours back to Kraków, longer than the bus, but we didn't care, because we had been given something wonderful, a positive gift that could not have contrasted more with Auschwitz if it had tried. Our nervous exhaustion had been replaced by a strange peace.

Back at the hostel I showered, wanting to wash completely, to re-affirm my life, my taken-for-granted daily actions. We ended up at 'Ariel' restaurant, a Jewish eatery done out in the old Kazimierz style. We sat outside, another warm night, in the square, up near the synagogues, Szeroka. It was good hearty food (dumplings, beef collar and fillet, apple cake and curd cheese) with beer, wine, amaretto and honey vodka. I felt tired still, but not anxious (I had dreamt the night before about railway tunnels oozing blood). I was glad to have gone through it, to have been, to have come back.

9<sup>th</sup> June

The next morning I was distracted in the communal bathroom by some British football fans staying in the hostel. The men were treating the bathroom like a changing room; naked, whipping each other with towels, then piling into one of the cubicles to shower together, naked bodies pressed under the one showerhead.

Wanting a more relaxing day after Auschwitz, Saoirse and I wandered along to Rynek Główny, the main square up in the Stare Miasto. It is a huge square, the largest medieval square in Europe, anchored round a flamboyant market hall with large oversized gargoyles. The square itself, unlike the Stare Miasto of Warszawa, is original,

the buildings cleaned and restored but still retaining a sense of age. The brick Church of Kościół Mariacki (St. Mary), its mismatched towers studded with turrets and crenellations, is straight out of a fairytale. Feeling luxuriant we had brunch in one of the pricier square cafés, overlooking the cathedral.



I'd wanted to get my train ticket to Wien booked for Tuesday, but we took the wrong direction on our walk to the station and found ourselves back at the Wawel, only a few hours after passing it on the way up to Rynek Główny. So we decided we may as well go and visit Schindler's Factory out in the old Ghetto across the river at Plac Bohaterów Getta/Kraków Zabłocie.

We walked over the bridge close to the hostel, feeling curious as to what this new area would be like. Having crossed under the railway line we found the factory and went first to the contemporary art museum, MOCAK, which had a good collection, although it was almost empty of tourists. We headed across the courtyard to the



Museum of Jewish Life in Kraków, in the old Schindler factory. Although packed with information and obviously possessing a sizeable budget (with generous funding and, I suspected, direct curatorial intervention from Roman Polanski) it was too focused on an “immersive” experience of experiential installations, such as walking over limestone chippings to mimic those of a labour camp. There was something about this mocked-up experience, in the rooms of an old factory with its own unique history, that felt disingenuous or gimmicky: indeed Schindler and his list were excluded from the main timeline and relegated to two upstairs rooms, an afterthought. I felt I could have been anywhere. The café was filled with photograph stills from the film, and the busloads of American tourists were stocking up on Holocaust memorabilia in the gift shop.

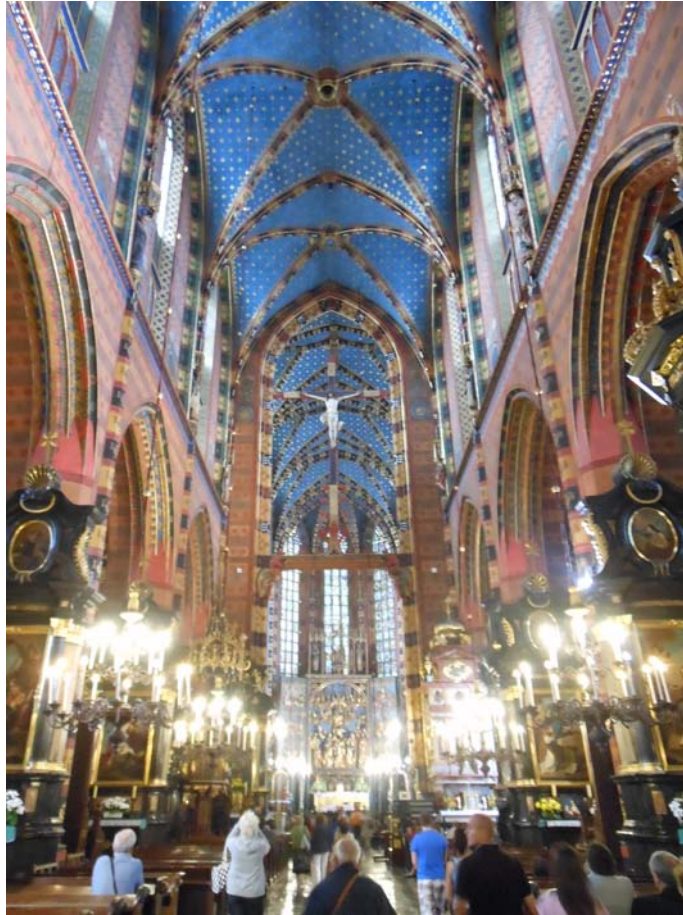
Saoirse had been reading up in the guidebook on Płaszów labour camp (where Schindler was meant to have sent his workers), the ruins of which were relatively close by, so we returned to Plac Bohaterów Getta and caught a tram down Ulica Wielicka to the cemetery. Here was a mixture of light industry and Soviet-style apartment blocks (a recurring theme, it seems, on sites of Nazi atrocities).

Once off the main road onto Ulica Jerozolimska the atmosphere became eerie. It was overcast and close, as if a storm were imminent. There was nobody much around, and though the area seemed fine both Saoirse and I felt unsafe, obvious, watched. We came to some concrete ruins, outbuildings of sorts. A little further down a sign indicated the old entrance to the camp, next to the still-standing commandant’s house, now divided into flats. Behind this was a strange grouping of hills and hummocks with scrub-like trees and hedges. In amongst this lay, like the ruins of a jungle temple, remnants of a concrete structure, composed of jagged shapes and voids, daubed with graffiti and strewn with litter and creepers. The area was now a sort of local heath, clearly used for

all manner of activities, at day and at night. Paths beat their way along the grass and between the hedges, litter was scattered everywhere. Here and there were rough patches of earth scorched by fires, or dug up as if by an excavator. We photographed the site and the small grave-like monuments erected by the Soviets and (later) Jews, covered with pebbles and stones, and then left hurriedly, feeling eyes watching us.



We headed back to Rynek Główny, where swallows were now darting round the cathedral towers. On impulse we went inside, and both of us were stunned by the interior of colour and gold inside, a jewel casket. We lit candles and, whilst Saoirse went up to the gilt altar, I sat in a pew, trying to piece together the Ghetto, Schindler and the ruination and decay we'd seen at Płaszów.



10<sup>th</sup> June

Saoirse's alarm rattled its way through the stuffy room. I rolled over in my bed, not having to pack and leave as she did, and being rather glad of it. Conversation was brief. Soon it was time for her to get the shuttle to the airport. After she left I found her empty bed across from mine strange, and realised that I was back with my own company again. I left the hostel at noon, and walked all the way to Plac Szczepański. I passed the Hotel Stry, where the England football team were staying, and went on to the Czartoryski Museum, to see Leonardo Da Vinci's *The Lady With The Ermine*. I found the museum at the tail end of refurbishment and closed, but a sign informed me that the painting was on show all the way back down at the Wawel. I retraced my steps, and found the Wawel thronged with people. The hot sunny day had turned overcast again,

and I wondered if today would finally bring a thunderstorm. The air was humid and sticky.

Having purchased a ticket for the Da Vinci, I entered a vast rhomboid-shaped Renaissance courtyard paved with cream marble, surrounded on three sides by a three-story colonnade of delicate proportions, with a partial fresco frieze running along the very top. I made my way to a small, fortified door in the corner of the colonnade, and after showing my ticket went up four flights of slippery brown marble steps to reach the balcony of the top colonnade.



I went into an anteroom of what would have once been a grand palace apartment. The room was dimly lit and had a large reproduction of the painting as well as some excellent curatorial notes on the sitter's identity (Cecilia Gallerani) and the painting's history. I was relieved to see there weren't too many people, so was hopeful of getting a decent view of the painting itself. Two guards manned the heavy mahogany



and brass doors, one of which was opened to let me enter the room in which the painting hung. It opened noiselessly, like the door to a vault. Upon entering I saw that I was the only person in there, apart from a guard at the far door and a steward. I never imagined that I would find myself alone with this painting.



The room was a good size, about fifteen feet square, with a marble floor, cream walls and a barrel vault ceiling. To the right was an alcove lit with spots. To the left was a constructed exhibition wall in a cool grey. In the middle, sunk into a recess in the wall was *The Lady With The Ermine*. A stanchion left about a six-foot gap between the viewer and the painting.

I had never looked at a painting for this long on my own. It bore endless looking, and to be alone with it was exhilarating. The frame was as beautiful as the painting

itself, a heraldic pattern of dull gold and delicate red and blue, picking out the red and blue of the Lady's clothes. The depiction of light in the painting was exceptional, the execution of this light flawless. The black background (painted over at a later date) makes this Renaissance painting seem uncannily like a photograph. The perfection of texture, the tension and pressure in the Lady's fingers, in the ermine's legs and paws, contrasting with the relaxed posture, the absolute elegance of her curved neck and turned-away face, is masterly hyperrealistic.

I adored the blue of her cloak, the reddy ochre of her bodice, the black beads around her neck. Her face itself was not beautiful *per se*. It had none of the coolness of the *Ginevra*, the distance of *La belle ferronnière*, the voluptuousness of the *Mona Lisa*. The Lady is nameless, rich, obvious and symbolic (unlike the *Mona Lisa*, who is conscious of her own riddles). She is aloof, complete, self-possessed. Her strength is unquestionable, because she is uninterested in the viewer. She is unconcerned with being painted, yet not disdainful of it. She likes to be viewed, but she has no need of it. I felt it was the most alive, vibrant object I had seen for a long time.

I headed back to Kazimierz with thunder all around, quickening my pace as bawdy drops started to fall from the sky.

## Wien

13<sup>th</sup> June

Coming into Wien was strange and disorienting and unfamiliar. No landmark stood out, nothing I recognised. But it had been twenty years and I hadn't arrived by train before, so it was hardly surprising. A brief glimpse of Schönebrunn Palace, with its pavilion, was the only thing that gave me a jolt of memory.

Once I reached the Opera House I remembered Wien. The main pedestrian street was almost exactly as it had been from twenty years before. I went in search of the hotel I'd stayed at with my family. Miraculously, like drawing back a curtain, it was still there, the Hotel Astoria. It still had its first-floor corner restaurant (I remembered breakfast there), the little Italian restaurant next door (refurbished, but still the same kind of fast food family place), the orange marble and dark wood lobby with stairs leading up to the restaurant. It was as if twenty years, and all the strange, painful things that had happened in them, had collapsed, and I was a child again.

I could remember being in this particular hotel, the noisy street musicians outside, the intense heat and thunderstorms, visiting Schönebrunn Palace, the Spanish Riding School. I remembered the horses criss-crossing each other, looking down the white baroque hall to the sandy arena. I remembered going to a Strauss concert on the upper floors of a villa on the Ringstrasse, a garden below filled with roses and white metal chairs and tables. There had been ballerinas, a small chamber orchestra, all the windows of the room open. And I remembered, in the interval perhaps, standing on the balcony in the almost-dark and seeing the most tremendous thunderstorm approaching Wien from the mountains, forked lightning, perilous thunder, swooping down on them, the windows being hastily shut, the orchestra competing with the thunder and rain outside. Strange how a simple thing, an unchanged hotel, can provoke such a flood of memories.

I found the cathedral, with its newly cleaned-up façade, a disappointment. There had been something about its mysterious stony blackness that had been extremely evocative, which had made the multicoloured tiled roof even more jewel-like. Now it seemed blander, stripped of its patina, its accumulated age, its summers and winters.



The whole city felt so spruced up now, so chi-chi, so restored, that I found it tedious, lacking in atmosphere. It seemed more uniform, bland, less interesting, less remarkable, homogenised. The buildings were beautiful, the squares charming, the statues opulent, but it felt too sterile, too clean, like visiting a theme park, a film set, an idea of Wien. Only the occasional faded building or shop provided anything real.

It took me nearly an hour to locate the Rachel Whiteread monument in the Judenplatz. When I did find it, I was immediately struck by its terrible simplicity. Whiteread had obviously studied Wien, walked around it a lot, realised what it was all about, and had produced the complete opposite. It was a breath of bitter air, in amongst all the opulent, crazy, fantastical, unreal rococo and baroque gilding.





I loved its solid, concrete form, the only one it seemed within the Ringstrasse. It spoke to me like a tomb or crypt, a secretive, strong monument. The setting of the square was disturbing and sinister, perhaps due to its claustrophobic atmosphere, its closed-in, hard-to-find nature. It felt like being at the heart of a city obsessed with façade, with appearance. This felt stripped back, the forever-closed doors a permanent portal and barrier to getting to the dark kernel of this apparently carefree, glitzy city's past. I spent a long time absorbed in this monument. It was one to get to know, to walk around, to look at, from a distance and from as close as possible. I felt absorbed by its symmetry, its rectilinear construction, its voids and protrusions, its concealed organicity: the delicate curves of each book, the minute divisions between pages, the unique

weathering and patination on each façade, on each shelf. A whole made up of individuals.

I was cold now, hungry again, disinclined to visit the Jewish Museum or anything remotely linked to curated culture. I was tired of it: labels, exhibitions, opinions, voices. After some minutes' walk I dived into a Tyrolean bar, 'Gösser Bierflinif', just as the rain began. It was cave-like inside, cream walls and black wood and a vast selection of beers. I was in the smoking room, although it turned out there was a larger, smoke-free back room as well, more like a beer hall. It didn't bother me. In fact I enjoyed the novelty of it, the smells of hearty food, cigar smoke, beer, the cool damp air outside. It was full of old Austrians, smoking and talking in an unhurried manner, there for the duration. I ensconced myself in a booth and demolished two Gösser beers and a plate of three sausages, potato and sauerkraut. I left at a quarter to four, out into the easing rain, the warmth and smoke of the bar clinging to me like a cloak.

## München

15<sup>th</sup> June

I got the S-Bahn out to Dachau with 'Hold On' by Wilson Phillips blaring in my ears, stomach stinging from a hastily bought croissant at München Hauptbahnhof. A bus from Dachau Station (Dachau itself was a sizeable, typically German suburban town) took myself and the other tourists to the camp, which like Auschwitz was shockingly close to the town itself. In Dachau's case, however, the Nazis never bothered trying to cover up its existence or purpose. In fact, it was held up as *the* model camp of Nazi "tough love", making dissenters into hard-working, functioning citizens of the glorious Reich. The reality, of incinerator-disguised gas chambers cloaked in pine trees, was slightly

different.



Dachau, with its modern visitor centre, reconstructed barracks buildings and almost laid-back atmosphere, was a sanitised contrast to Auschwitz-Birkenau and Treblinka. Things felt removed here, edited, cleaned of nasty bits. The place was scorchingly hot and full of bored American school groups (München was overrun with Americans), who all seemed to share an irreverence towards the site bordering on disrespect. It was clear that this rather ordinary-seeming barracks complex with its embarrassment of postwar artistic projects had little impact on many of the visitors, beyond being a historically interesting site. I found myself in that familiar territory of being unmoved by an experience that was doing everything in its power to make me feel something.

Not to belittle Dachau itself, the site of many atrocities. But the scale was too comforting, the strange overwhelming presence of religion, shown in the different

chapels dotted around the site, and the large-scale Nandor Glid sculpture, all served as buffers between the present and the past atrocities. Here monuments seemed to be used as aesthetic interventions, artworks that could “help” the visitor access some kind of emotion that the site itself seemed anxious we would not have. The contrast between Treblinka and its forest, its silent stones or enclosed meadows, was clear. Was this just a case of “museum fatigue”? Had I become, as a sentient being, somehow immune to the tragedy of the Holocaust, over-exposed? Was it correct of me to rank each monument or site, grade each experience as being better or worse than the last, rating the emotional impact as low, medium or high? But at the same time I couldn’t change how I was feeling, the sense or affect this particular site was giving me, as subjective as it was: I’m sure that if I had visited Treblinka and it had been similarly overrun by shouting school students I would have had a different reaction to it as a place. It was not even the noise of the students that bothered me, nor their fondness for climbing into the ditch that separated the barracks from the execution site: what bothered me was that the site was wanting them to behave in a different manner, to show respect or reverence when in truth they did not feel it, the site did not provoke that feeling in them. Perhaps what bothered me was that I felt the same as them, even if I did not show it. I began to think about how we construct or police a site like Dachau, how we decide what “appropriate” behaviour means, what that looks like, and who the appropriateness is for. I wondered if the former inmates of this concentration camp might not have welcomed the thought that one day teenagers would play in those ditches, free and unconcerned?

I wandered round in the heat, feeling strangely claustrophobic and light-headed. The reconstructed bunkhouses, whilst accurate, lacked the eerie decay of those at

Auschwitz, and in the heat smelled of fresh clean pine. They meant nothing, they were just bunk beds. It made me wonder what the purposes of such reconstructions could be.<sup>97</sup>



I found the gravel paths and numbered blockhouse sites unemotive. The imaginative extrapolations, the complex questions I'd had wandering Auschwitz-Birkenau felt impossible here.

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<sup>97</sup> See Jenny Edkins, *Trauma and the Memory of Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p.139: 'The wood is clean and new. There is no sign of the filth or the horror of life in close proximity. Four hundred people, we are told, ate together in this room – a room impossibly small for such a purpose. It seems crowded with the tour group of fifty or so well-fed and well-dressed visitors'.





The Jewish chapel, in its buried blackness, was atmospheric and evocative, the Christian chapels restful but somehow misplaced; it felt as if I was in the religious section of an exhibition. As a trio, at the end of the camp, they were beyond strange, and only served to negate the preservation of the gravelled-over blockhouses and recreated huts. Why bother? Why not cover the site with chapels, pergolas, follies?

Through an arch cut into one of the watchtowers behind the chapels I found the order of Carmelite nuns. These nuns live here, in chosen seclusion, next to a site of enforced exclusion, of extreme unlooked-for suffering. This juxtaposition not only appealed to me on an intellectual level but also seemed human, emotive and rigorous, unflinching. They hadn't just built a chapel then left, they lived there every day, this was their life. The monastery buildings lay on the 'other side' of the wall, accessed through the portal of the old watchtower. I was the only person from Dachau who had wandered through. The chapel itself was divided by a partition screen, separating nuns from

visitors. I wondered if there was anyone else in that space besides me, behind that screen. I strained my ears to see if I could hear anybody else breathing, but there was nothing. There could have been one silent nun on the other side of the screen or hundreds, or none. I would never know. I lit one of the red candles and knelt for some minutes in this architecturally comforting and simple space, clad in wood, brick, ochre floor tiles. It felt like a counterpoint to the inhuman, artistic, posturing, overblown structures beyond.

I made my way back into the camp and across the little river to the gas chamber and crematoria. This building was most noteworthy because its signage assured visitors that the chamber was not used for “mass killing”. The sign read:

The large crematorium was erected between May 1942 and April 1943. It was to serve both as a killing facility and to remove the dead. But the gas chamber in the middle of the building was not used for mass murder. Survivors have testified that the SS did, however, murder individual prisoners and small groups here using poison gas.<sup>98</sup>

As over 60,000 people died in Dachau, and as people were definitely gassed there, the claim seemed either naïve or offensive, I didn’t know which. It also invited a discussion on the concept of a “mass killing”. What defined that? Over twenty people? Over fifty? Was two enough? If you killed one person every day for fifty years was that a mass killing? Where were the linguistic and ethical pointers on that, I wondered? Why did numbers, in the end, matter, when killing one person was surely bad enough? Did scale of death indicate severity of crime? It seemed bizarre to even point out that here was one place where people were only killed singly, as if that were to lessen the crime.

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<sup>98</sup> ‘Large Crematorium (“Barrack X”)’ information board, Dachau concentration camp.

The 'woodland walk' behind the gas chamber, punctuated by bleak headstone-like plaques demarcating 'Ash Pit', 'Blood Ditch' 'Gallows' or 'Execution Wall' felt less controlled or curated, perhaps because plants were more abundant here, affording some kind of counterpoint to the artistry around them.



Back in München, once more beyond hunger, I ended up at the University, in search of the Weisse Rose Monument. It took the form of delicate newsprint photocopies transposed onto pale stones fashioned like scraps of paper, set into the cobbles around the university entrance and fountain, mixing with the real-life paper litter.





This monument, almost invisible, spoke more of resistance, of disharmony within the German ideal: a reminder that not all Germans agreed with the Nazis. Its scattered, fragmented form felt new to me, deeply unmonumental, something easily missed if it weren't looked for. From a distance it was hard to tell which parts of the ground were real litter and which were part of the monument.

Finally, late in the afternoon, I ate a baguette, looking down Leopoldstraße to the university buildings and the *faux* Roman triumphal arch, the Siegestor. Wandering back to Odeonplatz I found the bronze cobbles which made up the Shirker's Alley monument. This was another intervention, another quiet form of resistance. It was a wavy line of bronze cobbles, marking the street which people used to go down to avoid saluting the Nazi Honour Guard. I'd walked down this street before trying to find the monument but with no success. As with many monuments in München you had to look down, right down at the ground, rather than up. I liked these cobblestone monuments: they weren't

clear or obvious, could not afford the realism or didacticism of the Polish monuments of resistance and heroism. Perhaps they were reflecting the quandary faced by many Germans at the time: how to resist whilst staying alive? It also seemed that in München, heart of Bavarian Germany, the monuments themselves had to find new forms of resistance.



16<sup>th</sup> June

I was feeling drained from the constant seeking out of monuments, of trying to think about them, form impressions, take them in physically (how they looked, where

they were) as well as conceptually (what they represented, how they were doing that). I bought plenty of water as it was another hot day, and went to Radius Tours at the station to hire a bike. I cycled to the Englischer Garten and spent some hours getting lost amongst its shaded paths, enjoying the people strolling round: families, tourists, lovers, locals all thronging the greens, the groves, the cafés and Biergartens. I began to appreciate why München was considered the ideal German city. It was ancient, walled, medieval, but also a Renaissance city, a Bavarian utopia surrounded by nature. Not only did this particular park have its own woods, lawns and ice green glacial rivers flowing through it, but the city itself was within sight of the Alps, in the middle of fertile agricultural land, and from which Walhalla, the mythical Wagnerian birthplace of the German people, could almost be seen. From there I made my way up to the old Olympic site, the site of the shooting of Israeli athletes. It was a leisure park now, the swimming pool used, people playing tennis on the old courts. I went up the observation tower to look over the city: the old Olympic village, the BMW factory, even (the information board assured me) a distant glimpse of Walhalla.

I dropped the bike off back at the station, then walked to a Bavarian restaurant on the other side of the river, 'Wirsthaus in der Au'. The waiting staff were all dressed in traditional costume, and I sat inside as the biergarten was thronged with locals. I half-watched another Euro 2012 match as I ate sausage and sauerkraut. I walked back to the hostel in the hot night, the only cool breeze afforded by the waters of the River Isar as it tumbled over the large weir near Museum Island. As I crossed the bridge back into the city I saw people and fires on the shingle banks of the river, the smell of woodsmoke drifting across the sharp tang of the falling water.

17<sup>th</sup> June

I visited the München Stadtmuseum, an excellent and deceptively large (also well-funded) institution. I visited the 'Typography of Terror' exhibition on German poster art from the Nazi period (1932-45). I found myself resisting the narrative of the exhibition, that these posters were more than propaganda, a form of Nazi brainwashing that had cast the German people under a spell beneath which they were powerless. I found it too neat an explanation: the Nazis were criminals but German people were also victims. There seemed to be, just as with Dachau, no grey areas. For me it left too much power unaccounted for.

München was heaving this Sunday. There were even more Lederhosen on show, the women noticeable in their finery. Germany were advancing up the Euro 2012 table and seemed on track to be in the final, and the atmosphere of the city seemed extremely buoyant. As I watched the Town Hall clock with its *faux* Gothic life-size Medieval clockwork figures my eye was also drawn, among the Biergarten customers, to older couples in full Bavarian regalia. Seemingly down from the Alps themselves, the women were newly coiffured and made-up, wearing sheer silk Bavarian outfits in pistachio or lavender, dripping full sets of knuckle-sized pieces of rough cut amber: necklaces, bracelets, earrings, rings, brooches, chokers. The men's lederhosen gleamed over their smocked white shirts: silver buckles polished, shoes gleamed, Alpine hats jaunty with pheasant feathers. Along with the football fans waving German flags, the groups of younger men drinking heavily (also in lederhosen), the smell of bratwurst and currywurst and the unlimited tankards of Weissbier, it was an opulent scene of nationalism. I didn't feel threatened, as I had done by the openly homophobic nationalists in Warszawa, but nor was I a part of this display. It was not even done for

the benefit of tourists. But it was about asserting a uniquely German identity, one inextricably linked with Bavaria, and one which I cannot help but associate with Nazism. It was as if I were seeing the 1930s propaganda posters from that morning acted out before me: the quintessential blonde-haired, blue-eyed, lederhosen-wearing good German family in a München biergarten, almost as if nothing had happened over the past century.

I wanted to get away from the squares, and spent some time searching for somewhere to eat. Again I had gone for too long without eating. I wanted somewhere quiet, away from this mad atmosphere. Eventually at Sendlinger Tor I found a small place called 'Aroma', full of locals, none of whom were in Bavarian costume. The place felt less feverish, more like any neighbourhood café on a Sunday. I sat down on a wide oak window seat with folding windows open to the warm street, surrounded by lazy chatter, and ate a quiche and salad, perhaps in a deliberately un-Germanic gesture. A woman came over and carefully placed her sleeping toddler on the bench beside me, laying the child on some blankets the café had dotted around. There was something extremely beautiful in her tender gesture, in the boy's own half-awake slumber. I also found myself getting drowsy, there by the open window, the sleeping boy across from me, the gentle summer breeze blowing in off the street. I put my head back against the wall and dozed, feeling as if the boy's sleeping peacefulness was travelling through the oak to me.

I collected my bags from the hostel and made the 15.19 to Nürnberg. There were flashes of Alpine valleys and pine forests, small villages petalling out from Tyrolean spires. There were cyclists, and strange tall geometric-looking vineyards (for Riesling I

presumed), the vines trained up twelve-feet high sloping wires, casting zigzag patterns down the vineyard avenues.

## Nürnberg

18<sup>th</sup> June

I was staying just down from the Opera House, on the main ring road that hugged the medieval city walls. I could see them from my bedroom window, encircling the terracotta-roofed walls and Alpine spires of the reconstructed town. I took the S-Bahn out to the Nürnberg Nazi Party rally grounds and alighted at the Frankenstadion stop near the Zeppelintribüne. I walked across the huge boulevard to the massive, wall-like structure. The heat was fierce. There was some chainlink fencing around it, and I longed to see inside to the infamous marble-clad halls with their golden mosaics and empty sconces. It was impossible not to be affected by the physicality of it, its vast proportions. The podium and tiered seating brought to mind Roman arenas. Here, as in the concentration camps, the individual was entirely subjugated by vast architecture, rendered meaningless, collectivised around a single object. It was like viewing two sides of the same coin: stone mined in subjugation in Treblinka; stone brought here to be used in subjugation.





This made the smaller scale, hidden, postwar antifascist monuments like the Weisse Rose much easier to understand, and the thoughts and aesthetics behind them I could see were an essential, underappreciated response to Nazi rhetoric. These small-scale resistance monuments seemed more than ever like a network of quiet rebellion, that to be too obvious was unwise, in case of what the future held. It made those monuments seem even more vulnerable or fragile, much like the possibility of resistance itself.

I walked up the limestone steps, sweat pouring down my body. There was a school party near the podium and two men filming each other doing fitness exercises up and down the steps. A lone man was standing on the infamous Hitler podium. He had a strange, furtive manner. Below all this, on the tarmac road at the bottom of the steps, unconcerned workers were setting up barriers for an upcoming road-racing event. Further back, behind the road, the field where once hundreds of thousands of Germans

had gazed upon the Cathedral of Light was now subdivided into sports pitches, the goalposts for American football shimmering and bending in the heat haze.

I walked up to the doorway behind the podium, just as the school party began to move off. I stood in the shaded doorway which led into the inaccessible inner sanctum, bolted metal doors protecting the time-capsule tomb of Nazi dreams. I rested my back against the doors, glad of a bit of the shade, waiting for the man on the podium to move so I could take a photograph. I didn't understand why the man was standing there so long. The school group trooped down the steps in the blazing heat, some absently kicking the ragwort that had burrowed up between the treads. I closed my eyes for a second, imagining what was beyond the door, longing to enter that portal to the recent past.



I opened my eyes and the man was still there. He glanced around, looking down to the retreating school party. He strode up purposefully to the barrier on the edge of



the podium and gave a strong, confident Nazi salute, arm straight and extended, pointing to the sky. He must have known there were people around, that there was someone sheltering in the doorway just behind him. To watch somebody give that salute in seriousness, in the flesh, on that infamous spot, is powerful. The ghost of Hitler seemed to materialise in front of me. Only a few decades ago an SS guard standing exactly where I was would have witnessed the same gesture, lit with arc lights, the field thronged with ecstatic German Nazis shouting to the dark sky above.

The man dropped his arm, his ritual performed, and left. The heat felt stronger, the air fizzing and tainted. I went down the steps from the shaded doorway to the podium. The man had disappeared down the steps to the racetrack. I felt sick, confused at what I'd just seen and the affect it had produced in me. I stood where the man had stood seconds ago, where Hitler had stood decades ago. I felt strange, unreal.

I walked to the very back of the Zeppelinfeld. A chainlink gate was open, so I crept into the compound underneath the bleachers of the American football pitch. I climbed to the top of the bleachers, not caring if I was meant to be there or not, and saw the full-scale effect of the steps and the podium from a distance. It didn't take a great leap of imagination to see it covered in flags, gigantic sconces throwing fire up into the sky, arc lights shining, huge swastikas everywhere, a sea of brown uniforms, black, red, white. History felt very close, as if all this were just dormant. I left the compound, turning towards the lake and the rest of the park.



As I walked through the Dutzendteich Park, round the lake to the Kongresshalle, along the Große Straße, I noticed how much it was being used, like any other park, for recreation and relaxation (its original function when it had been the zoological garden). There were people on pedalos and paddleboats, yachts and rowboats. They were sunbathing, picnicking, running, walking, fishing, talking. There was something fitting in this sense of ordinariness, the feeling that whilst people knew the history here, they weren't going to let it interfere with their daily lives.



The Kongresshalle is almost twice the capacity of the Coliseum in Rome, and was equally awe-inspiring in its size and scale, even though it is still unfinished. In a perverse way, I wished it had been completed. If it had there is no doubt it would have been a wonder of the modern world. Nothing I could think of matched it for size. The Romans once more came to mind.

I went into the Dokumentationszentrum, its angular steel and glass structure blowing apart the austere classicism of the Kongresshalle's exterior. It was like a lightning bolt entering the stern granite building, a floating movement that disregarded the old structures, shattered them. Inside it documented the Nazi Party rallies, Albert Speer's designs, the ideological importance of Nürnberg for Hitler. The museum left me shattered and hungry, but the extreme heat and the heaviness of the day, of everything I was seeing, meant that all I could eat were some crisps before pushing on to the Luitpoldhain across the road. I wanted this done, finished with.



The Luitpoldhain's amphitheatre, though now obscured by trees, is still plain to see, even without the Luitpoldhalle (site of the first Nazi Party rallies) and the famous rostrum from which Hitler walked along "Hitler's Way" to honour the putsch "martyrs". Only one clue still remains as to this park's former use: the original 1929 Ehrenhalle, a monument built by the Weimar Republic to commemorate the dead of the First World War. In the year of its completion the Nazis incorporated it into their annual cult of the dead, where party members pledged their lives on the "blood flag" to avenge the putsch martyrs and swear allegiance to the Führer. It formed an axis to the podium across the amphitheatre, and even now the bowl-like space felt cultish, a place of rites.



The Ehrenhalle felt neglected. Under the colonnade were remnants of fires and smashed bottles. Weeds were everywhere, stains were on the walls. The paving slabs were uneven, the sconces lining the entrance unused. Dark trees crowded around it. The feeling was one of malevolent decay. Two metal doors at either end of the colonnade were locked.

Someone had painted the outline of a white 'road' down the grass, from the Ehrenhalle to the now-voided podium. It marked out "Hitler's Way", the way of the blood flag. It called up the old amphitheatre, the old ritual. I couldn't help wondering who had painted this, what rituals still occurred here in darkness. One could easily imagine being alone, at night, and seeing brown-clad shadows flit between the sconces, the arches of the colonnade.





I went back into town, towards the Nürnberg Courthouse and Court 600. It was blisteringly hot and nearly three in the afternoon when I got off the U-Bahn. I was desperate for food, but the area the Law Courts were in was an odd one, mostly residential, and nothing appealed to me. I'd gone past food and was feeling light-headed and indecisive. Again, eating seemed strangely inappropriate.

Court 600 was still a working court, part of the main building, but in an extension from the 1900s. I found the room much smaller than I had imagined, and it must have been boiling when filled with the twenty-two defendants, lawyers, judges, press and public in the galleries. There was certainly an atmosphere here, even though the layout of the room had been significantly changed since the trials, and the large press gallery removed (it now housed the exhibition on the Trials). I felt I could almost see the words: all the millions of words that had been absorbed by the wooden panels, had sunk

themselves into the bronze nudes of Adam and Eve, German and Roman law, above the ornate doorways.

Upstairs the exhibition charted the last days of the Third Reich and the subsequent attempts to bring the Nazis to justice by the Allies. I found the merciless, dapper figure of Goering riveting: his obvious disregard for the process, his quiet debasements during examination, were, still, unnerving. His final act of suicide, taking power away from the trial process and its sentence, contained a dark humour, an acknowledgement that justice can only work by consent. His death photograph, one eye leering open, was chilling.

I left the Courts, my head spinning with film footage (the concentration camps), the colour photographs (secretaries in a room covered with papers), the strange, unreal, immediate atmosphere of the place. An overwhelming sense that the Nazis had in fact escaped justice.

I went back into town, late in the afternoon, still having not eaten, and ended up at 'Vapiano', a strange self-service Italian place. I had a good tiramisu and two watery cappuccinos. The thought of eating anything more than this didn't feel right. I tried not to look over too much at the young, in-love, gay couple sitting across from me: holding hands and kissing, there in a restaurant in Nürnberg.

I dreamt all night of Goering and his leer, the eye always open, unable to shut.

### Kassel

20<sup>th</sup> June

I was stopping off in Kassel for a few hours on my way from Nürnberg to Hamburg. I was there to see the Horst Hoheisel countermonument, an inverted fountain



sunk into the ground outside the town hall, a negative inversion of a fountain originally placed there in the 1890s by a Jewish financier, and destroyed by the Nazis.

Kassel is a functional, postwar city which instantly reminded me of similar cities in the north of England. I assumed its functionality was largely due to the Allies bombing it, but I admired its reconstruction in contemporary style: there was no Bavarian sheen here. Some would probably call it a drab city, all concrete and angles. Even the few older grand civic buildings that remained (original or reconstructed it was impossible to tell) exhibited little to commend them architecturally. They too seemed functional, as if Kassel had always been so concerned with the business of industry that there had been very little time for needless decoration. I liked this atmosphere, I found it comforting, more straightforward.

The so-called “countermonument” surprised me in many ways. There was something about its industrial efficiency, its no-nonsense functional bleakness, that made it surprisingly affecting, particularly the trickle of water into an only half-glimpsed well of unknown proportions. I felt it could last forever, this dark well void, that it was underground, it was roots, it was resistance: the trees could be burned but the roots could always grow back. It was more moving than I thought it would be, precisely because of its enigmatic, unfinished continuity. It was endless. No reparation, atonement or closure was possible, just a flow of history downwards. Even without any knowledge of its mirror-image form of the original fountain it seemed to have its own atmosphere of something unfinished, sinister, subterranean.



## Hamburg

21<sup>st</sup> June

I awoke from a dream filled with earthquakes, fire and death. I caught the S-Bahn out to Harburg-Hamburg in search of the countermonument designed by Jochen Gerz and Esther Shalev-Gerz. On my way I noticed, set into the pavement near the hostel, two brass plaques commemorating Jewish people, deported from the building they were in front of to the camps. These brass interventions were, in fact, all over the city. I knew nothing about them, but found them, like the interventions in München, part of that almost-invisible resistance network of monuments. They turned out to be part of the *Stolpersteine* (*Stumbling Blocks*) project, artist Gunter Demnig's ongoing commemorative work that creates individual plaques to victims of the National Socialist

regime. Each plaque is placed outside the place of deportation, and records the name of the person commemorated, date of birth and the year and final place of execution.<sup>99</sup>



Hamburg is, like Kassel, an industrial city, albeit much wealthier. It is Germany's second city and its largest port, and as in Kassel art seemed to be everywhere: from communist squats to graffiti to murals to pop art public parks with giant plastic palm trees to man-made beach bars opposite the docks to a life-sized figure of what appeared to be Ronald Reagan affixed to a buoy in the river. This city understood art; it was in its streets, part of its identity and dialogues.

<sup>99</sup> See Gunter Demnig, *Stolpersteine*, <http://www.stolpersteine.eu/en/> [Accessed 24/6/15].



When I did alight at Harburg-Hamburg, just south-west of the main city, I felt anxious. I had no idea where the countermonument was located. I knew from photographs that the site was part of what would now be a thirty-year-old plaza complex. But I had no idea of where in Harburg this was. However, it turned out that the plaza and the countermonument were, in fact, directly opposite the Rathaus S-Bahn exit. The countermonument itself (a lead-coated obelisk, now buried) is entombed in what at first glance appears to be a red-brick service tower, completely integrated within a pedestrian underpass, a bridge above, some steps and a large quantity of stainless steel railings. The whole area is landscaped in red brick, which reminded me of the brick buildings at Auschwitz.

Harburg was still working class, but in an upward sense of the word. I thought it must have changed from descriptions I'd read of it in the 80s, when the countermonument was first erected. The platform for the countermonument (now the



roof of its tomb), with its 'non-view' over the trees and plaza, was unexpected and mysterious, even with its explanatory panels. As with the Kassel monument something felt buried but not entirely dead, the same kind of dormancy that I felt marked the München monuments. I felt as though it was in dialogue with the Nazi party rally grounds in Nürnberg: if the dormant, oppressive regime should rise again then so too could the dormant monuments of resistance against it.



The tomb itself, the brick tower that looked like it might hold winch machinery, was only accessed by a thin metal door, a tiny part of which was open to the tomb and which had a metal grille over it. Once again I found myself confronted with locked doors leading into something glimpsed at but inaccessible: like the Whiteread memorial in Vienna, like the buildings in Nürnberg, even the metal doors of the Jewish cemetery in

Warszawa. The grille revealed part of the buried monument, as if I were looking through a portal into the inner crypt, body inside. But, similar to the grille in Kassel with the water beneath, it was impossible to glimpse or grasp the whole. There was an acknowledgement of an interior, an inner cryptic space that could be seen (through the grilles) or guessed at (beyond the doors) but which could never be fully known. These monuments, more than the traditional examples such as the Warsaw Uprising Monument, or sites like Dachau, seemed to confront the problems of commemoration: that there was no neatness, no clarity to these questions of memory, history or remembrance.

22<sup>nd</sup> June

I woke to a colder, greyer day with storms rumbling across the clouds. I was in no rush to get to Berlin as Hans, who I was staying with, wasn't going to be off work until late. At the same time I felt impatient and tired, as if I'd forgotten how to relax. Although the Harburg monument had been the last one on my checklist (a strange kind of tourist list) I didn't feel finished or complete, but restless and edgy.

It began to rain heavily, so I made my way to the Kunsthalle, and was happy to leave my wet things in a locker. Almost by accident I was in the contemporary art wing, the great plaza dominated by a giant Louise Bourgeois spider lurking outside, rain coursing down its twisted bronze legs. The museum was showing an *Alice in Wonderland* exhibition, which included the Jan Svankmajer short film *Jabberwocky*. I found this stop-motion masterpiece with its strange, off-kilter music and Victorian sensibilities mesmeric, and watched it several times, hypnotised by the fantasy world of dark nursery images and gruesome fairytales, the inner kernel of painful childhood, the

bloodied knife jumping into the lace tablecloth. I then headed to the basement tunnel to avoid the rain, finding myself in the midst of the *Lost Places* photography exhibition: large-scale photographs of bleak industrial environments, deserted Russian towns, brutalist architecture.

I saw that across the way in the older wing was Caspar David Friedrich's *Wanderer über dem Nebelmeer*, the solitary wanderer above the sea of fog. The landscape which the wanderer looks upon is shrouded in early-morning mists, the rocky crags and trees and distant mountains abstract shapes in amongst the swirling clouds below the wanderer and the swirling skies above. This man in the picture is not a walker or hiker: he is a man, in the mist, wandering.



[[http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/b/b9/Caspar\\_David\\_Friedrich\\_-\\_Wanderer\\_above\\_the\\_sea\\_of\\_fog.jpg](http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/b/b9/Caspar_David_Friedrich_-_Wanderer_above_the_sea_of_fog.jpg)]



Despite wanting to see the painting in the flesh, I decided I had to leave the Kunsthalle. I was desperate for food. Once in the St. Georg streets I found myself with the by now familiar dilemma of where or what to eat, knowing that I'd gone past hunger. I was beginning to despair when I passed Café Gnosa, an old-fashioned place with a mixed crowd, many on their Friday afternoon glasses of wine or beer. People were sitting outside, under the maroon awning, sheltering from the summer rain, which had started to fall again. I ventured inside, overcome with the crippling shyness that gay environments sometimes inflict on me. It's something to do with feeling out-of-place, or unattractive, or not being accepted, an outsider feeling. The waiters, who were all very attractive and who all seemed to have slept, or still be sleeping with each other, were wearing crisp white shirts and black trousers with long maroon aprons tied round the waist. Two of them, whenever they were behind the bar, would put their arms round each other affectionately as one or the other made lattes or took money at the till. I was sitting opposite the 1950s bar-counter, in imitation mahogany and glass, showcasing an array of hysterical-looking cakes. The café seemed to do a brisk trade in these, and one younger waiter seemed to spend all his time popping oversized pieces of cheesecake onto doiled-up-plates and squirting cream around them.

It was pleasantly busy, with the lunchtime rush over, and I settled into my leather banquette with a book, ordering a tea and quiche with salad. I divided my time between watching the waiters at the bar and glancing over at a group of older gay men in the booth next to mine, who seemed to be on their third, if not fourth, bottle of wine and who were growing pleasantly animated.

I had just started eating the huge portion of quiche when the door into the café opened and an extraordinary man entered. He was no more than a teenager, black, skinny: there seemed to be not an ounce of flesh on him anywhere. He was wearing a pale blue silk blouse which rippled and shimmered under the café lights, miniscule navy shorts revealing his shaved legs. On his feet were expensive-looking black brogues with tassels and white socks. He had a blue cape over his shoulders and carried a patent leather bag. On his head was perched a black fedora, and his face was fully made-up. Everyone in the café, even if they didn't stop talking, noticed him. He appeared to be in a daze, and asked for cigarettes, which the waiters (who had formed a protective line behind the bar, two linking arms in a gesture of solidarity) told him they didn't sell. Undeterred, he got a glass of water off them, and asked where the toilets were. The waiters made the youngest one leave the protective casing of the bar and show him where they were. This done, the waiters returned to normal service, but in less than five seconds the visitor was back because he seemed unable to open the door to the toilets. Again, the young waiter was dispatched, and showed him (in full view of the café), that the door was "pull", not "push". Unembarrassed, the visitor went to the toilet for all of thirty seconds then swept out of the café in a whirl of cloak and a haze of florals.

I looked at my watch and saw it was past three, so I headed back to the hostel to pick up my rucksacks, as heavy as they had been when I started. In the warmer, brighter afternoon I caught the train from the Hauptbahnhof back down to Berlin. As the train headed south the rain started up again, and the German countryside became obscured by persistent drizzle.

Berlin

22<sup>nd</sup> June (continued)

The U-Bahn was packed and I had two changes to get to Hans's stop, which was Kurfürstenstraße, not far from Nollendorfplatz. The rain had stopped and it was a warm evening with no clouds at all. It felt good to be in a neighbourhood and not in a faceless hotel, going to a friend's place instead of an anonymous bedroom.

The apartment was towards the dead-end of Kurfürstenstraße, terminating at the wasteland lying between Yorckstraße and Schöneberger Ufer. This wasteland, remnants of Second World War bombing and disused railway tracks, is the last undeveloped area of central Berlin. Cement works to construct Potsdamer Platz were built on here, but mostly the site is criss-crossed by iron railway bridges. Local community groups have successfully lobbied for a park to be created on the site to provide a haven for the flora and fauna that has already been flourishing there. But this land's proximity to Potsdamer Platz, the Tiergarten and Brandenburg Tor means it's only a matter of time before another remnant of Berlin is developed-away.

Despite my desire for an early night, Hans and I went out drinking with a group of Berliners, and we ended up in a vast club, occupying an old cinema. I bought several cheap gin and tonics and began dancing on my own, finally enjoying a beginning of the release of tension built up over the past few weeks. There were no ghosts here, no shades, no gas chambers, no dead Jews in unmarked ash pits or marked, untended graves. Hans and I decided that the club was losing its sheen and one more bar before bed wouldn't hurt. I'd completely lost track of how many drinks I'd consumed on an empty stomach.

We took the U-Bahn up to Kreuzberg to Roses Bar, a stalwart of the Berlin gay scene: mirror tiles and odd lamps and garish red walls. It was like being inside a drag queen's head. After buying more beers and some shots, we fell in with a group of ex-pat Argentineans. All were involved in the arts and were doing interesting things in Berlin, so conversation was easy. One of the girls suggested we went on to the *really* late bar which was 24 hours. By this point it was about five in the morning and light outside. Some people peeled off, but Hans and I went there with the Argentinean girl and a couple of the guys. The bar was tiny and wood-panelled, and didn't seem to have been touched since 1970. Smoke hung in great clouds, wreathing the strange paintings and animal heads on the walls. The clientele was a curious mixture of gays, hipsters, students and a rough element of serious, mean drinkers, most of whom looked like they never left their stools. By this point I'd had so many beers and had gone through so many stages of tiredness and energy that I'd lost all sense of time or place: it felt like I was starting a new night out again.

We left the bar at about seven or eight in the morning. Both Hans and I were so drunk we were sober. Hans suggested that we may as well go on to a sex club on Nollendorfplatz. I wasn't sure, but nothing seemed to matter now, I was immune now, I'd survived. I checked my coat in the small front bar, which was full of leather-clad bears, punters in varying degrees of undress. We got more drinks at the bar. I felt overcome with excitement and fear. Through a curtain was the main room. It was almost pitch-black, subdued lighting in blue and green, loud music. There were raised benches around the walls and in the far corner a sling hung from the ceiling. Scattered around this small room (not much bigger than a gas chamber) were lots of shapes, bodies of men in varying stages of having sex. I sat on a bench, resting my head back on

the wall. There was something hypnotic about the space, comforting in its small barely-lit blackness. It was impersonal and liberating, death-like, I could see that. It became about one thing, making all the other things melt away. Here it was, no bullshit, men in a room fucking each other.

Part of me, some part that was being drowned, submerged by the other, stronger part, wanted to walk out of the club, knew that the sensible thing to do was not to get involved, to not be anything more than an observer: to participate was to risk. But the stronger part of me, a part that I had grown tired of restricting, pushed me into the bodies.

I left the club at half-past midday, thrown out into the hot sunshine. My phone battery had died long ago and I hadn't found my coat. My nose still smelt sweet from the poppers. I'd taken no precautions. I'd known this at the time, had been completely aware of this. But I hadn't cared, I had ceased. The street was too bright. I felt burnt-out, dehydrated.

I fell into the bed in the broad daylight of the curtainless back room in Hans's apartment.

23<sup>rd</sup> June

I had two hours' sleep before getting up, showering again and shuffling off to meet Hans. We walked into the Tiergarten and caught the end of the Pride parade. The trees and bushes were full of scantily-clad men urinating or engaging in other activities, hinted at by flashes of skin through the dense undergrowth. Everyone was drunk or high, everyone seemed happy, there were attractive men everywhere. It was what I'd wanted, a fun ending to these weeks of monument-watching. I felt sick and cold, found

the faces distorted. I was feeling claustrophobic with all the people round me, so we went through the Tor, down the Unter den Linden to a café. I walked past the Eisenmann Holocaust monument without even realising. It didn't matter. The café was on a corner and was overpriced, but in the evening sun it felt good to sit down. Hans and I talked through my options, what I could do, what the risks were. None of it mattered, I could feel a panic rising up inside me. The café was facing the sinking sun. A man in a customised wheelchair rumbled past with several banners attached to it saying "kill the gays", "homosexuality is evil", "God will punish all sinners".

Sparrows were all around us, their tiny bodies bobbing amongst the chair legs. One landed on the rim of my half-drunk coffee, looking at me mischievously with tiny black eyes. My mind made the obvious leap to wishing I was a sparrow on the Unter den Linden, and the lack of complications I would then have in my life at this moment. But it is probably just as fraught being a sparrow on the Unter den Linden, so I dismissed the idea along with a half-hearted wave to shoo the sparrow away.

If you think, at all, that you are at risk from being infected from HIV, the sooner you start taking PEP, Post-Exposure Prophylaxis, the better chance you have of stopping the virus from spreading, if indeed you'd caught it at all. The problem with HIV is the uncertainty surrounding it: once you get symptoms it's often too late to do much other than control it, so with PEP you have to take it before you know if you have it or not. With the clinics closed, we decided A&E was probably the best bet. As the sun began to set we walked up the road towards Charité hospital. Like most hospitals on the weekend it seemed to have a skeleton staff. In-keeping with the rest of my trip, a giant screen had been fixed up at one end of the room showing the football. I went to talk to the duty clerk, who screened all patients before they were admitted to A&E.

The waiting was interminable, made no better by the football blaring out across the room. At one point an old man was brought in by paramedics; he looked inches from death, hooked up to oxygen, his distraught wife beside him. As the paramedics wheeled him past the big screen he lifted himself up and leaned across to check on the score, before falling back on the stretcher.

I was called after another hour or so, and saw a doctor with a good command of English and an unforgiving demeanour. She told me that if I wanted PEP I would have to pay over €1,000, and that this would be the same for anybody, German or visitor. The German attitude was that if you caught such diseases it was because of your own transgressions, and the state shouldn't be footing the bill. It was after one in the morning, and I was losing the ability to understand anything that was going on. None of this was happening to me at all, my mind had drifted away from my body. These words the doctor was saying weren't anything to do with me. All I wanted was crawl into a corner, sleep and forget. Hans pointed out it would be cheaper for me to take the first flight home and go to the hospital there.

Hans and I left Charité at two in the morning. I'd had a couple of hours' sleep out of twenty-four and could barely stand. Once back at the apartment I found an EasyJet flight to Gatwick leaving at eight in the morning from Schönefeld. It was now half-past three, and I had to leave an hour to get to the airport and still had to pack. Hans wrote everything down for me, including a map, and I wanted to cry. I said goodbye to Hans and we embraced. Somehow I packed everything, awake now, dawn beginning already, another dawn. I lay down on the narrow bed, fully clothed, and slept for thirty minutes. It didn't feel like sleep.



24<sup>th</sup> June

Everything inside was so taut I felt invincible. I would always keep going, I didn't need sleep. At Schönefeld airport I stood up in a café and ate a sandwich of some kind. I didn't understand food. I felt unsure of where I was in the day, what day it was, what a day was. My brain felt like it was falling apart, shutting down. My flight was delayed. I tried to keep walking around the airport, not to sit down anywhere in case I passed out. I listened to music but didn't know what it was.

I queued with the other passengers for the flight. I was terrified I wouldn't be allowed on, that they'd send me away. We trooped out across the tarmac to the plane. I managed to get a seat near the window and fell asleep until we landed at Gatwick.

I stood on my feet near the airport entrance, rocking back and forth on my heels, trying to balance the rucksacks again, the weight of the large one almost pulling me onto my back, the smaller one at the front helping me somehow to stay upright.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE ELUSIVE MONUMENT

Psychoanalysis investigates the domain and configuration  
of incoherence, discontinuity, disruption, and  
disintegration; in short, it uncovers obstacles to  
harmonious functioning.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Nicholas Rand, 'Introduction', in Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok, *The Shell and the Kernel*, ed. Nicholas Rand (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), p.6.

This chapter begins my consideration of monuments alongside psychoanalysis, critical and literary theory. Taking inspiration from my visit to Rachel Whiteread's *Memorial to the Austrian Jewish Victims of the Shoah* (2000) in Vienna and its tomb-like qualities ('like a tomb or crypt, a secretive, strong monument'),<sup>101</sup> I juxtapose this intriguing sculptural piece alongside the famously cryptic psychoanalytic work of Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok. The crypt (something hidden, buried, known-yet-unknown) occupies an important place in Abraham and Torok's psychoanalytic thinking, and in the visual language of Whiteread's monument. The work of Abraham and Torok shows us that even the process of recognition, the signposting of the crypt if you like, can produce a methodology and a topography of the unknown that was not previously possible. Monuments, occupying as they do their own geographical coordinates, can also flag up or point the way towards past events which otherwise might go unnoticed or ignored. Whiteread's monument occupies a unique space in the Viennese topography, both physically and conceptually. By barring us at the threshold, causing us to pause in front of the doors, trapped between spaces, it forces us to recognise the unknown part of the Holocaust, the 'bottom', the place where only those who entered the gas chambers went to, and which anybody living will forever be barred from.

My use of psychoanalysis in this chapter can be seen not as a methodology that overlays a pre-ordained template onto a symptom or problem in order to 'cure' or explain it, but rather a critical lens by which that obstacle may be *recognised* or named. Which is why I preface this chapter with Nicholas Rand's statement that 'psychoanalysis investigates the domain and configuration of incoherence, discontinuity, disruption, and

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<sup>101</sup> See p.114 of this thesis.

disintegration; in short, it uncovers obstacles to harmonious functioning'.<sup>102</sup> Whiteread's monument occupies a similar position of disruption within the context of historic Vienna. Positioned inside the Ringstrasse, the monument is an aesthetic statement countering the elaborate, gilded, baroque architecture of the rest of the inner city.

Part of the visual dialogue of this monument seems to be primarily about difference, about something visible that also manages to conceal, about a counter-narrative going against the homogeneity of its surroundings: something shielded, hidden, mystic and mysterious. Tellingly, I had found the monument difficult to locate: a mixture of a poor map and the labyrinthine nature of Vienna's street system. This made its discovery, when I eventually found it, even more strikingly secret, as if it were possible to walk through the city and miss this important monument completely. It does not occupy a prominent position (unlike Alfred Hrdlicka's 1998 *Mahnmal gegen Krieg und Faschismus* [Monument against War and Fascism] in the Albertinaplatz), nor is it even visible from the streets that lead onto the Judenplatz: the casual passer by would not notice it at all:

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<sup>102</sup> Nicholas Rand, 'Introduction', in Abraham and Torok, *The Shell and the Kernel*, p.6.



The Judenplatz (literally 'Jews' Square) is elongated, oblong-shaped, a lozenge dropped onto the ground. The buildings surrounding it are coated in washes of white, cream, peach; roofs are tiled in terracotta pink, green oxidised copper or deep peat colours; dormer windows poke through the pan tiles. Windows are everywhere, set into pristinely-painted wooden frames. The platz is observed, recorded. Amongst the more quaint vernacular buildings are grander Baroque and neo-Baroque stone edifices: weighty stone cladding runs horizontally along the buildings, stopping to leap over archways. Lintels are supported by nymphs, caryatids, half-naked sea gods writhing with tridents and nets. Eagles soar above window pediments, every surface adorned with carving, gilt, curves, triangulations. Every brick lies concealed behind immaculate render. The granite setts of the platz ripple in greys, browns, blues.

This decorative architecture, typifying the rest of the inner city, is mirrored in the 1935 statue<sup>103</sup> commemorating German writer and Enlightenment philosopher Gotthold Ephraim Lessing: larger-than-life, bronze, on a non-uniform plinth of mismatched stone blocks, echoing the visual leaps across the rest of the platz.



Rachel Whiteread's memorial lies at the opposite end of the platz to the statue of Lessing. It is 3.9 metres high and is almost square, its base measuring 7.52 x 10.58 metres.<sup>104</sup> Its shape is squat, compressed, solid. It is the only object in the platz made of

<sup>103</sup> For a brief history of this statue's own chequered history see Rebecca Comay, 'Memory Block: Rachel Whiteread's Holocaust Memorial in Vienna', in Shelly Hornstein and Florence Jacobowitz (eds.), *Image and Remembrance: Representation and the Holocaust* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2003), pp.257-258.

<sup>104</sup> Charlotte Mullins, *Rachel Whiteread* (2004) (London: Tate Publishing, 2008), p.94.

concrete: un-rendered, un-whitewashed, unadorned. It sits on an oversized concrete plinth, which rises up from the gently cambered sea of granite setts.



The plinth is smooth, slick, with text of brushed steel inlaid into it. The font is clean, crisp, easily legible. Along the wide plinth, which surrounds the entire memorial, clusters of names, in widely-spaced groups of three, list the places where Austrian Jews were killed. Looking down on them, like looking on gravestones, creates groups of locations, sites which are geographically other to the one in which we stand, different co-ordinates. The forty-one sites are grouped alphabetically, trios of loaded and less familiar names, the recognisable Holocaust sites alongside more obscure locations:



Auschwitz

Belzec

Bergen-Belsen

Mittelbau/Dora

Modliborzyce

Natzweiler

Treblinka

Wlodawa

Zamosc



In front of the doors to the monument the plinth is inlaid with a Star of David, a peculiar welcome-mat, surrounded by the text in Hebrew, German and English: 'In commemoration of more than 65,000 Austrian Jews who were killed by the Nazis between 1938 and 1945'.



The plinth forms a link between the memorial and the ground upon which it stands, binding yet separating them. It makes the solid concrete structure appear to be floating above the platz, the plinth acting as oil between two liquids. The width between the plinth and the memorial (about three feet at its narrowest point) also prevents direct contact with the memorial: it's impossible to reach over and touch its sides, even though it is at eye level, apparently within reach. This, combined with the floating effect of the plinth, as well as the contrast with the surrounding architecture, gives the impression of a mirage or illusion, a monument that has been conjured, something that may be witnessed, but not touched or accessed.



The memorial itself is about a storey high: no more than eight or ten feet. It has the look and feel of a room or bunker, a mausoleum or tomb. Its proportions are imposing yet human in scale. The inclusion of what appear to be two doors leading into what we assume is a room within underscores this human, almost domestic, dimension. The doors are panelled, grand, also in concrete, but without furniture. Where the handles should be are only holes. The roof is stepped back from the walls, its top invisible from the ground.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> From the upper floors of the buildings of the platz the roof may be seen: it is flat, except for the cast impression of a ceiling rose, which has been likened to a showerhead. For most people in the platz the roof is completely unknown, somehow a more uncanny effect – does it even have one? From the ground it is impossible to tell.





Surrounding the doors and making up the rest of the memorial are seemingly identical concrete blocks, arranged in a stacked masonry bond, in vertical rows. This seems a curious choice, the weakest form of masonry. But moving closer to the memorial we can begin to see that the use of a stack masonry bond is appropriate, because each concrete element is comprised of a shelf of books (also referred to as a stack). Stacks of books, stacks of bricks: construction materials of architecture, libraries, cultures.

Yet as we move closer towards these individual concrete elements we can see that they are, in fact, not made up of book spines facing outwards, but rather the fore edges. What initially appear to be joins between these elements are now revealed to be voids: where one would expect mortar, a bonding material, there is the space left by the ghost of a shelf. This makes each element, rather like the memorial itself, appear to float, on invisible shelves.

Each shelf element is made up of twenty identically sized volumes, their outer bindings and individual pages highlighted by a precision casting process. We are seeing books here from another perspective, a new angle, but one from which we can gain no access to what might be inside, no further knowledge as to what might be written on them, if anything. Like the doors to this memorial-mausoleum they cannot be opened, they instead present us with a visible interior, something we can see to be there, but which we are prevented from accessing.



Although most critics note the effect being created is that of a 'lost library',<sup>106</sup> the overall picture is, in my opinion, more disturbing and unsettling. We are not only looking onto a closed room, a library whose titles cannot be read, but the effect of the fore edges of the books turned towards us creates the illusion that we are imprisoned behind the bookshelf: claustrophobic, shut in, even as we stand in the open platz. We are looking on something sealed from us. So, even though as Rebecca Comay notes, we are being presented with what is still a positive cast (in opposition to Whiteread's more usual practice of casting the space *around* an object to reveal its loss-and-presence), a cast that conveys 'the negativity of the books...by their literally inside-out-position rather than by their negative imprint',<sup>107</sup> we are still being given a negative cast of the walls of the library itself, the very structure which is supposed to support and contain the fragile books. This loss of superstructure (walls, foundations), speaks to something larger that is irrevocably irretrievable and missing; the very space in which the visitor to the platz is standing *should* be filled with something else, something that is now gone. The concrete library-monument is all that remains.

This absence gestures towards a wider loss, the rooms and structures beyond the library, the historic, social and cultural obliteration of Jewish buildings, narratives, families and archives. The loss is catastrophic but also unrecorded, or recorded but now inaccessible, evoking the tortured history of the Judenplatz itself. During the 'Wiener Geserah' pogrom of 1421 the synagogue that stood on this site was burned to the ground (the remains now lie under the monument, accessed through the nearby Jewish Museum), along with the rest of the Jewish ghetto. Almost one hundred Jews

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<sup>106</sup> See Matti Bunzl, *Symptoms of Modernity: Jews and Queers in Late-Twentieth-Century Vienna* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), p.173.

<sup>107</sup> Comay in Hornstein and Jacobowitz, p.265.



committed mass suicide in the synagogue to avoid being slaughtered or baptised by the authorities. A plaque on the House of Great Jordan (the oldest house on the square) from 1500 commemorates the pogrom with a depiction of Christ's baptism and an inscription celebrating the freeing of the City of Vienna from 'the Hebrew dogs',<sup>108</sup> and 'comparing the water that cleansed Christ's body to the fire that cleansed Vienna of its Jews'.<sup>109</sup>



Plaque on the House of Great Jordan in the Judenplatz celebrating the 'cleansing' of Vienna from the Jews, c.1500.

Image: Wolfgang Sauber, [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Wien\\_Judenplatz\\_-\\_Jordan\\_1.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Wien_Judenplatz_-_Jordan_1.jpg) [Accessed 14/4/15].

Whiteread's monument, in the wider context of the Judenplatz, is therefore not just referencing the Holocaust, but an ongoing history of Jewish oppression and

<sup>108</sup> See Comay in Hornstein and Jacobowitz, pp.258-259 and Nicholas Parsons, *Vienna: A Cultural History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p.129.

<sup>109</sup> Comay in Hornstein and Jacobowitz, p.258.

persecution, a history that if it is recorded is only done so in the voice of its oppressors. Rebecca Comay speculates that this describes 'the essential relapse of culture from a site of openness and emancipation to one of simultaneous exclusion and confinement'.<sup>110</sup> The monument therefore becomes part of the dialogue of signs around the square: from the anti-Semitic sign of 1500 to the conciliatory sign placed by the Catholic church to recognise its own culpability in the destruction of Jews, and the notice board accompanying the monument itself, placed a few metres away. The Catholic sign asks for forgiveness, whilst the monument's notice board reminds us what the library symbolises: 'a symbol for the jewish [sic] culture of books, which not only offers a sphere of refuge, but also stands as a living sign for the surviving Jewish mind'.

111

Whiteread's monument is depicting an archive: a library is, after all, a form of archive, whatever its contents. An archive may be understood, like this monument, as a discrete whole but also a remaindered object, a recorded fragment. In that sense the fixed geography of the monument-archive gestures to topographies and temporalities outside of itself, to other archives, other texts. This particular monument forms part of the archive of the Holocaust, the archive of Vienna,<sup>112</sup> and the archive of the Judenplatz

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<sup>110</sup> Comay in Hornstein and Jacobowitz, p.258.

<sup>111</sup> Kunst Für Alle Wien, 'Rachel Whiteread' information board [viewed 13/6/12].

<sup>112</sup> Vienna, like any city, forms a living archive, traced, erased, written-over and (un)recalled. It contains not just the visible: the "glorious" Habsburg Empire, the Strauss family, the palaces along the *Ringstrasse*, the cafés and churches. It also contains the invisible: Jews, queers, immigrants. It is a city in which Freud began his clinical work, which formed the backdrop to his first thoughts on psychoanalysis, and where many of his most famous case studies were treated. It is also where Richard von Krafft-Ebing settled after the 1886 publication of the *Pyscopathia Sexualis*, and where Adolf Hitler spent his 'apprenticeship' at the turn of the twentieth-century. It had a Jewish population that had been systematically persecuted for hundreds of years, and post-World War II had one of the most brutal state-sanctioned laws against homosexuality in Europe. For a very full account of one Jewish family's relationship to Vienna see Edmund de Waal, *The Hare with Amber Eyes* (2010) (London: Vintage, 2011). See Matti Bunzl, *Symptoms of Modernity: Jews and Queers in Late-Twentieth-Century Vienna* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), pp.21-23 for a summary of Austria's position as both 'collaborator' and 'victim' within the Third Reich and pp.29-56 and pp.61-85 for an overview of its draconian anti-homosexuality laws. For a

itself, resting as it does upon the foundations of the destroyed synagogue. And this seems to be not just a historical archive: the inaccessibility of this monument, its visible unreadability, gestures towards something more psychical, mystical, unknowable. This monument seems to be an archive of more than 'the personal stories of around 66,000 Austrian Jews (traditionally identified as "People of the Book") who perished during the Holocaust and the general devastation of World War II'.<sup>113</sup> Are we to see, in its modular construction, a grim evocation of the Holocaust itself, a single whole created from many parts, a library forged from the now-unreadable petrified ashes of its Jewish victims? Is this library a symbol of the stories lost, the individual narratives now barred to us? Is it a symbol of the durability of Austro-Jewish culture, closed off to the contemporary visitor, but still invoked? Or is it the remainder of something greater that has almost vanished, the remains?

Curator and critic Robert Storr offers one reading. For him the books represent stories, histories, visible and yet inaccessible to us, a room of culture, history eternally blocked to us, the void of the Holocaust. The imprisonment of unreadable books in an architectonic super-structure has echoes of the charnel house, made out of the bones of the deceased:

Using an aesthetic language that speaks simultaneously to tradition and to the future, Whiteread in this way respectfully symbolises a world whose irrevocable disappearance can never be wholly grasped by those who did not experience it, but whose most lasting monuments are the books written by Austrian Jews

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fascinating and thorough account of Hitler's years in Vienna see Brigitte Hamann, *Hitler's Vienna: A Dictator's Apprenticeship* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

<sup>113</sup> The Big Art Project, 'Rachel Whiteread: *Holocaust Memorial*' (2005) [http://www.channel4.com/culture/microsites/B/bigart/gallery\\_3\\_gallery\\_1.html](http://www.channel4.com/culture/microsites/B/bigart/gallery_3_gallery_1.html) [Accessed 25/11/14].

before, during and in the aftermath of the catastrophe brought down on them.<sup>114</sup>

But there is something about this reading that concerns itself solely with the aesthetics of the monument, that focuses on the surface metaphors of the piece. Storr is assuming that were we to access this archive-monument the books themselves would, in fact, be readable. But this is by no means certain. This is the threat of a book that cannot be opened, and this threat is largely ignored by critics of this work: we have absolutely no certainty of what these books might contain. What then can we make of a monument which presents us with a problem quite different from simply a sealed-off archive: that of an empty or unreadable archive? It feels like Whiteread is denying us these texts: we want *more* knowledge, *more* stories, *more* Holocaust. But this is, after all, a 'Nameless Library'.<sup>115</sup> What if all the pages in these books are blank? What if we are looking on a library of empty books, with no writing on their spines? What if the writing is illegible, or meaningless, or in an unknown language? What 'knowledge' or 'history' is Whiteread then denying us? And what kind of archive does this monument then represent or become?

Jacques Derrida writes that control of the archive is essential for political power, marking as it does an intersection between the state, memory, and legal constitution:

There is no political power without control of the archive, if not of memory. Effective democratization can always be measured by this

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<sup>114</sup> Robert Storr, quoted in James E. Young, *At Memory's Edge: After-Images of the Holocaust in Contemporary Art and Architecture* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000), p.112.

<sup>115</sup> For example see Bell, Bethany, 'Austria's Delayed Holocaust Memorial' (Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> October 2000), *BBC News Website* <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/989255.stm> [Accessed 25/11/14], The Polynational War Memorial, 'Holocaust Monument aka Nameless Library' (Added 12/9/2006) <http://www.war-memorial.net/Holocaust-Monument-aka-Nameless-Library-1.222> [Accessed 25/11/14] and others.

essential criterion: the participation in and the access to the archive, its constitution, and its interpretation.<sup>116</sup>

But Whiteread is showing us a symbolic archive that is, in some measure, both inaccessible and uncontrollable, feeling as it does like a manifestation, almost a hallucination. Where then does the political power of this particular monument lie? To go back to Storr's analysis of the piece, he views the shelfless books as being 'respectful symbols', creating a visual language that 'speaks simultaneously to tradition and to the future'. For him, the historic writings of Austrian Jews form 'lasting monuments',<sup>117</sup> an indelible archive of written traces that outlives the writer and allows the transference of memory into postmemory and history. But this reading feels unsatisfactory, as if the problems or complications of Whiteread's work may be cleverly swept aside by the neat symbolism of the book as an unproblematic archival object. For Storr such books are as homogenous inside as they are outside, presenting a unified historical narrative of Austro-Jewish history that speaks in one voice that was irrevocably interrupted by the aporia of the catastrophic Holocaust. Such assumptions not only reduce pre-Holocaust Jewish experience to a single voice, economy, ethnicity, sexuality and class, they ignore the multiplicity of voices and viewpoints preserved (or not) in the archive. We might indeed be tempted then to see that, compared to the plaque on the House of Great Jordan, with its triumphal celebration of the cleansing of Vienna from the Jews, Whiteread is finally giving a 'voice' to this lost Judaic archive.

But whatever voice this might be is itself lost: the only text this monument provides us with is sidelined to the plinth and noticeboard. If Whiteread had inscribed

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<sup>116</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, trans. Eric Prenowitz (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), p.4, Note 1.

<sup>117</sup> Storr, quoted in Young, *At Memory's Edge*, p.112.

her books, say with the names of Austrian Jews, we would be on safer ground, and more willing to accept Storr's assertions that we are indeed in the presence of a silenced archive of symbolic narratives. But we must also not forget that we are looking at a representation of books, not books themselves: this is concrete moulded to look *like* books, a *tromp l'oeil* effect that deceives our eyes and makes us believe that we are seeing the pages of books, when in fact we are seeing nothing of the sort. We cannot ignore this element of the memorial: it further destabilises the symbolic ground we are being placed on.<sup>118</sup> It complicates the desire of Storr and others to cast this monument in the role of a messenger between the past and the present, *vaulting over* the aporia of the Holocaust, when we are not seeing an archive at all, but an impression of an archive, an idea of an archive.

The language on the plinth is stark: apart from the central descriptive text (telling the viewer that this is, indeed, a monument), the only other names are those of the concentration camps. There is not an opening-up of narratives or even an attempt to reclaim some kind of lived past here. Nor does it feel like this memorial 'looks to the future' in any discernable way (and I am unclear how that may even be aesthetically manifested). Instead we are being pointed towards locations of suffering, places of displacement.

For Derrida, the archive needs a narrative of transgenerational memory to function at all:

Without the irrepressible, that is to say, only suppressible and repressible, force and authority of this transgenerational

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<sup>118</sup> The modular casting process of concrete itself, so different from sculpture, further perpetuates the mimicry of this monument: concrete can be moulded to almost any shape, unlike the shaping of stone there is nothing 'inner' to be revealed through the stonecutter's processes.

memory...there would no longer be any essential history of culture, there would no longer be any question of memory and of archive, of patriarchal or of matriarchal, and one would no longer even understand how an ancestor can speak within us, nor what sense there might be in us to speak *to* him or her, to speak in such an *unheimlich*, 'uncanny' fashion, to his or her ghost. *With it.*<sup>119</sup>

Is Whiteread, rather than continuing a pre-Holocaust narrative, instead showing us its inevitable foreclosure? Perhaps it is precisely this foreclosure that makes this monument become increasingly difficult and distancing the more we attend to it. Derrida seems to suggest that without memory the archive itself is in danger, that language becomes unreadable, unspeakable, unintelligible. The significance of the names of the concentration camps underscores this problem. Because they are place names (some, like Auschwitz, with attendant imagery), they invoke geographical specificity, but do not bring our remembrance at this memorial to a particular focus. Instead they become Holocaust intersections in their own right, sites of mass extinction for millions of other people *not* commemorated by this memorial. In short, we are being pointed to other archives. What should bring this memorial back to the human suffering at its heart, the inferred stories or names within the books, is the very thing barred to us. We are not allowed this Derridean fantasy of conversing with the ancestors. The denial of this fantasy creates a barrier between ourselves and these ancestors, a barrier that we are told that monuments help to break down, allowing us access to the past archive. This engenders the idea of a future possibility of the archive, perhaps even creates a purpose out of ancestral suffering (to lead towards a more positive future).

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<sup>119</sup> Derrida, *Archive Fever*, pp.35-36.



Derrida similarly tells us (Storr mimics this in his analysis of the monument), that the archive is for the future as much as the past:

The question of the archive is not, we repeat, a question of the past. It is not the question of a concept dealing with the past that might *already* be at our disposal, *an archivable concept of the archive*. It is a question of the future, the question of the future itself, the question of a response, of a promise and of a responsibility for tomorrow.<sup>120</sup>

What 'promise' does Whiteread's monument give us? That one day the doors may be opened and the secrets of this monument-tomb revealed? Whatever symbolic certainty we want to attribute to it, whatever narratives we may want it to convey, this monument presents us with refusal and mimicry: an archive that is not really an archive, fake concrete books that even if we could open them would potentially lead us no closer to either the past or the future.

Whiteread's monument is thereby offering up an archive that is itself encrypted, in need of some kind of translation. Rebecca Comay similarly sees this monument as an exercise in encryption, 'a room full of shelves full of books full of pages full of words...a container of a container of a container of a container of a container'.<sup>121</sup> The form of the monument follows a process of enfolding spaces (both positive and negative) into each other, an encrypted paradox:

While the exposure of the normally concealed page edges suggests a kind of 'inside on the outside'...the very fact of their exposure points equally to the ultimate encrypting, not only the 'outside on the inside' (the spines now permanently incarcerated

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<sup>120</sup> Derrida, *Archive Fever*, p.36.

<sup>121</sup> Comay in Hornstein and Jacobowitz, p.265.

in concrete) but equally of the 'inside on the inside': the page surfaces themselves, fused as a block, forever inaccessible.<sup>122</sup>

Whilst I am wary of Comay's over zealous reading of page edges as always being concealed parts of a book (even on the shelf page edges are usually visible), her reading picks up on the oscillation between insides and outsides that this monument conjures. Comay sees this as moving beyond the oppositional thinking which often surrounds monument discourse, setting up a location of disquiet, embodying 'the endlessness of mourning without term'.<sup>123</sup> However, Comay fails to address how this positive casting of the books counteracts not just our ability to read them, but our ability to access them as objects. They become enfolded into a larger structure but also trapped within it. In that sense the books seem to promote not so much endless mourning but endless frustration, barred as we are from the object of mourning, putting our own subjectivity as mourners into question.

This notion of access is an echo from funerary practices going back thousands of years. Richard Bradley informs us that immediate burial was performed in the Neolithic period through a closed tomb, which was 'achieved symbolically by building a chamber without any entrance'.<sup>124</sup> This is exactly the form of Whiteread's monument. However, Bradley tells us that for ancestor rituals, an open passage was kept to the often communal tombs, meaning that 'the dead were continuously accessible'.<sup>125</sup> Even though the individual grave was sealed, the *forum*/archive/library of the dead was kept open:

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<sup>122</sup> Comay in Hornstein and Jacobowitz, p.261.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> Richard Bradley, *The Significance of Monuments: On the Shaping of Human Experience in Neolithic and Bronze Age Europe* (London & New York: Routledge, 1998), p.62.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., p.62.

only through an open threshold of access with the dead could rituals, and therefore the future, be realised.<sup>126</sup> This fluidity of access Bradley characterises as:

A clear continuity between the past and the present. This continuity was symbolised by the passage communicating between the outer world and the world of the ancestors within the monument. Such structures also allowed the possibility of further use in the future.<sup>127</sup>

Is there something about Whiteread's refusal of access to the monument that forecloses this future use? It is difficult to determine when the monument itself seems so built around a *desire* on the part of the viewer to see and know what is inside it.

It strikes me that what Whiteread's monument achieves is a mnemonic sleight-of-hand, showing us the archive we most want to access whilst simultaneously reinforcing its inaccessibility and its impossibility. Contrary to Derrida's belief in the archive, it simply may not exist. Moreover, Whiteread is not taking it upon herself to give voice to the archive.<sup>128</sup> Whiteread's project is different, because it acknowledges the futility of our position of being always outside the archive, however much we may like to imagine we control it, or speak *through* it to the past or future *qua* Derrida. By placing us, the viewer, *inside* the walls of the library, metaphorically trapped behind the books, Whiteread implicates and distances us, invites and bars us from the cryptic interior of this monument-room-library.

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<sup>126</sup> This possibility of reconciliation with the dead, or with some kind of transgenerational transference, echoes Derrida's sections on the impression left by Sigmund Freud, psychoanalysis and the transgenerational Freud family Bible. See 'Exergue' and 'Preamble', in *Archive Fever*, pp.7-31.

<sup>127</sup> Bradley, p.63.

<sup>128</sup> Unlike, for example, Daniel Libeskind and Peter Eisenman, whose deconstructivist designs for the Berlin Jewish Museum and the *Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe* ventriloquise the Holocaust experience through manipulative, 'sensation producing' architectural devices.

*If* we could walk through the doors, access the interior of this sealed tomb, then the intimation is that perhaps, then, on the inside, we *would* be able to read the spines, perhaps even remove the books from the shelves, begin to access the archive. As the City of Vienna's Urban Planning literature tells us, the memorial is 'a concrete library, books that no-one can read, sentences that cannot be found'.<sup>129</sup> In that sense we are being presented with a secret, but what secret? We are being invited to browse the absent shelves of this monumental archive that we may not take down, may not read: we can look, but we cannot touch. We are being placed at the threshold of this archive, and as such are being confronted with an uncomfortable truth about memorialisation and the preservation of the archive: there might be nothing there. Or what is there might not be what we think it is.

There is an environment being created by this nameless library, something experiential that perhaps falls outside of knowledge or understanding, and refuses any kind of meaning-making. Nicholas Royle, in *Telepathy and Literature* (1991), describes a similar kind of experience, one in which the reader (in this case of *Wuthering Heights*) finds themselves on the threshold of a text, trying to make sense of it:

To try to read and understand is, first of all, to 'stumble and totter' on the threshold. Do we ever cross it? Does the text allow us to cross the threshold, however softly, however imperceptibly, for instance like a thrush, or like a ghost?<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> City of Vienna Urban Development, *The Public Space: Judenplatz* <https://www.wien.gv.at/stadtentwicklung/veranstaltungen/ausstellungen/unesco/pdf/tafel-16.pdf> [Accessed 25/11/14].

<sup>130</sup> Nicholas Royle, *Telepathy and Literature* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991), p.53. Royle's quotation of 'stumble and totter' is from *Wuthering Heights*, when Lockwood says 'we should stumble and totter yet'.

It seems suggestive that Whiteread's monument is making a similar intervention in our conceptualisation of how a monument works. It suddenly becomes not just about *how* to represent a supposedly unrepresentable historical event, but about *why* we might want it commemorating in a certain way, and what narrative we might ourselves expect from it. By arresting us at the threshold of this monument, Whiteread is delaying us in our desire to plunge into the texts beyond the doors, at this place that Royle characterises as 'the limit of consciousness':<sup>131</sup> a place that takes us from one part of the psyche into another,<sup>132</sup> 'the paradox of being both "entrance" and "exclusion"'.<sup>133</sup>

There is a recognition of the uncertainty of reading and understanding that Royle is keen to draw out. It is the same uncertainty that Primo Levi acknowledges in *The Drowned and the Saved* (1986) in relation to our conceptualisation of memory:

The memories which lie within us are not carved in stone; not only do they tend to become erased as the years go by, but often they change, or even increase by incorporating extraneous features.... This scant reliability of our memory will be satisfactorily explained only when we know in what language, in what alphabet they are written, on what material, and with what pen: to this day we are still far from this goal.<sup>134</sup>

The mnemonic archive, then, could be seen as changing under us, never reaching a fixed point. It is not only open to erasure but is also unreliable, not to be trusted. There is a fluidity and flexibility to Levi's conception of memory, and an acknowledgement that much of it is, in fact, unknown to us. Like Royle's insistence on the threshold, Levi

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<sup>131</sup> Royle, *Telepathy and Literature*, p.50.

<sup>132</sup> Similar to Freud's delineations of the *Pcpt.-Cs.* system in 'A Note Upon the "Mystic Writing-Pad"'. See Sigmund Freud, 'A Note Upon the "Mystic Writing-Pad"' (1925 [1924]), in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Vol. XIX (1923-1925), 'The Ego and the Id' and Other Works, trans. James Strachey (London: Vintage, 2001), pp.226-232.

<sup>133</sup> Royle, *Telepathy and Literature*, p.55.

<sup>134</sup> Primo Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved* (1986), trans. Raymond Rosenthal (London: Abacus Books, 1990), p.11.

positions his reader in front of 'memory' itself, creating a scene not unlike the experience of standing in front of a monument 'carved in stone'. But for Levi such analogies belie the changeability of memory, the fluidity of language, meaning and legibility, and the very real threat of erasure. Levi, even in acknowledging the limitations of memory, does suggest that in the future there might be some greater knowledge available to us ('in what language...on what material, and with what pen'). It is this acknowledgement that leads us to the crypt: the idea that somewhere (at present inaccessible) lies a language, an alphabet, a material, a pen, that exists, that is knowable, even if it will always remain inaccessible to us. It covers the same area of knowledge that psychoanalysis sets out to explore and uncover: inaccessible phenomena, hidden-yet-visible forms. The crypt is one such phenomenon, both an architectural structure and a psychoanalytic term that enfolds and secretes whatever it contains. Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok's writing is particularly concerned with the psychoanalytic crypt, and their work informs Royle's own reading of *Wuthering Heights*.

As Royle points out in his discussion of Abraham and Torok's *The Wolf Man's Magic Word* (1976), '[I] would wonder about the appropriateness of determining Abraham and Torok's work as a "critical tool" – as a critical text being brought to bear, in a clinical and instrumental way, on a "literary" text'.<sup>135</sup> Just as Royle is keen to dismantle any notions of critical texts being located neatly outside literary texts, and therefore 'discrete from literature "itself"',<sup>136</sup> I too am wary of placing Abraham and Torok's work as a purely critical lens through which Whiteread's monument may be better 'understood'. What feels a more productive method of approach is rather to examine the implications of encryption within the text of both Whiteread's monument and

<sup>135</sup> Royle, *Telepathy and Literature*, pp.28-29.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, p.29.

Abraham and Torok's writing. As Royle goes on to comment, '*The Wolf Man's Magic Word* appears to be a tool...of the other, of alterity and otherness in general'.<sup>137</sup> As I have already mentioned, part of the encrypted language in which this monument is 'speaking' to us is to be one of difference, or otherness, borne out by its form and materiality.

The *OED* tells us that the word 'crypt' originates from the classical Latin '*crypta*' (also '*crupta*') meaning 'covered passage, arcade, (perhaps) underground room for religious rites', as well as the ancient Greek '*κρυπτός*', meaning hidden or concealed, and Old Church Slavonic '*kryti*', to hide.<sup>138</sup> The crypt is dependant on architecture, or construction, something covered or hidden but that exists, by extension, underneath, alongside or within *other things*. It was borrowed into Old English as '*croft*', which would become 'croft', itself meaning a very visible, often isolated 'dwelling-place' or homestead, coming full circle to the uncanny, domestic 'dwelling' of Whiteread's monument, and showing the crypt's own linguistic containment of the concealed-yet-knowable, architectural and domestic spaces.<sup>139</sup>

These definitions echo Derrida's description of the crypt as being located in the *forum*, the traditional Roman place of exchange (of ideas, commerce, language etc.). The parallels with Whiteread's monument, standing in the public square of the Judenplatz, are striking:

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<sup>137</sup> Royle, *Telepathy and Literature*, p.33.

<sup>138</sup> OED entry, 'crypt'.

<sup>139</sup> Through the crypt, and indeed the croft, this takes us further back in architecture, towards original encryptions of dwellings within the Neolithic settlements of thousands of years ago. Richard Bradley records that where families had abandoned dwellings (either by moving or through death), the dwellings were left in the community as ruins, forming a settlement made up of 'a series of "living houses", interspersed with "dead houses" or, more precisely, the houses of the dead'. See Bradley, pp.44-46.



Constructing a system of partitions, with their inner and outer surfaces, the cryptic enclave produces a cleft in space, in the assembled system of various places, in the architectonics of the open square within space itself delimited by a generalized closure, in the *forum*. Within this forum, a place where the free circulation and exchange of objects and speeches can occur, the crypt constructs another, more inward forum like a closed rostrum or speaker's box, a *safe*: sealed, and thus internal to itself, a secret interior within the public square, but, by the same token, outside it, external to the interior. Whatever one might write upon them, the crypts parietal surfaces do not simply separate an inner forum from an outer forum. The inner forum is (a) safe, an outcast outside inside the inside. That is the condition, and stratagem, of the cryptic enclave's ability to isolate, to protect, to shelter from any penetration, from anything that can filter in from outside along with air, light, or sounds, along with the eye or the ear, the gesture or the spoken word.<sup>140</sup>

If the archive looks to the future, can be shaped and added to, and its possession endows political power, the crypt is the splintered and splintering object that informs the archive, and which can never be properly mastered or fully translated. The legible archive, possessing the circulation of the forum, the exchange of ideas, is what is constructed around and enfolds the crypt, like a pearl around grit. Derrida describes the psychoanalytic crypt as 'not a natural place [*lieu*], but the striking history of an artifice, an *architecture*, an artefact: of a place *comprehended* within another but rigorously separate from it, isolated from general space by partitions, an enclosure, an enclave'.<sup>141</sup>

The more Derrida describes the psychoanalytic crypt, the more he seems to uncannily evoke the Nameless Library:

*This* crypt no longer rallies the easy metaphors of the Unconscious (hidden, secret, underground, latent, other, etc.), of the prime object, in sum, psychoanalysis. Instead, using that first

<sup>140</sup> Jacques Derrida, 'Fors' (trans. Barbara Johnson), in Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok (trans. Nicholas Rand), *The Wolf Man's Magic Word* (1976) (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), p.xiv.

<sup>141</sup> Derrida, 'Fors', p.xiv.

object as a background, it is a kind of 'false unconscious', an 'artificial' unconscious lodged like a prothesis, a graft in the heart of an organ, within the *divided self*. A very specific and peculiar place, highly circumscribed, to which access can nevertheless only be gained by following the routes of a different topography.<sup>142</sup>

Derrida *might* be describing Whiteread's memorial but in fact he isn't, he is describing the concept of the crypt in the divided ego, as formulated by Abraham and Torok in *The Wolf Man's Magic Word* (1976). In turn, Abraham and Torok's formulation of the crypt is based around *their* reading of Freud's case study, 'From the History of an Infantile Neurosis' (1918).<sup>143</sup> Freud's case study is in turn based on *his* observations of the so-called 'Wolf Man', Russian aristocrat Sergei Pankeyev.<sup>144</sup>

Abraham and Torok claim that the key to the Wolf Man's dreams and neuroses was in fact a 'magic word', the Russian word *tieret* (to rub) which, as they go on to show, formed the encrypted, secret core of the Wolf Man's linguistic and psychic archive. Abraham and Torok draw up a 'Verbarium',<sup>145</sup> a cross-referenced archive of words and phrases over multiple languages, that exposes how *tieret* is encrypted across these seemingly different words and images, which imprison this magic word, a site of both pleasure and unpleasure, within an inaccessible crypt.<sup>146</sup> This leads to a 'cohabitation',<sup>147</sup> within Pankeyev of both repression and desire, frustration and fulfilment, forming a

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<sup>142</sup> Derrida, 'Fors', p.xiii

<sup>143</sup> Freud, 'From the History of an Infantile Neurosis', in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Vol. XVII (1917-1919), 'An Infantile Neurosis' and Other Works*, trans. James Strachey (London: Vintage, 2001), pp.2-122.

<sup>144</sup> Although I'm using the spelling Sergei Pankeyev, Freud spelt it Penkejeff and Abraham and Torok prefer Pankeiev. Even the rewriting of the Wolf Man's name signifies his encrypted, indecipherable subjectivity. Pankeyev was in analysis for most of his life, transferring from Freud to Ruth Mack Brunswick and other analysts. As well as being the subject for Abraham and Torok's book, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari famously analyse the case in their 1977 essay 'May 14 1914. One or Several Wolves?', in *semiotexte*, 'Anti-Oedipus: From Psychoanalysis to Schizopolitics', Vol. II, No. 3, 1977, pp.136-147.

<sup>145</sup> See Abraham and Torok, 'Appendix: The Wolf Man's Verbarium', in *The Wolf Man's Magic Word*, pp.107-113.

<sup>146</sup> See Abraham and Torok, *The Wolf Man's Magic Word*, p.19.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, p.3.

complex system of connections that is constructed and upheld through words and images operating across language and registers. Looked at in light of such exclusion, Whiteread is showing us the same thing: the Holocaust as an unreadable archive or verbarium.<sup>148</sup>

Of course, the word 'unreadable' occupies several meanings: not just legibility but also the suitability (or seemliness) of its content, as well as the ability to put together the symbol and cosymbol of language to create meaning. This impossibility of 'making meaning' is central to any Holocaust narrative (as well as many other traumas), and it is meant to be the purview of the monument to help in this, through affect or didacticism. Whiteread's work shows us and denies us that meaning, mimicking what Nicholas Rand defines as the cryptonymy central to Abraham and Torok's premise:

[A cryptonymy is] a verbal procedure leading to the creation of a text...whose sole purpose is to hide words that are hypothesised as having to remain beyond reach.... Divested of metaphorical reach and the power to institute or depose an extralinguistic event or action, cryptonyms create a collection of words, a verbarium, with no apparent aim to carry any form of knowledge or conviction.<sup>149</sup>

In this context, is Whiteread's library, rather than a metaphor for the 'lost library' of Austrian Jewish culture, the stories untold, the lives wasted, instead a critique of such easy assumptions? Could it be seen, in its 'meaningless' verbarium of unopenable, spine-inwards books, as a much bleaker commentary on both the Holocaust and its

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<sup>148</sup> A characteristic critique of 'A History of Infantile Neurosis' is not just that Freud misreads the Wolf Man's symptoms, but that in fact 'the Wolf Man's material is unreadable' [See Nicholas Rand, 'Introduction', in Abraham and Torok, *The Wolf Man's Magic Word*, p.lix]. Whilst Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari write that 'In truth, Freud sees nothing and understands nothing' [See Deleuze and Guattari, p.146], their criticism of him is in fact rooted in the illegibility of the source material Freud is being presented with.

<sup>149</sup> Rand in Abraham and Torok, *The Wolf Man's Magic Word*, p.lvii.

commemorative practices? What 'knowledge' or 'conviction' does Whiteread's monument actually provide us with? Why does this sculpture seem to put everything it supposedly brings nearer to us only further outside our reach?

I previously called the archive a 'pearl' surrounding the 'grit' of the crypt, or, as Nicolas Abraham has written, 'the organic Kernel' and 'the psychic Envelope'.<sup>150</sup> Like the crypt, this is a system whereby the memory trace creates an inscription that is both a part of and separate to both systems:

The inscription is made possible precisely as a result of different uses to which the trace is put on the two sides, and this doubleness is constitutive of both the Envelope and the Kernel; these would then be simply the poles on the *near* and *far side* of the dividing line where the perpetual nucleo-peripheral differral [*differecement*] pulsates. Envelope and Kernel would have this frontier as substance, instrument, object, and subject simultaneously. Conceived in this manner, the trace would no longer be a static vestige, a Janus figure or two-sided medallion. On the contrary, it would be constant activity, repeating endlessly the alternation of its duplex discourse.<sup>151</sup>

Abraham characterises this trace as being in constant oscillation, a perpetual motion between the Kernel and Envelope: it is an 'activity', not an object. When looped back into monument-discourse, this observation seems obvious (the 'perpetuation of memory', we could call it, or a 'keeping alive' of memory), but Abraham is clear that in the case of the psyche this trace, rather like an analogue frequency, is oscillating between two points *in perpetua*. This movement of the trace between Envelope and Kernel resembles Royle's 'stumbling and tottering' on the threshold, the same activity of

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<sup>150</sup> Nicolas Abraham, 'The Shell and the Kernel: The Scope and Originality of Freudian Psychoanalysis' (1968), trans. Nicholas Rand, in Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok, *The Shell and the Kernel* (ed. Nicholas Rand) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), p.91.

<sup>151</sup> Abraham, 'The Shell and the Kernel', in Abraham and Torok, *The Shell and the Kernel*, pp.91-92.

movement. It is a movement which is ceaseless, without resolution, and in which the viewer, reader or patient is deeply involved and implicated. In terms of Whiteread's monument, it begins to reveal itself as a dynamic text that is not so much 'read' or 'seen' by the viewer, but enacts its own reading upon that viewer. This chimes with Royle's comment that 'the analyst or critic is being read, being determined by the text'.<sup>152</sup> The location of secrecy and desire within this monument would seem to be part of this 'reading' the monument enacts upon the viewer, and echoes Abraham and Torok's own observations: 'Yet who is actually sick? The dead. Of what? They are sick of it: they cannot "stomach" the trauma of their loss of the subject'.<sup>153</sup> As much as we are being barred access to the crypt, whatever is inside the crypt is also barred from interacting with us.

Approaching this monument as a 'text' that reads us as much as we read it returns us to the desire it conjures: desire to know what is inside. In psychoanalytic terms the monument is setting us a riddle of finding out what the symbolic inner sanctum might contain, and this returns us to the unreadable archive, and how we are to set about translating it. Abraham and Torok, in discussing their 'decoding' of the Wolf Man's apparently meaningless Verbarium, remind us that:

Symbols are data that are missing an as yet undetermined part, but that can, in principle, be determined.... From the beginnings of psychoanalysis to the present, theoretical efforts have been aimed at finding rules that will permit us to find the unknown missing complement, in other words, the fragment that 'symbolises with' – or, we might say, that 'cosymbolises'.<sup>154</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> Royle, *Telepathy and Literature*, p.33.

<sup>153</sup> Abraham and Torok, 'Self-to-Self Affliction: Notes of a Conversation on "Psychosomatics"' (1973), in Abraham and Torok, *The Shell and the Kernel*, p.163.

<sup>154</sup> Abraham and Torok, *The Wolf Man's Magic Word*, p.79.

The encryption of Whiteread's memorial is not only a monument to 'missing data', but could be such a successful encryption that all efforts at discovering its 'unknown missing complement' prove futile.

As Abraham writes in a 1961 essay:

We live with the handy prejudice that all one has to do is attach the meaning to the thing, its support, join the semantic significations to the hieroglyphics, in order to pride oneself on one's success in the act of deciphering. But all this process really accomplishes is to convert one system of symbols into another, which then in turn becomes accountable for its secret.<sup>155</sup>

Abraham is warning us against complacency (the 'neat' result of the easy decipher), as well as the danger of trapping ourselves in a symbolic loop that in fact perpetuates 'the secret' being concealed by the encryption. This is the loop that Storr and others fall into by ascribing to the books the *only* symbolism of the 'stories' of Austrian Jews killed in the Holocaust. It is the loop that much Holocaust remembrance locks itself into, by not only perpetuating simplistic victim/perpetrator narratives, but also by assuming that a mastery over the archive, control of its words, will eventually and effectively open the encrypted tomb it surrounds, a refusal to acknowledge what Levi calls the 'Grey Zone' of the Holocaust.<sup>156</sup>

Abraham shows us that the conversion of 'one system of symbols into another' relies on the ability of 'semantic significations' to be linked back to 'hieroglyphics', and assumes not only that there is an existing 'semantic signification' to be found, but that the 'hieroglyphics' are indeed legible. This conversion also presupposes the kind of

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<sup>155</sup> Nicolas Abraham 'On the Symbol' (1961), quoted in Jacques Derrida, 'Fors', in Abraham and Torok, *The Wolf Man's Magic Word*, p.xxix.

<sup>156</sup> See Levi, *The Drowned and Saved*, Ch. 2, 'The Grey Zone', pp.22-49.

meaning-making which Levi cautions against, particularly when dealing with memory, Holocaust or historical narratives ('this *desire* for simplification is justified, but the same does not always apply to simplification itself').<sup>157</sup> Whiteread has, by placing us inside-outside the books, denied these hieroglyphics to us, preventing the kind of easy translation we would like (the kind that Abraham reminds us still perpetuates the 'secret' of the crypt). When read in this light, the monument causes a huge disruption in what we would normally think of as the 'smoother' narratives of remembrance, because it in fact denies us the initial object of mourning, complicating the kind of redemptory narrative where 'the good must prevail, otherwise the world would be subverted'.<sup>158</sup> Whiteread is putting us in the same paradoxical position Abraham and Torok described earlier: it is not us who have 'lost' the subject of the dead, but the dead who 'cannot "stomach" the trauma of their loss of the subject'.<sup>159</sup> The loss is on both sides, and the dead (as understood through this quotation) are as active as the living in search of the subject: they are not simply passive objects that we re-activate through our remembrance alone.

J. Hillis Miller figures the relationship between these worlds of the body and the burial tomb, and between language and inscription:

In...the Greek pun on *soma/sema* (body/sign), the relation between a dead body and the mound or tomb above it, or between the corpse and the inscription on the tombstone above it, figures the complex relation between perception and language, or between

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<sup>157</sup> Levi, p.23.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

<sup>159</sup> Abraham and Torok, 'Self-to-Self Affliction: Notes of a Conversation on "Psychosomatics"' (1973), in Abraham and Torok, *The Shell and the Kernel*, p.163.



language and its necessary material substrate – the stone, paper, or modulated air on which it is inscribed.<sup>160</sup>

Without language,<sup>161</sup> Whiteread's monument points us towards an encrypted cosymbol, a lost other, an effect Hillis Miller conceptualises as '*soma* without *sema*, or *soma* coming into the open as the material base of *sema*...like a tombstone with the letters worn away or a coin rubbed smooth, "effaced"'.<sup>162</sup> Whiteread's similar act of effacement (whilst, of course, drawing attention to it as such) is hard not to interpret as a more direct commentary on Viennese history. It in fact mimics and inverts the similarly complex inscription/effacement being enacted by the plaque on the House of Great Jordan, which celebrates the 1421 destruction of the Jews through an inscription in stone, a *sema* celebrating the absence of *soma*. In both cases the stone of the monument is standing in for a body but, unlike the neater symbolism employed by grave markers, the bodies here are not only displaced to *other* locations, but are missing completely, transfigured to ash. Moreover, the Jewish bodies are made absent by design, forcibly removed from the archive, although of course not from the crypt. This absence of bodies confronts us with what Hillis Miller describes as the anasemic symbol:

For the Greeks a symbol was the broken half of a whole object, for example a broken stick or stone, that signals a compact or engagement between two persons when the broken halves are joined.... In the anasemic symbol, however, the other half is permanently and irrevocably missing. It is hidden in that inaccessible crypt. Nevertheless, the broken symbol, the half word that is not a word but a word-thing, is the only testimony we have that the crypt

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<sup>160</sup> J. Hillis Miller, 'Topography and Tropography in Thomas Hardy's "In Front on the Landscape"', in Richard Machin and Christopher Norris (eds.), *Post-structuralist Readings of English Poetry*, pp.345-6.

<sup>161</sup> By this I mean the lack of text on the actual sculpture itself. The plinth does provide its own (con)textuality, but as I've already shown it does not necessarily aid us in our 'translation' of the sculpture.

<sup>162</sup> Hillis Miller in Machin and Norris, p.346.

exists. It is also our only way of knowing anything about the cryptic enclosure as a place that is not a place, a place-no-place where events take place without taking place.<sup>163</sup>

This is the 'place-no-place' in which the Wolf Man, according to Abraham and Torok, positions himself, a place where the Wolf Man 'could reveal – without ever being able to use his own name – who in fact he was'.<sup>164</sup> It is also the 'place-no-place' in which Whiteread places her viewer, a place where we may be shown the 'cryptic enclosure' as mapped out by this monument.

A key interpretation of this memorial is of an anasemic symbol writ large and made uncomfortably present: it shows us the inaccessible Holocaust crypt, forces us to recognise that we must be forever consigned to a threshold of understanding. It reinforces our 'otherness' to the archive of the Holocaust, re-positions us as viewers of that historical event, re-positions us as mistakenly assuming we hold the 'keys' (or the evidence) of that archive. Whiteread is preventing us from knowing too much. For Stephen Frosh, 'knowing too much, knowing it too soon, stops what is unknown from coming into being', 'psychoanalysis is a practice of *not* knowing, of refusing to understand what cannot be known'.<sup>165</sup> Whiteread's monument is making a similar kind of refusal.

However, we should also take into account Hillis Miller's description of the symbol as signifying a 'compact' between two people. Aside from the monument's structural refusal of neat symbolism (what the books might mean, or might be enclosing), its anasemic qualities point towards the greater compact that has been

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<sup>163</sup> J. Hillis Miller, 'Derrida's Topographies', *Derrida's Topographies*, *South Atlantic Review*, Vol.59, No.1, Jan. 1994 (South Atlantic Modern Language Association), p.15.

<sup>164</sup> Abraham and Torok, *The Wolf Man's Magic Word*, p.5.

<sup>165</sup> Stephen Frosh, *Hauntings: Psychoanalysis and Ghostly Transmissions* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p.40.

broken (more than once) between Austria and its citizens. The 'permanently and irrevocably missing' Austrian Jews, their corporeal effacement, forms the 'other half' of this particular anasemic symbol.

But I do not think that we can easily assume that this monument becomes the *de facto* tomb for the 'missing' Austrian Jews. Because the bodies are not there, the writing has been made permanently, violently illegible: loss, desire and frustration are left. It is this illegibility which frustrates the act of 'endless mourning' Comay and others wish to see this monument perpetuating. Even though it signifies a return of the ultimate repressed race to Viennese consciousness, a 'challenge to the myth that *nothing existed there*',<sup>166</sup> there is still to be factored the uncertainty of what this particular crypt contains, and what 'magic word' (if any) we can use to decrypt it.

I am ambivalent about whether such a project is even desirable let alone possible. However, this monument, as understood alongside Abraham and Torok's *cryptonomie*, asks us how the perpetuation of a Holocaust archive (of which monuments and their inscriptions form a part) can lead to the continuing encryption of *something else*, something much more unstable and unknowable.

For Abraham and Torok, the 'word-thing' preserved in the crypt of the Wolf Man is the 'pleasure word' *tieret* [to rub]. In effect this word becomes the word of (exquisite) death, which can never be acknowledged, but which drives everything else, the 'organism' of the Wolf Man:

*Where I was there should be it is the slogan of a manoeuvre  
whose sole purpose is to preserve this nonplace for sexual  
gratification inside a place where sexual gratification should no*

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<sup>166</sup> Frosh, p.57.

*longer take place.* This particular area within the Ego, the place that shuns symbolization and is the site of the death of pleasure, knows the word that says pleasure. The pleasure word *tieret* is buried there with the fallacious fiction that it is no longer living.<sup>167</sup>

The crypt therefore perpetuates this place/nonplace of both 'sexual gratification' (or perhaps more appropriately, eroticism) *and* death. It becomes a mixture of the two places, the deadly crypt becoming the container for eroticism, the one imprisoning and yet keeping alive the other. Whatever is pleasurable about the magic word/inaccessible cosymbol inside the crypt is denied, because it is untruthfully painted as 'dead'. In fact, it is the site of *both* pleasure and its death. This is what Torok would brilliantly go on to term the 'exquisite corpse': a living-and-dead object that is never fully integrated into the functionings of the ego. In 'The Illness of Mourning' (1968) she describes the ego searching 'for this exquisite corpse continually in the hope of one day reviving it',<sup>168</sup> without being able to fully incorporate it.

Recognition of the crypt's existence does not, of course, guarantee access to the word-thing of the exquisite corpse (as much of this chapter has been discussing). Torok notes that whilst pain (she is discussing specifically the patient) leads 'to the tomb where desire lies buried', this pain is 'a kind of "here lies", an inscription on which the name of the deceased long remains undecipherable'.<sup>169</sup> Again we are being returned to an undecipherable effacement that is perpetuating and masking *something else* in its encryption.

Like the barred doors to the monument, this crypt is forever inaccessible, '*hidden away* by an act of violence that does not announce "here is the safe", but rather buries

<sup>167</sup> Abraham and Torok, *The Wolf Man's Magic Word*, p.81 [Abraham and Torok's emphasis].

<sup>168</sup> Maria Torok, 'The Illness of Mourning and the Fantasy of the Exquisite Corpse' (1968), trans. Nicholas Rand, in Abraham and Torok, *The Shell and the Kernel*, p.118.

<sup>169</sup> Torok, 'The Illness of Mourning', p.121.

it behind one wall and then another, until only a ghost who can pass through walls could possibly get out'.<sup>170</sup> Or indeed, get in. As Derrida writes: 'what the crypt commemorates, as the incorporated object's "monument" or "tomb", is not the object itself, but its exclusion'.<sup>171</sup> It seems that this comes very close to the desire for commemoration that Whiteread is confronting us with: how the belated idealism of incorporating Holocaust victims back into a structural narrative paradoxically does not mark this re-inclusion into national consciousness, it in fact encrypts and enforces that exclusion whilst perpetuating the encrypted violence and desires of the Holocaust.<sup>172</sup> I think there is also the very real question raised by Whiteread's monument of whether there is anything in the crypt at all: the tomb has, effectively, been robbed. Perhaps even haunting becomes impossible in that case.

The impossibility of haunting, or the problems raised by the potential of a voided crypt, casts the Holocaust as an event that is a site of death *and* of desire. Therefore to focus remembrance solely on the dead, effaced Jewish 'other' is to ignore what for many German and Austrian people was the *pleasurable* side of the Holocaust. This is not a matter of choice, but a matter of recognition, one which was perhaps best summed up by the mayor of Hamburg, Klaus von Dohnányi,<sup>173</sup> in 1985:

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<sup>170</sup> Frosh, p.49.

<sup>171</sup> Derrida, 'Fors', p.xvii.

<sup>172</sup> I acknowledge that my use of 'desire' here is complex. Whilst it could mean the kind of erotic desire that Torok locates in the crypt, I also believe that on this level it equates to the past desires of the German and Austrian people for their own elevation (morally, culturally, socially, perhaps even erotically) above the Jews. The desire to eradicate the Jewish race, and the anxieties surrounding that, are not easy to separate, nor is the desire to both forget and remember the Holocaust, according to convenience of narrative and situation.

<sup>173</sup> Dohnányi is, interestingly, the Hamburg mayor who oversaw the construction of Jochen Gerz and Esther Shalev-Gerz's Monument Against Fascism (see Ch.3). The speech he gives to the psychoanalytic congress chimes very much with West Germany's concerns in the 1980s regarding memorialisation of the Nazi past, and his philosophy of confronting Nazi history chimes with the Gerzes' memorial project. Dohnányi's own father and uncle were murdered by the Nazis for being part of the anti-Nazi German resistance [See Wikipedia 'Klaus von Dohnányi', quoting Jochen Thies, 'Die Dohnanyis' (Berlin: Propyläen Verlag, 2004), Accessed 28 September 2015].

*What is one to do with a Nazi father?* Apparently, the only solution is to reject him. If you speak of the need to integrate your identification with that father, you are immediately treated as a Nazi yourself.... In order to become a human being in the full sense of the term, we have to be able to discover, confront and own, the *Hitler in uns*, otherwise the repressed will return and the disavowed will come back in various guises.<sup>174</sup>

Whiteread's memorial seems to point towards this confrontation and its impossibility, but arguably problematises this sense that once 'discovered', 'uncovered' and 'owned' the '*Hitler in uns*' will be resolved, that what is disavowed will indeed no longer return to haunt us.<sup>175</sup> Haunting implies that a reaching back is indeed possible: with effacement so total, with a potentially empty crypt, that seems less likely.

As Dohnányi perceptively states, 'if you speak of the need to integrate your identification with that father, you are immediately treated as a Nazi yourself'. This is the unresolvable problem facing any kind of modern Austrian or German identity, not just with regards to Hitler specifically but to the historical anti-Semitic crimes the plaque on the House of Great Jordan celebrates so openly. Whilst many monuments aim to reach back to the 'Nazi father' in order to cast themselves as mediators in this imagined dialogue by commemorating atrocities, Whiteread's monument, in its legible illegibility, brings us only to the threshold the Holocaust imposes. It brings us in front of the crypt built by-and-with the Nazi father and Jewish dead alike, within which lies an exquisite corpse we cannot incorporate, we are anxious to preserve but that we cannot acknowledge, and which might not even be there. It is not a case of an aporia or gap *per se*, but rather a powerful encryption that is endlessly multiplied in a present that is

<sup>174</sup> Janine Chasseguet-Smirgel, "'Time's White Hair we Ruffle': Reflections on the Hamburg Congress', *International Review of Psycho-Analysis*, 14, pp.433-44 (p.437), quoted in Frosh, p.48.

<sup>175</sup> See Max Picard, *Hitler in Our Selves*, trans. Heinrich Hauser (Hinsdale IL: Henry Regnery Co., 1947).

perpetually constructing words and documentation about a past that is, ultimately, illegible.

As Levi writes:

The history of the Lagers has been written almost exclusively by those who, like myself, never fathomed them to the bottom. Those who did so did not return, or their capacity for observation was paralysed by suffering and incomprehension.<sup>176</sup>

It is a feeling echoed by Auschwitz *Sonderkommando*<sup>177</sup> Filip Müller in Lanzmann's

*Shoah*:

It was pointless to tell the truth to anyone who crossed the threshold of the crematorium. You couldn't save anyone there. It was impossible to save people.<sup>178</sup>

Once over the gas chamber threshold there is no means of return. And even though Müller once tried to kill himself by going into the gas chamber with his fellow Czech Jews, they persuaded him to leave, so that he could bear witness:

They looked at me and said right there in the gas-chamber – one of them said, 'So you want to die. But that's senseless. Your death won't give us back our lives. That's no way. You must get out of here alive, you must bear witness to our suffering, and to the injustice done to us'.<sup>179</sup>

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<sup>176</sup> Levi, p.6.

<sup>177</sup> Work units for the crematoria in the death camps made up from mostly Jewish prisoners, conscripted by the Nazis under penalty of death to control the crematoria doors and dispose of the bodies once gassed. Müller disposed of the corpses of thousands of Jews.

<sup>178</sup> Claude Lanzmann, *Shoah* (1985), 'Second Period: Part 1', 1:05:30.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid., 'Second Period: Part 2', 30:33.



The irony, of course, is that whilst Müller, Levi and many others lived to bear witness to their experiences of the Holocaust, nobody survived the gas chambers. They remain the one threshold from which none could cross back over. This is what Levi means when he says that he never ‘fathomed them [the Lagers] to the bottom’. Because he survived, he is not in fact a ‘true’ witness to the Holocaust as a phenomenon of mass extermination:

I might be alive in the place of another, at the expense of another; I might have usurped, that is, in fact killed. The ‘saved’ of the Lager were not the best, those predestined to do good; the bearers of a message.<sup>180</sup>

By rejecting the supposition that he was ‘saved’ in order that he might bear witness, Levi raises the moral and ethical problems surrounding Holocaust remembrance: who it’s for, and who it speaks to. Refusing to self-identify as a ‘worthy’ survivor is to complicate the kind of redemptive narrative that many Holocaust memorials or sites wish to convey: that out of extreme trauma and suffering there is hope for reconciliation, a similar wish seen in the desire to reconcile Germany and Austria with their own Nazi past in order to prevent the ‘haunting’ described by Dohnányi. Whiteread’s memorial offers no such consolation. Like Levi, its position as witness is one of discomfort, putting the viewer into a relationship where their own subjectivity comes under question, because of the underlying cryptic trope of exclusion, of being barred from the threshold.

If the purpose of the crypt is to hide something in plain view but make it unreadable, what implications does Whiteread’s memorial have for our preconceived notions of Holocaust testimony, bearing witness, Holocaust narrative, public discourse

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<sup>180</sup> Levi, p.62.

and role of the monument in these actions? As I have suggested, the enfolded nature of the Holocaust *qua* Levi, where victim and perpetrator are by no means easy distinctions to morally rely upon from the position of either survivor or viewer, seems replicated in the nameless, unknowable library that Whiteread has created. Her monument enables us, should we choose, to reflect on the multiple encryptions that are undergone by us on perhaps a more regular basis than the massive traumatic events we describe as single entities. In this light the Holocaust enfolds into itself the exquisite corpses of the Jewish dead *and* the 'Hitler in us', without necessarily supposing that either will become separated or resolved. We can therefore be said to be forever held by this particular monument at a state of incompleteness and encryption.<sup>181</sup>

By showing us the archive we most want to access whilst simultaneously reinforcing its inaccessibility and its impossibility, the *Memorial to the Austrian Jewish Victims of the Shoah* confronts us with an uncomfortable truth about memorialisation and the preservation of the archive. Our desire to cast the monument in the role of a messenger between the past and the present, *vaulting over* the aporia of the Holocaust, is challenged by the presentation to us of this illegible archive, its impression, its idea. We experience a lack of certainty, a sense that even in our analysing of text or event there may be something forever eluding us, just as the Holocaust, despite numerous representations, descriptions and testimonies, still seems to elude our desire for narrative clarity, closure and reconstruction. By causing us to pause on its threshold, this monument forces the viewer into a more complicit and less stable position towards the Holocaust itself. Remembrance here is being exposed as a *split* between past and present, rather than a bridge between the two.

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<sup>181</sup> I say 'at' a state rather than 'in' a state because there is a certain liminality implied by this position, fully occupying neither one nor the other but lying on the threshold of both.

If the promise of psychoanalysis is that the exquisite corpse may one day be freed from the crypt, exhumed, then buried 'properly, in its rightful place',<sup>182</sup> then I think we must begin to question how we can reasonably expect that to happen. If there is no corpse, if the crypt is so successfully sealed that it may never be accessed, what then can psychoanalysis do?

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<sup>182</sup> Frosh, p.49.

## CHAPTER 3

# THE USEFUL MONUMENT

Destruction plays its part in making the reality, placing the  
object outside the self.<sup>183</sup>

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<sup>183</sup> D.W. Winnicott, *Playing and Reality* (1971) (London: Routledge, 1992), p.91.

For many, the monument is a sacred public object to be respected and left pristine, *in perpetua*. Monuments are there to be preserved, and only to be interacted with during highly specific, state-sanctioned, *ritualised* moments in time: any interactions committed outside of these times are usually viewed as transgressive. Jenny Edkins, tracing the change in how the Cenotaph in London has been ritually co-opted by the state, reminds us that:

The event is now highly scripted: the informality of crowding around the Cenotaph, passing wreaths over the heads of the people in front, is no more. Present-day ceremonies seem an attempt to tame the Cenotaph; they re-introduce elements of myth and glory that the monument itself so carefully side-stepped.<sup>184</sup>

The societal rules around the use of monuments is deeply engrained, and most (like the Cenotaph) are given privileged or sacred rites. State remembrance ceremonies are key to fixing a memorial's narrative in the public consciousness, making sure the object is appropriated correctly (so it does not become an object for countermemory or non-state sanctioned narratives).<sup>185</sup> Reports of desecrations to war memorials and cenotaphs are always couched as 'senseless' acts of violence against the nation-state, the mystic status of the monument reinforced by the covert acceptance that defacing this inanimate stone object is tantamount to defacing a 'war hero' or corporeal body. At an anti-austerity march against the Tory government on 9 May 2015 the *Women of*

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<sup>184</sup> Jenny Edkins, *Trauma and the Memory of Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp.71-72.

<sup>185</sup> See Henry Pickford's account of the *Neue Wache* memorial in Berlin throughout its history. Henry W. Pickford, 'Conflict and Commemoration: Two Berlin Memorials', in *Modernism/modernity*, Vol.12, No.1, January 2005, pp.133-173. Also see Bill Niven and Chloe Paver (eds.), *Memorialisation in Germany Since 1945* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), especially Alexandra Kaiser, 'The *Volkstrauertag* (People's Day of Mourning) from 1922 to the Present' (pp.15-25), Dieter K. Buse, 'The Mediators: Memorialisation Endeavours of the Regional Offices for Political Education (*Landeszentralen für politische Bildung*)' (pp.91-102), and Markus Urban, 'Memorialisation of Perpetrator Sites in Bavaria' (pp.103-113).

*World War II* memorial on London's Whitehall was spray-painted with the words 'fuck Tory scum'. As reported in the media, reactions to this 'act of vandalism' were strong, 'with people from both ends of the political spectrum criticising the vandal's actions'.<sup>186</sup> However, as *The Independent* noted, some people found the criticism of such cosmetic damage disproportionate to the purpose of the march itself, which was to protest against the government's cuts to state welfare: 'Disabled war veterans get their benefits stopped, no one bats an eye. War memorial gets tagged, everyone cries about respect #ToriesOutNow'.<sup>187</sup> Whilst both viewpoints perhaps oversimplify the graffiti in terms of its wider meaning or implication, there nevertheless is a tension exposed here between 'appropriate' behaviour and the sanctity of the monument beyond its own materiality: in short, by defacing the monument you are defacing, or *defiling* the 'pure' event or victims it represents. Where does the division lie (if it lies anywhere) between the monument as an object, as a symbol for the thing it commemorates, and as a symbol for the government that sanctions, protects and polices it? And what about actions that cause no physical damage to the monument whatsoever, but because they are not

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<sup>186</sup> See James Tapper, 'Anti-austerity protesters take to UK streets after Tory election victory', *The Guardian*, 9/5/15, 22.14 BST, <http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2015/may/09/anti-austerity-protesters-take-to-uk-streets-after-tory-election-victory> [Accessed 6/7/15], Doug Bolton, 'War memorial vandalised: Anti-Tory protestors spray "f\*\*k Tory scum" during anti-government protests', *The Independent*, 10/5/15, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/war-memorial-vandalised-antitory-protesters-spray-fk-tory-scum--during-antigovernment-protests-10239105.html> [Accessed 6/7/15], Camilla Turner and James Rothwell, 'Anti-Tory protestors deface war monument on Whitehall', *The Telegraph*, 10/5/15, 08.50 BST, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/law-and-order/11595097/Police-officer-injured-as-anti-Tory-protesters-gather-outside-Downing-Street-and-Whitehall.html> [Accessed 6/7/15], BBC News, 'Police arrest 15 in anti-austerity protest in London', 10/5/15, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/election-2015-32678518> [Accessed 6/7/15].

<sup>187</sup> Twitter handle @KingChicken, 9/5/15, 23.19 BST, quoted in Doug Bolton, 'War memorial vandalised: Anti-Tory protestors spray "f\*\*k Tory scum" during anti-government protests'. Another example was during the 2010 protests in London against tuition fees, when Pink Floyd guitarist David Gilmour's son was photographed swinging from a flag on the Cenotaph, and was subsequently tried for vandalism. See Victoria Ward, 'Tuition fee protests: Charlie Gilmour, son of Pink Floyd guitarist David Gilmour, apologises for climbing Cenotaph', in *The Daily Telegraph*, 10 Dec 2010, 1:45pm GMT, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/educationnews/8194089/Tuition-fee-protests-Charlie-Gilmour-son-of-Pink-Floyd-guitarist-David-Gilmour-apologises-for-climbing-Cenotaph.html> [Accessed 11/3/15].

‘appropriate’ to the unwritten moral codes surrounding memorial sites, are also deemed as transgressive? It’s my intention to trace these transgressions against monuments by reading them alongside D.W. Winnicott’s work on delinquency and object use.

The two blogs ‘Selfies at Serious Places’ and ‘Totem and Taboo: Grindr Remembers the Holocaust’ (which I shall discuss later in the chapter) form an interesting informal record of people being photographed at monuments whilst behaving ‘inappropriately’.<sup>188</sup> These photographs, depicting as they do monument-behaviour that falls outside of rituals of remembrance, gesture towards an alternative narrative of how some sites of remembrance provoke responses that are counter to their designed intentions or supposed purpose. Bearing in mind Derrida’s formulation of the archive from the previous chapter, it is interesting how these often unrecorded acts fall outside the state-sanctioned narrative or archive of power. Derrida has told us that ‘there is no political power without control of the archive’,<sup>189</sup> but what about in these cases, where the archive chooses to ignore, erase or not record these awkward, more challenging actions, where an alternative archive (outside of normative power structures) must be created? The presence of blogs such as these brings into dialogue Derrida’s fears surrounding generational amnesia, that ‘one would no longer even understand how an ancestor can speak within us, nor what sense there might be in us to speak to him or

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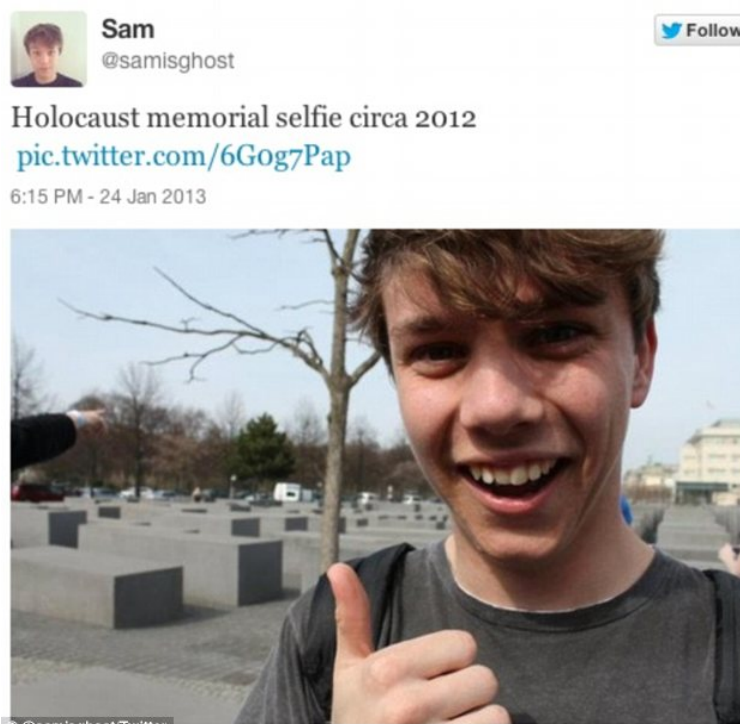
<sup>188</sup> ‘Selfies at Serious Places’ <http://selfiesatseriousplaces.tumblr.com> [Accessed 12/3/15] and ‘Totem and Taboo: Grindr Remembers the Holocaust’ <http://grindr-remembers.blogspot.nl> [Accessed 12/3/15].

<sup>189</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, trans. Eric Prenowitz (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), p.4, Note 1.



her'.<sup>190</sup> The blog itself of course is a form of archive, existing in the present whilst also providing, like tree rings, a history of its growth up until that point.<sup>191</sup>

The short-lived 'Selfies at Serious Places' speaks to these fears of historical amnesia in the 'younger generation', depicting as it does teenage selfie-takers making 'inappropriate' gestures at memorial sites such as Pearl Harbour, Auschwitz and the *Berlin Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe*. The following photograph, titled on the blog 'Thumbs up for the Holocaust', shows a teenaged boy at the *Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe* smiling, with his thumb raised, in a gesture that is perfectly harmless. However, with the monument forming the background to the shot all kinds of questions are raised: is this just naïveté or ignorance? An example of 'bad taste' humour? But how 'disrespectful' is this gesture, given that to all intents and purposes it is made in front of a row of concrete blocks?



Via <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2405379/Selfies-Serious-Places-blog-shows-self-portraits-inappropriate-locations.html> [Accessed 12/3/15].

<sup>190</sup> Derrida, *Archive Fever*, pp.35-36.

<sup>191</sup> 'Selfies at Serious Places', although still an accessible web page, has not been updated since 2013.

Reactions surrounding this photograph and others on the blog vary between amusement, bafflement and anger. Newspapers coined phrases such as ‘Curse of the grossly insensitive selfies’<sup>192</sup> to describe the phenomenon.<sup>193</sup> This particular photograph was re-posted after the original selfie-taker wrote to the ‘Selfies in Serious Places’ blog to express his contrition at taking such a photo: ‘I have to say you made me realize how much of an idiot I made myself look. I’ve had people messaging me and calling me stuff, all of which I obviously deserve.’ This apology was printed on the site and the photograph changed to mask the selfie-taker’s face and Twitter handle, with the blog graciously conceding that: ‘this was big of him, I thought, and no one photo—even a thumbs-up selfie at the Holocaust Memorial—defines a person’.<sup>194</sup> The blog adopts this moralising tone towards all the selfies: that the photographs are a product of youthful ignorance of the locations and their significance.<sup>195</sup> What I find most interesting about these shots is not the juxtaposition of cheerful or playful teenagers against sites representing murder or suffering: it is the fact that the only thing that makes these photos ‘offensive’ is the context, the prior knowledge that must be brought to the photograph to understand its ‘inappropriateness’, rather than the materiality of the site itself.

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<sup>192</sup> Daily Mail Reporter, ‘Curse of the grossly insensitive selfies’, in *The Daily Mail*, 29 August 2013, 11:00, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2405379/Selfies-Serious-Places-blog-shows-self-portraits-inappropriate-locations.html> [Accessed 12/3/15].

<sup>193</sup> It is interesting to note that selfie-taking has become almost as controversial as graffiti or vandalism as a means of desecration at either monument sites or sites of atrocity themselves. In the wake of the terrorist attack on 26 June 2015 in Sousse, Tunisia, newspapers reported tourists taking selfies at the scene of the shootings. See Sam Webb, ‘Tunisia attack: Disbelief as tourists flock to massacre site to take SELFIES’, *The Daily Mirror*, 29/6/15, 12.44 BST, <http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/tunisia-attack-disbelief-tourists-flock-5968353#rllabs=1> [Accessed 8/7/15].

<sup>194</sup> See ‘Thumbs up for the Holocaust!’ in ‘Selfies at Serious Places’, <http://selfiesatseriousplaces.tumblr.com> [Accessed 12/3/15].

<sup>195</sup> Not all the posts are monument or atrocity related, although they become more so as the blog progresses. Some photos include a teen posing with her grandmother’s ashes, another at a funeral parlour and one in front of a homeless man on the street.

Peter Eisenman's *Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe*, the backdrop for 'Thumbs up for the Holocaust' was opened in 2005 after nearly twenty years of disagreement, two design competitions and much internal bureaucracy.<sup>196</sup> Instantly (and perhaps inevitably) iconic, it is one of the most high-profile monument projects in Europe, critically lauded and a major tourist destination. But this memorial, despite being designed by Eisenman to provoke disorientation or fear in the participants as they walk amongst its differently angled stele of varying heights, has become, in spite of its subject matter, a playground for children and adults alike.



Quentin Stevens's study of the interaction of visitors with the memorial shows how 'individuals' needs and interests for remembrance or informal playing are much more varied, less well understood, and much harder to support or control through

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<sup>196</sup> See Peter Carrier, *Holocaust Monuments and National Memory in France and Germany since 1989: The Origins and Political Function of the Vél' d'Hiv' in Paris and the Holocaust Monument in Berlin* (New York and Oxford: Berghain Books, 2005), pp.100-146. Also see James E. Young, *At Memory's Edge: After-Images of the Holocaust in Contemporary Art and Architecture* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000), pp.200-223.

design'.<sup>197</sup> This is in direct contrast to the intentions of the memorial, which as James E. Young tells us, was carefully designed to ensure 'that visitors will not step or walk out over the tops of the pillars'.<sup>198</sup> Stevens also reminds us that Eisenman's intention was to:

Induce in memorial visitors physiological feelings which would be similar to those that Holocaust victims themselves experienced. He placed the rows of dark, tall, stelae...close together, so people walking between them would feel claustrophobic, trapped and confined.<sup>199</sup>

This pre-imagining of the visitor's interaction with a memorial, part of the 'design-concept', becomes increasingly difficult to square with how in fact it ends up being used as an object outside of its ritual purpose. It also exposes a conceptual cruelty at the heart of Eisenman's project, perhaps even hubris (that art would be able to mimic the 'Holocaust experience'). Any abstract artwork that sets out to 'induce...physiological feelings' is already playing a dangerous game of manipulation upon its public. In the introduction I mentioned the critic Jonathan Jones and his comments that *Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red* should have resembled a bloody battlefield, that the poppies were too abstract to fully convey the horror of war.<sup>200</sup> Jones's aspiration, to bypass any kind of comforting art, is conveyed by Eisenmann through abstraction. This abstraction (more in-keeping perhaps with Adorno's rejection of representation as being able to ever convey the horror of the Holocaust), arguably becomes unstuck through its very

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<sup>197</sup> Quentin Stevens, 'Why Berlin's Holocaust Memorial is such a Popular Playground', in *OASE #77 'Into the Open'* (2008), p.73.

<sup>198</sup> Young, *At Memory's Edge*, p.211.

<sup>199</sup> Quentin Stevens, 'Nothing More Than Feelings: Abstract Memorials', in *Architectural Theory Review*, 14:2 (2009), p.166.

<sup>200</sup> See introduction to this thesis, pp.8-12.

intent, which is almost fascistic in its desire to control and manipulate the spectator. As Gillian Rose perceptively writes:

The demonstration that Fascism and representation are inseparable does not lead to the conclusion, current in post-modern aesthetics, philosophy and political theory, that representation is or should be superseded. On the contrary, the argument for the overcoming of representation, in its aesthetic, philosophical and political versions, converges with the *inner tendency* of Fascism itself.<sup>201</sup>

It is ironic therefore that despite its abstraction the *Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe* can be seen as expressing as much intent as any manipulative piece of propaganda, if perhaps it is less recognisable as such. And in a way, this comes back to a failure of its own abstraction. As Quentin Stevens goes on to hypothesise, perhaps part of the problem of the *Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe* is that it is *too* abstract, too reliant on sensory effects which 'raise the question of whether [this design] encourage[s] visitors to think at all, or, rather, only to perceive, to move, and to act'.<sup>202</sup> Stevens is right to question how much this particular monument encourages contemplation, imagination or empathetic thinking: whether we should be privileging these responses above a more perceptive, physical response I am not sure.

Although James E. Young (a member of the chairing committee) anticipates that the memorial might not be the 'perfect' choice for the people of Berlin and Germany, he views a public interaction with it only within mnemonic terms:

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<sup>201</sup> Gillian Rose, *Mourning Becomes the Law: Philosophy and Representation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p.41.

<sup>202</sup> Stevens, 'Nothing More Than Feelings', p.170.

Gerhard Schroeder's government should build the memorial and give the German public a choice, even an imperfect choice: let them choose to remember what Germany once did to the Jews of Europe by coming to the memorial, by staying at home, by remembering alone or in the company of others. Let the people decide whether to animate such a site with their visits, with their shame, their sorrow, or their contempt.<sup>203</sup>

Perhaps most fascinating about this quotation is Young's idea that the German public is being given a choice to remember. Given the importance of psychoanalysis in my own thinking, and the often traumatic and ungovernable nature of mnemonic recall, Young's neat characterisation of how remembrance works is interesting. The problem raised: that anybody would be able to master difficult emotions like shame, sorrow or contempt, or be able to choose how and where these become expressed (particularly around the Holocaust) seems more complicated to me than simply erecting a monument. Young puts the burden of this choice onto the state, but also onto the monument itself, not recognising that traumatic memory does not necessarily follow a neat path to state-sanctioned remembrance. Nowhere in his vision of this 'imperfect choice' does Young allow for an entirely different animation from shame, sorrow, contempt: one that is transgressive, erotic, queer, defiant.

In contrast to the memorial as a 'postmodern' design concerned with conditions of destabilisation and placelessness,<sup>204</sup> Quentin Stevens shows that it instead provides 'a vertiginous escape from the everyday', a place where 'young people run, scream, smoke and kiss as they please', where visitors 'test the acoustics by yelling...play hide-and-

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<sup>203</sup> Young, *At Memory's Edge*, pp.221-222.

<sup>204</sup> Richard Crownshaw, 'The German Countermonument: Conceptual Indeterminacies and the Retheorisation of the Arts of Vicarious Memory', in *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, Vol. 44, No. 2 (2008), p.216.

seek...wander and try to get lost...run along the undulating pathways...enjoy the vertigo of climbing and jumping across chasms'.<sup>205</sup>



This tension, between the concept or purpose of a memorial and its actual use, marks a gulf between monument-theory and monument-practice. How can we bridge this divide and reconcile the noble theoretical intentions of monument design with the reality of it as a site of play, violence, sex or indifference? More importantly, can we start to trace the roots in 'monument-play' of something other than transgression, 'going against' memory?

For Brigitte Sion the 'failure' of the *Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe* derives from both Eisenman's design (partly because it does not 'attempt to

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<sup>205</sup> Stevens, 'Why Berlin's Holocaust Memorial', pp.75-76.

individualise each death'),<sup>206</sup> and the complicity of the Berlin authorities, who 'do not address how such behaviour [climbing, graffiti, etc.] undermines efforts of coming to terms with Germany's Nazi past'.<sup>207</sup> Sion sees this less prescriptive, more open form of commemoration and interaction as damaging and problematic: 'the memorial fails to perform remembrance but succeeds as a public artwork'; 'the memorial may be ideally open for multiple interpretations, but visitor behaviour indicates how the ambiguity created by the design threatens the commemorative *raison d'être* of the memorial.'<sup>208</sup> Sion sees the porosity of the memorial, the lack of prescribed behaviours surrounding it, as damaging to its supposedly larger, overarching 'intent'. Its lack of commemorative space for formal ceremonies, its lack of signage or notice boards, also points towards a failure on the state's part, exposing a 'political disengagement from memory or mature acknowledgement of past crimes'.<sup>209</sup> In light of Young's framing of the memorial as providing a 'choice' (people can choose to be engaged with it or not), these comments of Sion's lay the blame squarely at the government for *not* doing more to effectively force the spectator of this monument into an appropriately reverential position.<sup>210</sup>

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<sup>206</sup> Brigitte Sion, 'Affective Memory, Ineffectual Functionality: Experiencing Berlin's Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe', in Bill Niven and Chloe Paver (eds.), *Memorialisation in Germany since 1945* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p.243.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid., p.250.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid., p.243, p.250.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid., p.250.

<sup>210</sup> All the dialogues around the *Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe*, from planning to reception, betray an ambivalence verging on disengagement. Even James E. Young made an impressive *volte face* on whether there should be a monument at all, something he tries to address in the final chapter of *At Memory's Edge*. The endless (and expensive) search for a design to please everybody (or at least the major 'stakeholders' in the site) created deep divisions amongst several community groups, with certain Jewish leaders seen to be pushing a particular agenda that was by no means a consensus. The site's surprisingly bland history (it had either been an ornamental garden or wasteground since the 1800s) left many questioning why other more meaningful Berlin sites were not chosen: the sceptics were left wondering how much of the process was down to Berlin's transformational redevelopment during the late 1990s and early 2000s, and the memorial as a very public (but perhaps not sincere) declaration of visible repentance. The fact that the monument is visited almost exclusively by tourists, lying as it does adjacent to the Brandenburger Tor, is significant given Young's claim that it was there for the German public to 'choose' to animate or not.



Whilst elements of Sion's critique are perhaps valid, it is interesting to me that she stresses 'the fundamental contradiction between commemoration and play and freedom [that] is at the heart of this memorial'.<sup>211</sup> It seems a shame that there is no sense that play, freedom or lively interaction with a monument can be perceived as doing any good memory-work or commemoration, that only state-sanctioned, prescribed, *silent* and 'respectful' acts can be said to successfully fulfil this need.

For D.W. Winnicott cultural experience becomes 'the fate of the potential space',<sup>212</sup> a fate in which play has a significant importance, one which is, Winnicott tells us, difficult to classify, but which is 'something that is in the common pool of humanity, into which individuals and groups of people may contribute, and from which we may all draw *if we have somewhere to put what we find*'.<sup>213</sup> In that sense, therefore, the 'play' of various kinds associated with the *Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe*, which Sion perhaps rightly attributes to its quality of embodying a 'public artwork' rather than a 'Holocaust memorial' could be said (whatever its 'appropriateness') to be borne out of a communal interaction with a single cultural object, one which Winnicott tells us is changed and contributed to by all the interactions with it, and which, crucially, we can ourselves gain immeasurable benefit from. This benefit, perhaps not as easy to determine as that supposedly gained from a proscribed ritual ceremony, Winnicott firmly associates with a kind of psychic wellness that is located around this porous, intermediate area formed by the collective cultural object existing in the potential space. What the *Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe* achieves is just such a space, one that embodies Winnicott's question: '*if play is neither inside nor outside, where is*

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<sup>211</sup> Sion in Niven and Paver, p.250.

<sup>212</sup> Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*, p.101.

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid.*, p.99 [Winnicott's emphasis].

it?'.<sup>214</sup> The porous divisions embodied by Eisenmann's monument (itself never fully inside or outside) allow play to happen in this supposedly sacred space. As Stevens reminds us, 'the site overlaps its surroundings and always remains open; its entire perimeter is permeable'.<sup>215</sup> Whilst Sion and others see this play as disrespectful, it perhaps is doing more meaningful psychic work than it first appears, even if that work is not directly linked to remembering the Jewish dead of the Holocaust. Winnicott recognises that play provides an area in our cultural lives of 'invited variability, contrasting with the relative stereotypy of phenomena that relate either to personal body functioning or to environmental actuality'.<sup>216</sup> It is also, however, precarious, 'since it always deals with the knife-edge between the subjective and that which is objectively perceived'.<sup>217</sup> This tension is worth exploring further, between the kinds of subjective and objective realities this monument appears to be encompassing.

The blog 'Totem and Taboo' takes these juxtapositions between remembrance and play, inner and outer reality even further. Whilst 'Selfies at Serious Places' records the unintentional or misguided behaviour of people, and the daytime tourists of the *Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe* perform a casual, playful interaction, 'Totem and Taboo' records an underrepresented but common use of the monument: as a backdrop to gay sex. 'Totem and Taboo' (whose name obviously evokes Freud's famous work) collects and records photographs of men from the gay hookup app Grindr,<sup>218</sup>

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<sup>214</sup> Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*, p.96 [Winnicott's emphasis].

<sup>215</sup> Stevens, 'Why Berlin's Holocaust Memorial', p.74.

<sup>216</sup> Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*, p.98.

<sup>217</sup> Winnicott, 'Playing and Culture: A Talk Given to the Imago Group, 12 March 1968', in *Psycho-Analytic Explorations*, (1989), ed. Clare Winnicott, Ray Shepherd and Madeleine Davis (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), p.206.

<sup>218</sup> Grindr is an online app that allows men to view the nearest men to them also using the app, with the closest appearing first: it can be used to enable gay men to meet in an area where they would otherwise be unable to find each other, and also (more notoriously) allows for almost instantaneously available casual sex. The site is based around personal profiles where men upload selfies or photos of themselves

posed on and amongst the concrete stele that make up the *Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe*. The blog, queer and disruptive in tone, satirises the unintentional commemoration of the Holocaust that is reproduced in each of these photographs, whilst also acknowledging the surprising place of the monument in queer underground culture as a cruising ground.<sup>219</sup>

The reproduction of the monument as backdrop to these profile pictures is indirectly perpetuating a memory narrative (even if this narrative is viewed by the blog in an ironic tone). The tension (and humour) comes around precisely through this juxtaposition of gay sex and Holocaust remembrance, and despite its humorous tone the blog puts forward a radical, queer idea: that such acts, even those outside the state-sanctioned (heteronormative) rituals, can promote a kind of remembrance. The blog's introduction, deliberately tongue-in-cheek, supports this:

In an age when ignorance is [more] prevalent than ever, Grindr, the latest most addictive gay obsession, has wowed its members in relentlessly promoting the memory of the holocaust. While the gay community is being [*sic*] under scrutiny for promoting hedonism and alienation, this tribute seems all the more compelling.

Totem and Taboo, our new blog, asks nothing more but to harness the vibrant blogosphere to Grindr users' innovative manoeuvres to keep the memory alive, fresh and attractive. Now, you gals don't just stand and watch! Be the change you want to see in the world. We kindly urge you to join our team: Help us collecting [*sic*] pics of the spreading new trend. (NSA) [No Strings Attached].<sup>220</sup>

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and highlight characteristics that they're looking for. Grindr has a wide range of users aside from self-identifying 'gay men' and offers a relatively unpoliced forum for interpersonal experimentations and connections of all kinds.

<sup>219</sup> Partly due to its location, just across the road from the vast Tiergarten. Eisenman's design allows for clandestine meetings because of the enclosed nature of the pillars.

<sup>220</sup> 'Grindr remembers', in 'Totem and Taboo', <http://grindr-remembers.blogspot.nl> [Accessed 12/3/15].

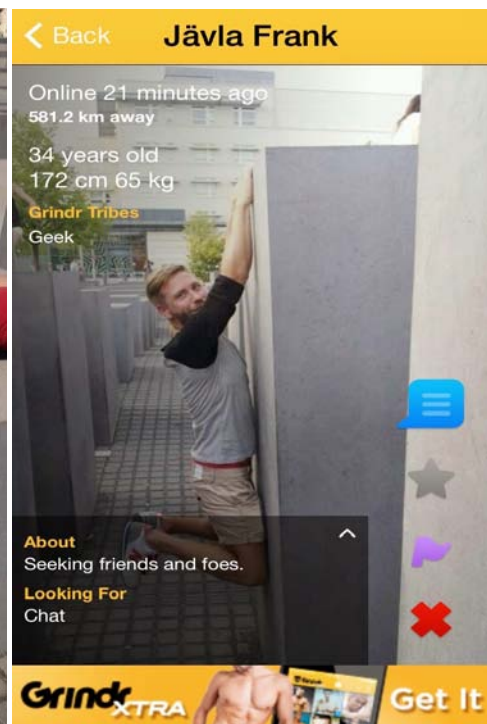
The photographs form a fascinating, unintentional and unique documentation of queer monument-use. Whilst some photographs affect a seriousness that could be seen as in-keeping with the location, others range from the bizarre to the theatrical. The blog's mock-serious titles also form a knowing, camp commentary to each image:



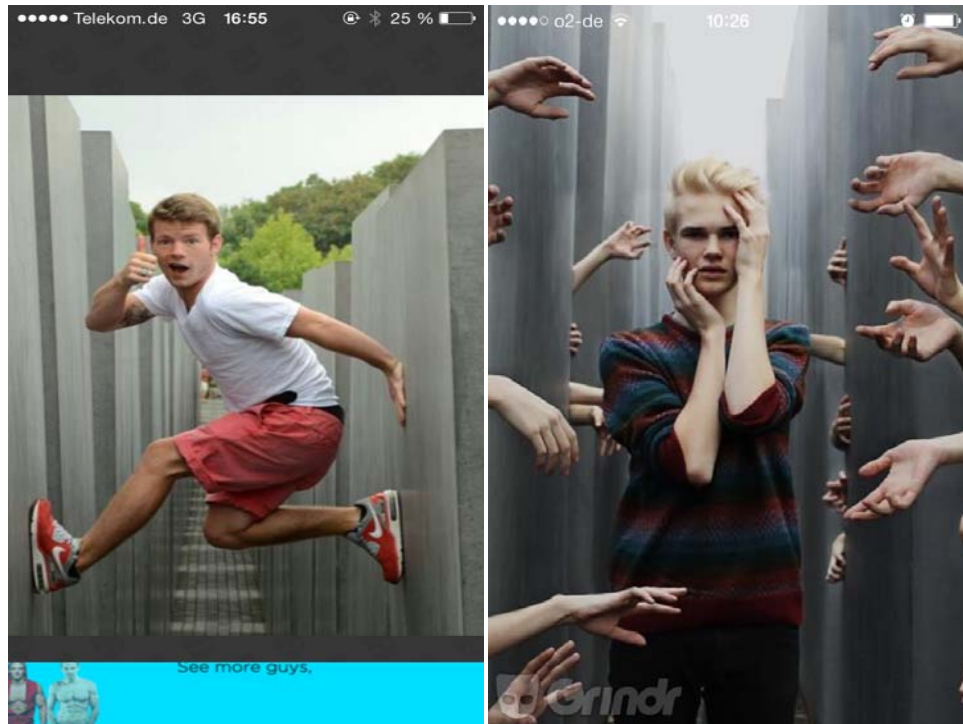
'Ain't no snow gonna stop her from remembering!'



'Good morning memory'



'Hang on there sister!'



'I'd like to see more, please'

'The boys are becoming more and more creative!'<sup>221</sup>

What all the photos share is a reappropriation of the monument's supposedly fixed meaning of remembrance and how it is interacted with as a supposedly ritual object. In this context, it becomes a backdrop to performances of queerness, masculinity, athleticism and contemplation. It juxtaposes the respect we feel should be given to the monument and the practicalities of quotidian, everyday life: a tension of two oppositions.<sup>222</sup>

Although the blog's tone could be seen by some as verging on disrespectful, it is in fact performing a complex task: trying to reconcile the idea of remembrance with its performed (or not) reality. The juxtaposition of gay sex with a monument to murdered

<sup>221</sup> All photos from 'Totem and Taboo' <http://grindr-remembers.blogspot.nl> [Accessed 12/3/15].

<sup>222</sup> A tension W.H. Auden articulates in his poem 'Musée des Beaux Arts' (1938):

'About suffering they were never wrong,

The Old Masters: how well they understood

Its human position; how it takes place

While someone else is eating or opening a window or just walking dully along'

W.H. Auden, 'Musée des Beaux Arts', in *Collected Poems*, ed. Edward Mendelson (London: Random House, 1976), p.179.

Jews seems shocking only if we accept the monument itself to be something morally superior or untouchable, something 'pure' which can be 'defiled', what Gillian Rose terms 'Holocaust piety'.<sup>223</sup> This piety or sentimentality endows the Holocaust with a mythical quality, a sacredness of Biblical proportions that forecloses deeper examination of the complex nature of the event and our present-day relationship or reactions towards it. For Rose, sentimentality surrounding the Holocaust must be given critical attention lest we fall into the trap of assuming that 'representation is or should be superseded'.<sup>224</sup> This assumption, central to the design of the *Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe*, allows a safety in the 'sacredness' of the Holocaust as a historical rupture, rather than as a human act.<sup>225</sup> In short, the sacredness of the Holocaust prevents critical reflection upon its representation, or how the quotidian, 'disrespectful' world of the erotic forms part of it. Again we are placed within oppositional and simplistic thinking, the kind that Rose cautions against and which Sion expounds, claiming that there is a 'fundamental contradiction between commemoration and play and freedom...at the heart of this memorial'.<sup>226</sup> How much more loaded the word 'freedom' becomes if we think of the policing of homosexual desire by the Nazis, and if we can so readily accept that any expression of this desire has no place in commemoration or how we view our monuments.

For Rose, discussing *Schindler's List*, the aim of such Holocaust representation is that 'our sentimentality be left intact',<sup>227</sup> ironically through an act of remembrance:

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<sup>223</sup> See Rose, *Mourning Becomes the Law*, pp.41-54.

<sup>224</sup> Ibid., p.41.

<sup>225</sup> Ibid., p.43.

<sup>226</sup> Sion in Niven and Paver, p.250.

<sup>227</sup> Rose, *Mourning Becomes the Law*, p.48.

It [the film] leaves us at *the beginning of the day*, in a Fascist security of our own unreflected predation, piously joining the survivors putting stones on Schindler's grave in Israel. It should leave us unsafe, but with *the remains of the day*. To have that experience, we would have to discover and confront our own fascism.<sup>228</sup>

Rose characterises the pious placing of stones as a ritual that protects us from our own close examination: *risk*, whilst leaving us *unsafe*, with remains, is what provides us with the tools we need to discover and confront ourselves. Rose is using the term 'fascism' deliberately provocatively: not implying that we are all Fascists, but rather that we all carry that 'inner tendency' (as she terms it), the potential for that tendency for violence and complicity. By trying to create a perfect, 'pure' monument-dialogue the risk we run, as Rose suggests, is '*to mystify something we dare not understand*, because we fear that it may be all too understandable, all too continuous with what we are – human, all too human'.<sup>229</sup> The erotic, messier reality of 'Totem and Taboo' brings us back to this 'too human' state.

Remember too that this acting-out of queerness, playfulness and masculinity is set against the memorial to the murdered *Jews* of Europe. The separate monument installed across the road for homosexual Holocaust victims is conveniently hidden within the trees of the Tiergarten.<sup>230</sup>

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<sup>228</sup> Rose, *Mourning Becomes the Law*, p.48 [Rose's emphasis].

<sup>229</sup> *Ibid.*, p.43 [Rose's emphasis].

<sup>230</sup> *The Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe* is, of course, highly political in its rigid rhetoric of commemoration: Roma, Sinti or political prisoners must look elsewhere for their commemoration. The *Monument to Homosexual Holocaust Victims* was in part a response to this specificity that deliberately placed Jewishness above homosexuality (or indeed Communism) as the defining trait by which the victims should be grouped and commemorated. We of course cannot know how each individual Jew saw themselves in terms of their gender, sexuality, or indeed 'Jewishness' and whether they would even want to be commemorated in such a way. However, at least a self-identifying homosexual Jew killed in the camps is safely covered by both memorials.





*Monument to Homosexual Holocaust Victims, Tiergarten, Berlin, 2013.*

This monument, which consists of a single concrete stele mimicking in form the ones of the Jewish memorial, has a viewing window cut out in it, through which visitors above a certain height<sup>231</sup> (see photograph above) can see a looped video of lesbian and gay couples kissing in public.<sup>232</sup>

<sup>231</sup> It is worth nothing that for people in wheelchairs or under 5ft in height it would be impossible to view the video *in situ*.

<sup>232</sup> See 'Remembering Different Histories: Monument to Homosexual Holocaust Victims opens in Berlin' in *Spiegel Online International*, 27/5/08, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/remembering-different-histories-monument-to-homosexual-holocaust-victims-opens-in-berlin-a-555665.html> [Accessed 13/10/14], and also 'Memorial to the Homosexuals Persecuted Under the National Socialist Regime', in *Stiftung Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas* [Foundation Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe] <http://www.stiftung-denkmal.de/en/memorials/memorial-to-the-homosexuals-persecuted-under-the-national-socialist-regime.html> [Accessed 13/10/14].





Photographed stills from 'Neverending Kiss' (Gerald Backhaus, Bernd Fischer, Ibrahim Gülnar), shown inside the memorial 26 January 2012 - 6 October 2014. The current film being shown until a new one is chosen is the original installation film by the memorial's designers, Michael Elmgreen and Ingar Dragset.<sup>233</sup>

<sup>233</sup> To view both films visit 'Film Inside the Memorial', <http://www.stiftung-denkmal.de/en/memorials/memorial-to-the-homosexuals-persecuted-under-the-national-socialist-regime/film-inside-the-memorial.html> [Accessed 13/3/15].

Although its website claims that it represents ‘openness’, and ‘a lasting symbol against exclusion’,<sup>234</sup> the memorial has a clandestine quality, with the voyeuristic visitor gazing into a supposedly more open and liberal contemporary homosexual world, but one which is in reality portrayed by this monument as secret, closed, undetectable and heavily censored/de-sexualised.<sup>235</sup> What ‘Totem and Taboo’ shows us is that homosexuals are not to be ‘contained’ by the memorial designed for them, and rather than hiding themselves away in the bushes will use the supposedly non-homosexual memorial across the way as a means to work through and act out their desires, even if these seem to run contrary to the memorial’s own self-styled narrative.



‘brotherhood of man’, via <http://grindr-remembers.blogspot.nl/> [Accessed 12/3/15].

<sup>234</sup> See ‘Memorial to the Homosexuals Persecuted Under the National Socialist Regime’, in *Stiftung Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas [Foundation Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe]* <http://www.stiftung-denkmal.de/en/memorials/memorial-to-the-homosexuals-persecuted-under-the-national-socialist-regime.html> [Accessed 13/10/14].

<sup>235</sup> See Thomas O. Haakenson’s essay ‘(In)Visible Trauma: Michael Elmgreen and Ingar Dragset’s Memorial to the Homosexuals Persecuted under the National Socialist Regime’, in Bill Niven and Chloe Paver (eds.), *Memorialisation in Germany since 1945* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp.146-156, for an examination of the play of visibility/invisibility which this monument provokes.

The use of memorials for these kinds of sexual encounters, both gay and straight, is a different form of protest (or defacement) to graffiti, and like play is much harder to police. It exposes the charged space the monument creates, but also how a monument may become a site for uses contrary to its intention, unable to be foreseen or prevented through its design.<sup>236</sup> It is, as Quentin Stevens puts it, an important and positive 'expansion of playful possibility, and not only predetermined, restricted notions of function'.<sup>237</sup> What Stevens's work on monuments does is to further this notion of monumental *excess*, what is remaindered or left over outside of these restricted notions we have of what a monument is and what it can do. Just like Rose urges us to focus on the unsafe remains of the day, so Stevens points us towards the possibilities of play in our understandings of remembrance.

Graffiti is a more material intervention on the body of the monument, though no less performative. Along with other forms of vandalism, it is normally seen as sacrilegious and wrong-headed, pitting the individual against society or the state in a battle of defiance. But what would it mean if we were not only to remove this kind of censorship towards the pristine, always-intact monument, but in fact encourage a more corporeal, physical relationship with our monument-objects? As Rachel Whiteread responded when asked if she was worried about anti-Semitic slogans being drawn on her Memorial:

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<sup>236</sup> See Yevgeniy Fiks's *Moscow* (2013) [http://yevgeniyfiks.com/artwork/2184584\\_Moscow.html](http://yevgeniyfiks.com/artwork/2184584_Moscow.html) [Accessed 13/10/14] and Neil Emmerson's *habit@t* (2002), in *bellebyrd* <http://printaustralia.blogspot.co.uk/2006/03/neil-emmerson.html> [Accessed 13/10/14] as two examples of a monument being appropriated as a space for gay cruising and anonymous sex, which is then re-interpreted or re-remembered by these artistic projects.

<sup>237</sup> Stevens, 'Why Berlin's Holocaust Memorial', p.74.

If someone sprays a swastika on it we can try to scrub it off...but a few daubed swastikas would really make people think about what's happening in their society.<sup>238</sup>

Whiteread's response shows us how the much-maligned 'defacement' of a memorial can be, quite simply, turned back to the community that created both things: the monument and its graffiti, exposing the divisions or problems within that community. In light of the previous chapter, it's clear that for Whiteread the *Memorial to the Austrian Jewish Victims of the Shoah* could and should become part of a wider, reflexive dialogue about Austrian society. We can see here an active, ongoing process of monumentalisation at odds with our usual perception of the monument as being *in vitro*, that only its continuing preservation can promote the 'correct' means of remembrance.

Winnicott, who writes extensively about child delinquency and what he termed the 'antisocial tendency', recognised that such actions were as much a part of testing the stability of the holding environment as inflicting damage upon a specific object.<sup>239</sup> Winnicott draws parallels between the family or home environment and the wider society as places where this tendency is 'acted out',<sup>240</sup> where the antisocial tendency can in fact signify hope, a desire for change. This expression of hope is, as Winnicott points out, a vital moment for the deprived child (or adult individual), but is also (as may be evidenced time and again) 'awkward for society'.<sup>241</sup> This chimes with Whiteread's response to the possibility of graffiti on her monument. Rather than always viewing

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<sup>238</sup> Kate Connolly, 'Closed Books and Stilled Lives. Review: Whiteread's Concrete Tribute to Victims of Nazism', in *The Guardian*, 26/10/00, 02:04 BST, [www.guardian.co.uk/world/2000/oct/26/kateconnolly](http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2000/oct/26/kateconnolly) [Accessed 13/05/13, 16:22].

<sup>239</sup> See Winnicott, 'The Antisocial Tendency' (1956), in *Through Paediatrics to Psychoanalysis: Collected Essays* (1958) (London: Karnac Books, 2007), pp.308-309.

<sup>240</sup> *Ibid.*, p.308.

<sup>241</sup> *Ibid.*, p.309.

defacement of a monument as a direct comment upon the *event* being represented, it might in fact be more useful for us to think of the monument as signifying this wider governmental or environmental/societal network of policed public objects.<sup>242</sup> It is important for us to note that Winnicott (again writing about the child, although he himself acknowledges it is applicable to any stage of human development) characterises this antisocial behaviour as a failure in the holding environment:

By *one* trend [stealing] the child is looking for something, somewhere, and failing to find it seeks it elsewhere, when hopeful. By the *other* [destructiveness] the child is seeking that amount of environmental stability which will stand the strain resulting from impulsive behaviour. This is a search for an environmental provision that has been lost.<sup>243</sup>

But where does this leave Rachel Whiteread's comment about swastikas? In truth that kind of graffiti, racially motivated and highly specific to that monument, is a different *kind* of destruction to the 'fuck Tory scum' tag on the *Women of World War II* memorial. The memorial in the case of Whiteread *is* standing in for a community, the harming of it a substitute for physical, corporeal harm. But perhaps this kind of hate-filled sloganing that Whiteread welcomes because of its manifestation of tensions already present in society, is as linked to a loss of 'environmental provision' as the 'fuck Tory scum' tag. Both acts of destruction draw attention to uncomfortable societal tensions: a more acceptable gesture against the government; a less acceptable but no less real expression of racial hatred. Winnicott recognises that society wants to efface or erase such destructive impulses because it finds them awkward, disrupting a smooth narrative. He

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<sup>242</sup> The difficulty of separating these two spheres of influence: a state-sanctioned narrative and an individual event, is almost impossible, but nevertheless it's important to acknowledge that both are separate entities that become enfolded into a monument.

<sup>243</sup> Winnicott, 'The Antisocial Tendency', p.310.

tellingly reprimands the consensus that psychoanalytic therapy is the answer to such antisocial tendencies, reminding his readers that 'the treatment of the antisocial tendency is not psycho-analysis but management, a going to meet and match the moment of hope'.<sup>244</sup> In short, the responsibility is turned back onto society to address its own failing.

Winnicott explicitly links the destruction of (cultural) objects to our early object-use as a means of reality testing. In both cases what is at stake is a testing by the individual of the environment in which they find themselves. The paradox that we need to hold on to (and not try to resolve) is that the object is both a gateway to or representative of that wider environment, but also creates and forms part of that environment at the same time. Winnicott places this, with the mother-infant relationship, at the forefront of the complexities surrounding object use:

The infant develops two kinds of relationships at one and the same time – that to the environment-mother and that to the object, which becomes the object-mother. The environment-mother is human, and the object-mother is a thing, although it is also the mother or part of her.<sup>245</sup>

It does not seem to me inconceivable that a similar kind of complexity is at work in the often fraught relationships experienced between monuments and their visitors or communities: the roles that are placed upon them as objects, but also as environmental providers (of peace, solace, 'sense-making', reflection, tranquillity, etc.), something that we turn to, not unlike the good-enough mother. Winnicott firmly places the environmental failing as something that is experienced in infancy, and that as the infant

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<sup>244</sup> Winnicott, 'The Antisocial Tendency', p.309.

<sup>245</sup> Winnicott, 'Communicating and Not Communicating Leading to a Study of Certain Opposites' (1963), in *The Maturation Processes and the Facilitating Environment* (1965) (London: Karnac Books, 2007), p.183.

grows, expands with the infant: 'one can discern a series – the mother's body, the mother's arms, the parental relationship, the home, the family including cousins and near relations, the school, the locality with its police-stations, the country with its laws'.<sup>246</sup>

This idea of a monument being both an 'environment-monument' and an 'object-monument' can help us to use this paradox as a new means of approach, especially towards such apparently antisocial behaviour. This is because by complicating the object in this way we remove the sentimentality or false morality surrounding the policing and punishment of such acts of transgression. It also raises the opposition between what we might term 'good' and 'bad' destruction. We could say that the spray-painted slogan is an example of the latter, with harmless play as the former. Society punishes vandalism, perhaps reprimands play. And Winnicott characteristically does not let society off the hook for this schema of punishment, by countering that that manifestation of the antisocial tendency is, paradoxically, being *less* destructive than the people who destroy objects in fantasy:

By contrast, the compulsive denigration, messing and destruction that belong to the former, an alteration of the object aimed at making it less exciting and less worthy of destruction, this needs society's attention. For example: the antisocial person who enters an art gallery and slashes a picture by an old master is not activated by love of the painting and in fact is not being as destructive as the art-lover is when preserving the picture and using it fully and in unconscious fantasy destroying it over and

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<sup>246</sup> Winnicott, 'The Antisocial Tendency', p.310. This expansion of the mother-infant relationship towards wider adult society and culture is a gesture Winnicott makes almost obliquely and is not methodologically without its problems. We could argue that to map development so neatly in ever-expanding circles is to over simplify what can be a traumatic process, and that no matter how good the initial holding environment of the mother and baby uncontrollable traumas or catastrophes can unbalance it: however even by this logic there is some burden then placed on the nation-state to ensure a continuation of an appropriate holding environment.

over again. Nevertheless the vandal's one act of vandalism affects society, and society must protect itself.<sup>247</sup>

It is characteristic of Winnicott's writing that, whilst acknowledging the destructiveness (both on an object-level and a societal level) of an act of vandalism upon an art object, he is asking us to accept that in fact, whatever the material difference, it is still less destructive than the unconscious fantasies being acted-out by people who *do not* destroy the painting.

We (society) punish the antisocial tendency because we dislike its products, and those products alter our shared objects, making them less good, less worthy of destruction. This 'bad' destruction forms a pairing (another opposition) to the 'good' destruction that Winnicott sees as perfectly natural, two distinct types of relating to objects:

1. spoiling the good object to render it less good and so less under attack, and
2. the destruction that is at the root of object-relating and that becomes (in health) channelled off into the destruction that takes place in the unconscious, in the individual's inner psychic reality, in the individual's dream life and play activities, and in creative expression.<sup>248</sup>

Despite Winnicott's mild phrasing, these are quite radical ideas, and it is difficult to accept that (going against the materiality of vandalism) those who *do not* destroy objects are more destructive than those who do. It is the same work Winnicott demands

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<sup>247</sup> Winnicott, 'On "The Use of an Object": Notes Made on the Train, Part 2 (Written in April 1965)', in *Psychoanalytic Explorations*, p.232.

<sup>248</sup> Ibid.



of his readers when he places the anti-social tendency as both a hopeful gesture and an environmental failing.

When Winnicott describes destruction of the object, be that through a reality-testing of the environment or an antisocial tendency, the most important feature the object must have in order to be 'successful' is to survive the attacks. Only then can some kind of productive, meaningful *rapprochement* begin between the individual and the environment or object. This dynamic has wide-ranging implications for Winnicott, as he views it as being the core of the psychoanalytic relationship between analyst and analysand, and between the mother and the infant; indeed it could be argued that much of Winnicott's contribution to psychoanalysis is his uncovering of the *need* for destruction-and-survival to produce meaningful development:

The subject says to the object: 'I destroyed you', and the object is there to receive the communication. From now on the subject says: 'Hello object!' 'I destroyed you'. 'I love you'. 'You have value for me because of your survival of my destruction of you'. 'While I am loving you I am all the time destroying you in (unconscious) *fantasy*'. Here fantasy begins for the individual. The subject can now *use* the object that has survived. It is important to note that it is not only that the subject destroys the object because the object is placed outside the area of omnipotent control. It is equally significant to state this the other way round and to say that it is the destruction of the object that places the object outside the area of the subject's omnipotent control. In these ways the object develops its own autonomy and life and (if it survives) contributes in to the subject, according to its own properties.<sup>249</sup>

The object can only become positive and useful for the subject if it *survives* destruction. If it does not, then it is not useful to us in negotiating the transition

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<sup>249</sup> Winnicott, 'On "The Use of an Object"', pp.222-223.

between our inner and outer realities. Only through surviving destruction can an object have 'autonomy' and belong to "shared" reality'.<sup>250</sup> This shared reality comes out of and extends away from the initial 'experience of omnipotence'<sup>251</sup> the infant feels at the mother's breast, when the breast appears magically exactly when the infant wants it. It is only by returning to the materiality of the object that we can reach a greater appreciation of its psychic importance. And perhaps with the monument, because it is an object so connected with a wider sense of a holding environment, performing a function that is ultimately related to loss, mourning and extreme trauma, the need to *allow* its destruction is even greater, as are the stakes on its capacity to survive that destruction.

This idea of survival in the face of destruction links back very readily to Gillian Rose's insistence that we focus on the *remains* of the day ('it should leave us unsafe, but with *the remains of the day*').<sup>252</sup> Monuments are themselves remainders: their close interconnectedness with ruins reminds us of this. What is left becomes the monument, just as the monument often becomes what is left. In that sense, we could argue that a monument can *only* be created through destruction of some kind: if there was no destruction we would have no monuments, nor would we need them. To that end we can see the monument as an object that has to create a successful holding environment, in order to carry us through a particular state of trauma. Of course this is problematic when monuments are constructed decades after the events they commemorate, when the acute need for them has perhaps already subsided.

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<sup>250</sup> Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*, p.91.

<sup>251</sup> Winnicott, 'Communicating and Not Communicating', p.180.

<sup>252</sup> Rose, *Mourning Becomes the Law*, p.48 [Rose's emphasis].

E. Ann Kaplan, in her description of the immediate aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks on New York City, captures this instantaneous need for an object to creatively provide some kind of environmental support in the face of trauma:

The Square was crowded with mourners and with people like myself needing to share in the grief and loss we all experienced, even if one had not personally lost a loved one...

I watched as a huge roll of paper was brought into the Square, gradually unfurling as more and more people knelt down and drew or wrote on the spur of the moment. It became one vast communal outpouring of emotion and thought.<sup>253</sup>

The huge roll of paper is not, in this case, a premeditated or highly mediated monument (it might be difficult to recognise it as a monument but I believe that it is), but instead something spontaneous, an object being brought into an environment that is, on some level, failing the community. Kaplan describes people drawing or writing on it 'on the spur of the moment', using the object to fulfil an immediate need. More importantly, the sheet of paper is not just placed in Union Square to be revered, it is *shaped* and *changed* through writing and creativity, defaced, marked and made into an object that can begin to fulfil the need to 'share the grief and loss we all experienced'. It suggests to me that to present a community with a pre-designed, pristine monument may not always be the way to address such needs, even through rituals such as wreath-laying or silence. Again we seem to be returned to destruction-and-survival as a potential path towards reparation.

In his posthumously published essay 'The Use of an Object in the Context of *Moses and Monotheism*' (an insightful response to Freud's late work), Winnicott

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<sup>253</sup> E. Ann Kaplan, *Trauma Culture: The Politics of Terror and Loss in Media and Literature* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2005), p.11.

qualifies this theory of destruction, writing that ‘something that I call “destruction”...I could have called a combined love-strife drive’.<sup>254</sup> It is helpful to think about destruction in terms of a ‘love-strife drive’, because this makes clearer Winnicott’s theorisation of a destructive impulse as crucial to our sense of reality. As he goes on to say:

The drive is potentially ‘destructive’ but whether it *is* destructive or not depends on what the object is like; does the object *survive*, that is, does it retain its character, or does it *react*? If the former, then there is no destruction, or not much, and there is a next moment when the baby can become and does gradually become aware of a cathected object plus the *fantasy* of having destroyed, hurt, damaged, or provoked the object. The baby in this extreme of environmental provision goes on in a pattern of developing personal aggressiveness that provides the backcloth of a continuous (unconscious) fantasy of destruction. Here we may use Klein’s reparation concept, which links constructive play and work with this (unconscious) *fantasy backcloth* of destruction or provocation (perhaps the right word has not been found). But destruction of an object that survives, has not reacted or disappeared, leads on to use.<sup>255</sup>

Winnicott sees the ‘love-strife’ destruction at the root of ‘healthy’ object-relating, as not needing control by society: what is needed is a good-enough holding environment that can ‘allow for the emotional growth of the individual, continuous from earliest infancy until the time when the complexities of fantasy and displacement become available to the individual in his or her search for a personal solution’.<sup>256</sup> Winnicott doesn’t lose sight of the primarily important needs of the individual, situated as they are here in a quest-like search for an amorphous ‘personal solution’. And this too intersects with the monument, which is itself a public and private object, having to

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<sup>254</sup> Winnicott, ‘The Use of an Object in the Context of *Moses and Monotheism*’ (16 January 1969), in *Psychoanalytic Explorations*, pp.240-246.

<sup>255</sup> *Ibid.*, p.245 [Winnicott’s emphasis]. It is interesting to note Winnicott’s folding in of Klein here.

<sup>256</sup> Winnicott, ‘On “The Use of an Object”’, p.232.

fulfil a personal need for mourning alongside a collective, national narrative of grief or reparation.

Here Winnicott is not talking about object relations, but object use. In *Playing and Reality* he writes that 'the allied subject of relating to objects seems to me to have had our full attention. The idea of the use of an object has not, however, been so much examined'.<sup>257</sup> This seems to me part of the challenge we have when writing about monuments, and perhaps goes some way to explaining the difficulty of teasing out discourse surrounding them: so often we talk about our relations with monuments, rather than our use of them. To be clear, these are two very different ways of 'being with' an object. 'Relating to' an object suggests a dialogue, a re-appropriation, a changing of perspectives, but implies a certain level of distance. It stems from inquisitive examination and is the same impulse behind tourism or taking photographs: a tourist, for example, is wandering a city, interacting or relating with objects they come across, but they do not necessarily *need* those objects. 'Using' an object is a far more loaded term, implying want, potential destruction, aggressiveness; all of which the object might not survive. It is still part of object-relating (the two certainly go hand-in-hand), but is *more* than that. Object-relating for Winnicott 'is an experience of the subject that can be described in terms of the subject as an isolate'<sup>258</sup> – in short, and as Winnicott writes elsewhere, it is a 'subjective phenomenon'.<sup>259</sup>

It makes me wonder, if we consider the highly-policed nature of some monuments and cultural sites, whether we are in danger of making these into such subjective phenomena. Does the emphasis on looking but not touching affect our adult

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<sup>257</sup> Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*, p.86.

<sup>258</sup> *Ibid.*, p.88.

<sup>259</sup> Winnicott, 'Communicating and Not Communicating', p.180.

interactions with objects? If we think back to *Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red* we can see that part of the nature of the piece, its distance from the viewer, the lack of physical interaction, gives it the quality of a hallucination, rather than a mass of distinct objects. If the public had been allowed to walk amongst the ceramic poppies, how would that potential for object interaction have changed the feeling of the piece?

Our complex uses of monuments outside of their rituals seems to point to this excess that comes with all monuments; a sense of uncontainment, that their lives as objects extend beyond their functions as sites of remembrance alone. It's my intention now to turn to a specific group of monuments, the so-called countermonuments,<sup>260</sup> to examine whether this particular monument-genre can help us think further about the benefits of monuments that can be *used*.

James E. Young was the first to coin the term 'countermonument' in *The Texture of Memory*, first published in 1993, and since then his writing has become the touchstone for all critics working with this term, and in this field. The Goethe Institut website on German culture devotes an entire page to countermonuments, opening with the phrase 'the American English and Judaic Studies scholar James E. Young coined the term "counter-monument" in the 1990s in connection with the debates on contemporary monument concepts'.<sup>261</sup> Even the examples on the website (Horst Hoheisel's *Aschrott's Fountain* and John Gerz and Esther Shalev-Gerz's *Monument Against Fascism and War*) are paraphrased directly from Young. Apart from press reports and artist books/interviews, very little material remains about these

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<sup>260</sup> This can be spelt either 'countermonument' or 'counter-monument'. As James E. Young uses 'countermonument' throughout his writing, and as the term was coined by him, I follow his spelling.

<sup>261</sup> Goethe Institut, 'Counter-Monuments – Criticising Traditional Monuments', in 'Contemporary Monument Concepts in Germany' website, <http://www.goethe.de/kue/arc/dos/dos/zdk/en204638.htm> [Accessed 10/9/2014].

countermonuments: as such, Young's is the most comprehensive study from a contemporary critical perspective.

Young proposes that countermonuments are a very specific (and inherently post-modern) phenomenon that challenge the traditional monumental form. For Young, countermonuments 'contemptuously reject the traditional forms and reasons for public memorial art',<sup>262</sup> and put the 'burden of memory' back onto the viewer/mourner/tourist.<sup>263</sup> In Young's overview, the countermonumental form is only embodied by a handful of (Western) artists: Jochen Gerz, Esther Shalev Gerz, Horst Hoheisel, Alfred Hrdlicka, Norbert Radermacher, and by extension Christian Boltanski, Micha Ullman, Renata Stih, Frieder Schnock and Rachel Whiteread. Daniel Libeskind and Peter Eisenman are discussed by Young in slightly different terms: Libeskind as taking a deconstructivist architectural approach, and Eisenman as operating (with the Berlin Holocaust Memorial) on a 'higher' level distinct from the other artists. It is interesting that Young groups Hoheisel, Boltanski, Ullman, Whiteread and Stih/Schnock as being part of countermemory, 'the end of the monument',<sup>264</sup> but not necessarily producing countermonuments *per se*. Gerz is held up (perhaps rightly) as the supreme exponent of the countermonumental form.

Young's writing on the countermonument is impassioned, and in its pre-9/11 context almost naïve in its belief in the power of conceptual art to find a way to transcend its violent past, activating a 'new' kind of memory-discourse that retains the burden of remembering but without the inheritance of trauma. Young sees the

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<sup>262</sup> James E. Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), p.28.

<sup>263</sup> See Young's "re-working" of his previous discussions of Jochen Gerz's and Horst Hoheisel's countermonuments in *At Memory's Edge: After-Images of the Holocaust in Contemporary Art and Architecture* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000), pp.90-151.

<sup>264</sup> Young, *At Memory's Edge*, pp.90-119.

countermonument as being part of the 'public "counter-arts" of memory in Germany', and these as being best equipped to 'resist the certainty of monumental forms'.<sup>265</sup> This echoes Richard Crownshaw's assertion that 'in terms of architecture, "H"istory is equivalent to monumentality, and memory finds form in countermonumentality'.<sup>266</sup> This perpetuates the history/memory binary that Pierre Nora's work explores in detail.<sup>267</sup> But as Crownshaw has pointed out, Young's term similarly locks us into 'a binary opposition between the monument and the countermonument',<sup>268</sup> one that is ultimately unsatisfactory. Crownshaw writes that 'perhaps what is needed is a conception of the countermonument that does not oppose memory to history'.<sup>269</sup> Again, the monument is being used as a place between two oppositional positions.

Alfred Boime reminds us that countermonuments were around long before the 1980s (even if they weren't called as such); for example Lenin's *Monumental Propaganda* project, which conceived of a series of temporary public statues that could be changed to reflect the state's current propagandist concerns and shifting public mood.<sup>270</sup> Boime proposes a different set of monumental qualifiers to Young: 'monument inversion, monument subversion, and monument conversion', as three separate means of what he sees as 'the process of monument iconoclasm'.<sup>271</sup> Boime describes political

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<sup>265</sup> Young, *At Memory's Edge*, p.7.

<sup>266</sup> Crownshaw writes 'H'istory to denote a capitalised, formal, official historical narrative rather than an informal collective history. Crownshaw, 'The German Countermonument', p.213.

<sup>267</sup> See Pierre Nora, 'Between Memory and History: *Les Lieux de Mémoire*' in Natalie Zemon Davis and Randolph Starn (eds.), *Representations*, Spring 1989, No. 26 (University of California Press), pp.7-25.

<sup>268</sup> Crownshaw, 'The German Countermonument', p.214.

<sup>269</sup> *Ibid.*, p.216.

<sup>270</sup> See Albert Boime, 'Perestroika and the Destabilisation of the Soviet Monuments' <http://www.albertboime.com/Articles/96.pdf> [Accessed 10/9/2014], pp.217-218.

<sup>271</sup> Boime, p.213-214. Although neither Boime nor Young reference each other's work, there is a clear overlap of interest, and it is worth considering how monumental discourse would have taken a different conceptual tack if Boime's descriptions had been adopted with the same fervour as Young's countermonuments.



acts of monument-reconstitution, allowing for a broader, more community-focused monumental activism than Young's conceptual, art-historical approach.

This is something that Noam Lupu, in his essay 'Memory Vanished, Absent, and Confined' (2003) draws our attention to, reminding us that Young 'examines only the aesthetic and conceptual contributions of countermonuments'.<sup>272</sup> Young is reluctant to fully engage in the then-contemporary debates surrounding postmemory,<sup>273</sup> and whilst acknowledging the connections between the 'rise' of the countermonument and changes in Western contemporary art ('European artists have begun to challenge the traditional redemptory premises of art itself'),<sup>274</sup> there seems to be a resistance in Young's writing to the idea that this narrative is part of a much wider dialogue about the evolution of art and public sculpture. In that sense, all the artists Young discusses work in hermetic units, unaffected by wider connections within the art world, or concerns/practices shared by artists who are left off Young's list of countermonumental practitioners.<sup>275</sup> That said, Young recognises the importance of contemporary art in the creation of the countermonumental form. But this kind of isolationism seems to be part of countermonumental discourse: they are separate, other, doing different things than the 'conventional' monuments.

Many critics use Young's work to set up the countermonument as an unproblematic concept, followed by their own critique of the monument(s) or their

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<sup>272</sup> Noam Lupu, 'Memory Vanished, Absent, and Confined: The Countermemorial Project in 1980s and 1990s Germany', in *History and Memory*, Vol. 15, No. 2 (Fall/Winter 2003), p.131.

<sup>273</sup> Apart from a few pages where he discusses postmemory and *Maus* (pp.38-41), Young offers no new reading or engagement with postmemory writing such as Marianne Hirsch's *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative, and Postmemory* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997).

<sup>274</sup> Young, *At Memory's Edge*, p.7.

<sup>275</sup> For example Jenny Holzer, especially her *Black Garden* (1994), *Erlauf Peace Monument* (1995), and *Monument* (2008). See Davie Joselit, Joan Simon and Renata Saleci, *Jenny Holzer* (London: Phaidon Press, 1998), pp.30-33, pp.140-142. The work of Croatian artist Sanja Iveković, who deals with post-Holocaust, post-Communist and feminist concerns, feels exceptionally pertinent to questioning the artistic practice of countermemory. See Sanja Iveković, *Sweet Violence* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2011).

application of the term to another monument which could be/might be/possibly is another countermonument.<sup>276</sup> For example, whilst critics such as Richard Crownshaw and Noam Lupu take Young (or Young's theorisation of the countermonument) to task in some measure, they don't question the usefulness of the distinction itself. As Young explicitly states, countermonuments are as concerned with contemporary art as much as contemporary memory, their non-figurative forms supposedly avoiding the 'fascistic' and overbearing representation of more conventional memorials – although as I showed in my analysis of the *Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe* with Gillian Rose, this is a claim we should be wary of making too earnestly. But it is worth pursuing this notion of abstraction and fascism a little further, if only to reinforce the shaky ground upon which the countermonument conceptually sits.

As Lupu and Crownshaw suggest, and as Elizabeth Strakosch recognises in her essay on Australian countermonuments, the non-representation of the countermonument can become a kind of aesthetic fascism. Strakosch makes an interesting point about the abstraction of countermonuments, reminding us that:

It is politically significant that abstract memorial forms appear most often in relation to events in which the memorialising nation is implicated as perpetrator, to 'events in their history with which they have a greatly ambivalent relationship'. Abstract sites acknowledge events, but preserve this ambivalence and refuse to privilege the emotionally confronting representations of victims.<sup>277</sup>

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<sup>276</sup> See Elizabeth Strakosch, 'Counter-Monuments and Nation-Building in Australia', in *Peace Review: A Journal of Social Justice*, Vol. 22, No.3 (2010), pp.268-275. Although Strakosch effectively critiques the countermonument, she is perhaps too accepting of them as a subgroup in their own right: her essay does not challenge what to my mind is the more fundamental question, of accepting the countermonument (or not) as truly distinct.

<sup>277</sup> *Ibid.*, p.273.

This chimes with Lupu's restatement of Adorno's claim that 'the aesthetic principle of stylisation...make[s] an unthinkable fate appear to have had some meaning; it is transfigured, something of its horror is removed',<sup>278</sup> a statement to which Lupu argues that there is a 'necessity of a successful expression of traumatic pain that eludes appropriation or stylisation'.<sup>279</sup>

This conceptualisation of the unrepresentability of the subjects demanding commemoration feeds back into what Crownshaw sees as the countermonuments' 'architectural articulation of the wound and their refusal to complete the representation of those they remember'.<sup>280</sup> This allows, as Young and Crownshaw state, the allowance of a 'postmemory' in the contemporary visitors to these monuments, false remembrance of unwitnessed events. Crownshaw perhaps best sums up the nature of the countermonument as something that 'not only foregrounds the highly mediated nature of such cultural memory work, but also encourages in the visitor a highly self-reflexive relationship to the past and to the remembrance of that past'.<sup>281</sup> This goes against Lupu's more critical take on the efficacy of the Gerzes' countermonument, which for him is more a vanity-exercise than a necessary, meaningful contribution to the community in which it exists. However, Lupu is still ready to acquiesce to Young's assertion that the countermonument puts memory 'back onto' the community, or the casual visitor (a postmemory, or similar). Lupu returns to the archive that the monument has created, the site becoming a 'physical history of the monument itself'.<sup>282</sup>

This statement is not entirely convincing, nor is Lupu's further conviction that 'the

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<sup>278</sup> Adorno 'Commitment', in *Aesthetics and Politics*, quoted in Lupu, p.133.

<sup>279</sup> Lupu, p.133.

<sup>280</sup> Crownshaw, 'The German Countermonument', p.213.

<sup>281</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.213-214.

<sup>282</sup> Lupu, p.146.

nonsite retained the social meanings of the site'.<sup>283</sup> It seems to me that, even in works such as Thomas Stubblefield's 'Do Disappearing Monuments Simply Disappear?',<sup>284</sup> the emphasis quickly becomes about the history of the monumentalising process, the concepts involved, the designs produced, the immediate public reception, and whether the concept itself stands or falls by its artistic/political execution.

Lupu is specifically referencing Jochen Gerz and Esther Shalev Gerz's *Monument Against Fascism*, which was constructed in Harburg (a working-class commuter suburb of Hamburg). It was erected in 1986, a 12m lead-coated stele upon which citizens and visitors could write their names with a steel stylus, in a gesture of opposition against fascism. As soon as the stele was filled to a certain height, it was ceremonially lowered into the ground 140cm. This ceremonial lowering happened eight times before the monument completely "disappeared" in 1993.<sup>285</sup>



Plaque from the Harburg countermonument depicting the lowerings of the stele.

<sup>283</sup> Lupu, p.147.

<sup>284</sup> Thomas Stubblefield, 'Do Disappearing Monuments Simply Disappear?', in *Future Anterior*, Vol. 8, No. 2 (Winter 2011), pp.xii-11.

<sup>285</sup> See Andreas Hapkemeyer, Marion Hohlfeldt, Brigitte Unterhofer-Klammer, *Jochen Gerz: Res Publica* (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 1999), pp.52-57 and Young, *The Texture of Memory*, pp.28-37 and *At Memory's Edge*, pp.127-139.

During its lifetime there was controversy around both the expense of the monument and its 'disappearing' nature; equally, what had been envisioned as an orderly process of writing on the stele became instead an illegible mass of graffiti, 'hearts with "Jürgen liebt Kirsten" written inside, Stars of David...funny faces daubed in paint and marker pen...swastikas'.<sup>286</sup> Although the Gerzes embraced this more anarchic use of their intended monument, with an attitude similar to Whiteread's, it can be clearly seen that once again monument-use has not explicitly followed design. This is highly suggestive: although Young holds up the countermonument as a taxonomy of difference to the conventional monument, it seems beset with exactly the same problem: an impulse in its community towards destruction or vandalism.

We seem to be occupying a position in which the apparent abstraction of contemporary art practice simultaneously creates a palimpsestic site of postmemory that, whilst it is supposed to 'liberate' us from the didacticism of the traditional monument form, feels extremely similar in how it demands to be read. For Lupu, the countermonument in Harburg results in nothing more than 'a silenced archive',<sup>287</sup> which he equates with a kind of 'fascism' on the part of the artists, imposing their totalitarian structures upon the public, who must in the end interact (or put up with) a pre-ordained artwork.<sup>288</sup> In this sense, even though the countermonument is meant to move away from conventional monuments in terms of form, as an art object it seems to suffer from the same problems of over-determinacy from its creators, and in the end is as open to 'misuse' by the public as much as a conventional monument.

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<sup>286</sup> Young, *At Memory's Edge*, p.138.

<sup>287</sup> Lupu, p.140.

<sup>288</sup> *Ibid.*, p.142.

Lupu picks up on this problem, recognising that the field of countermonuments as defined by Young does not perhaps go quite far enough, or achieve the pure ends that Young hopes for: 'while the countermemorial project certainly succeeded in creating a more attenuated vision of memorialisation, it did not suggest a new social formation of re-memory'.<sup>289</sup> This failure of countermonuments 'to create a sphere of social interaction outside the didacticism of traditional monuments'<sup>290</sup> seems to go against Young's claim that the Gerzes countermonument 'has not only returned the burden of memory to those who come looking for it but has changed the way a generation of artists and the public have come to regard the very idea of memorial'.<sup>291</sup>

Whilst Young sees the countermonument as a liberating alternative to traditional monument forms, we seem to have found ourselves returned to the same problems the artists Young discusses were trying to get away from: the rhetoric on one hand of escaping an imposed memory burden, and the reality of a human-designed aesthetic/architectural object that at the end of the day can perhaps only do *so much* in helping us to reevaluate or challenge state narratives, collective memories, postmemories, countermemories and communal tensions. Which leads us back, ironically, to the same problems facing any memorial, however unconventional its design.

The Gerzes' countermonument is not significant because it challenges the form a monument takes, it is significant because it challenges our conceptions of how the monument may be *used* and destroyed as a means of working through past traumas or losses. Returning to Winnicott, it is tempting to view this particular monument as a

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<sup>289</sup> Lupu, p.132.

<sup>290</sup> Ibid.

<sup>291</sup> Young, *At Memory's Edge*, p.139.

‘transitional object’, a developmental stage experienced by infants that becomes mapped onto a communal memorial process. This kind of mapping (for example in a 1968 essay: ‘Cultural experience comes about as a direct extension from the playing of children’)<sup>292</sup> is bewitching in its simplicity. But we need to be extremely wary of placing the use of the transitional object, a specific moment in an infant’s development, onto cultural interactions experienced by adults: there are infinitely more pressures being placed on the monument, and by multiple different groups and narratives. In order to use this particular countermonument as a means of thinking beyond its role as simply an oppositional object to the ‘conventional’ monument, I want to return to it in its current half-buried state in the suburbs of Hamburg.

This monument is buried in the ground, inaccessible yet still present. All we have is a pavement, next to a busy road in the urban commuter town of Harburg, opposite the *Rathaus* S-Bahn exit: concrete edged with bricks, the regularity of the paving slabs broken by a lighter-coloured, smoother concrete oblong slab.

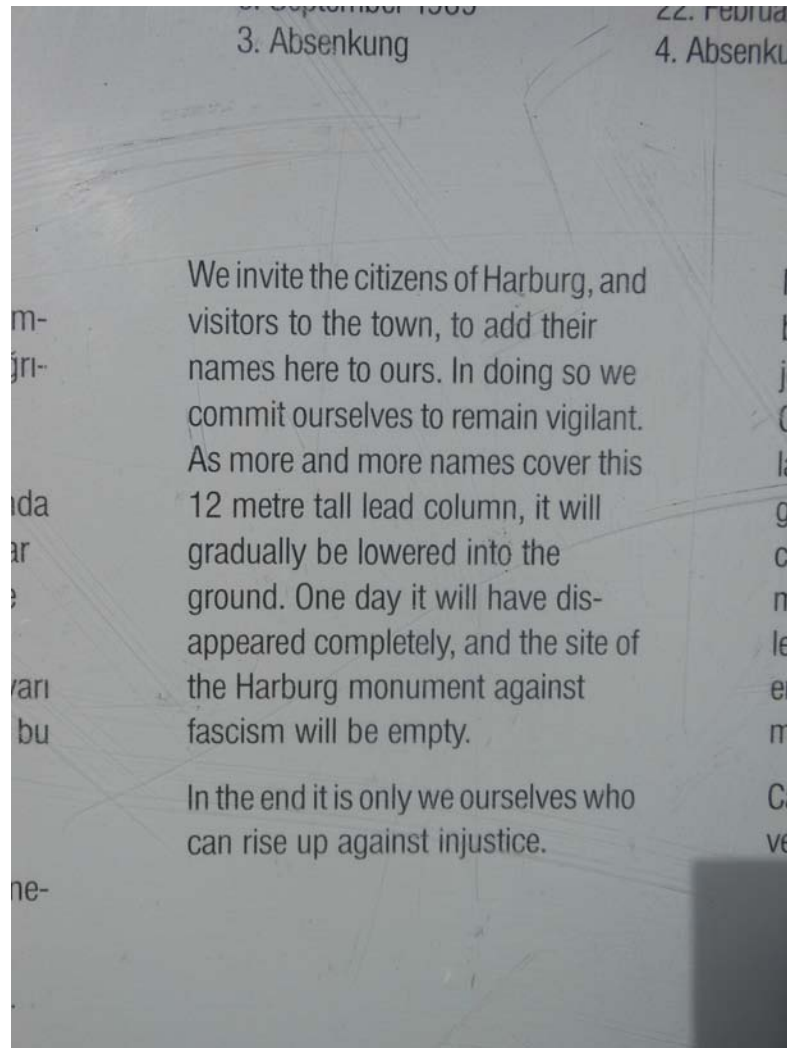
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<sup>292</sup> Winnicott, ‘Playing and Culture: A Talk Given to the Imago Group, 12 March 1968’, in *Psycho-Analytic Explorations*, p.203.



There are tufts of weeds and grass in the paving joins, chewing-gum, cigarette butts and a feeling of slight neglect. The brushed steel railings look onto an ordinary shopping plaza, in the summer overhung with green trees. Here the notice board, the postmemory document, is prominent, fixed to the railings like those at viewpoints of natural beauty or expansive urban views, detailing the landscape you are looking out over.





In this case the notice board is mnemonic, a document of postmemory, a visual record of the 'life' of this monument above-ground. But all we have now, tangibly, is a different-coloured, different-textured paving slab. Even though the notice board tells us the monument against fascism is 'empty' it is not true, this monument is still there, buried, half-concealed.

Leaving the viewing platform we descend the steps to the shopping plaza. The plaza looks tired, the red brick edging and brushed steel feels locked in the 1980s. Public architecture does not look like this anymore.



There is graffiti on the brickwork, salt leaching from the bricks, more tufts of grass, weeds, places where the bricks have been replaced and re-pointed. The steps dogleg around a flowerbed, planted with shade-loving ferns, creepers, ivy, ground-covering green plants, with a single tree towering up from it, a maturing sapling. The viewing platform can still be seen, its base revealed to be a curved brick tower, ivy beginning to climb it. It is reminiscent of modernist power stations, with an aura of the medieval, the splash of ivy crawling up ruined turrets. Just along from the flowerbed, at the base of the tower, before the pedestrian plaza plunges under the road to the S-Bahn, is a steel

door with a slit-like grille in it. It looks like the entrance to an electrical substation or machinery room: industrial, fortified, secretive.



The same notice board as on the viewing platform is affixed to the wall, next to a giant, colourful graffiti tag. A small bronze plaque, tarnished and scratched through what seems to be multiple cleanings from graffiti, simply reads 'Esther und Jochen Gerz Mahnmal gegen Faschismus 1986'.





Apart from the signs, there is nothing, so far, that leads us to think that this is a monument. We must rely on the postmemory of these didactic information boards to tell us what went on here, to curate the site and the architecture for us.

Inside the brick tower, walled-up, behind the grille on the door can be seen, within the cold, damp interior, the buried monument. The lead covering has buckled in places, and the writing on it is indecipherable, a mixture of graffiti tags and illegible scoring. Water has dripped down the sides, mimicking the bricks surrounding it. It stretches up to the roof of the chamber, and seems to disappear into the floor, potentially limitless. It is buried-yet-visible, inaccessible but at the same time *present*, separated from the bustling shopping plaza outside by only a thin metal door and a grille.



Whilst Young and others seek to re-activate this ‘vanished’ monument through the re-telling of its postmemory, it seems odd to do so when it is still here, almost touchable, yet permanently out of reach, barred to us. There is something of this denial that strongly echoes Rachel Whiteread’s *Memorial to the Austrian Jewish Victims of the Shoah*, the same withholding.

For many countermonuments, deliberately ephemeral objects, there is nothing physical for the new viewer to return to, we can *only* re-examine them through a

historical retelling or reconstructing.<sup>293</sup> This act of re-writing or re-telling can produce its own monumentalism, of things left behind, keeping postmemory active. Might there not be some benefit in rejecting this constant reinscribing of the monument, shoring up its claims? Could other more useful interpretations or conversations be opened up by dealing only with the physical remainder, what is left now? It could be argued that in every re-telling of the Gerzes' countermonument we not only activate the postmemory of it, but we also (dangerously) reinscribe and fix its meaning, in the same manner of a state-sanctioned ritual ceremony.

If we consider the Gerzes' monument as a stand-in for the transitional object, how does this help us? Countermonuments are valuable because they expose (not through their form but through their use) a way in which we can *use* our conventional monuments in a different way: it is perhaps our use that comes to define the monument, rather than its design. By offering itself up as a transitional object, this countermonument enacts what is only theorised around ritual monument-use: the need for the monument's community to use that object as they see fit, even in a manner that may be perceived as 'anti-social'. So perhaps the monument can only become positive and useful for its subjects if it *survives* destruction. If it does not, then it is not useful to us in negotiating the transition between our inner and outer realities, coming to terms with whatever loss or trauma the monument symbolises.

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<sup>293</sup> For example, see Bill Fontana's 1984 installation *Entfernte Züge (Distant Trains)*, in which Fontana buried several loudspeakers in the derelict shell of Berlin's Anhalter Bahnhof, once the busiest train station in Germany, and projected sound recordings from contemporary Cologne station (at that point the busiest in Europe). In doing so he created an 'acoustic memory' for the ruined station, round which visitors could walk, surrounded by these postmemories of its pre-war past. See Bill Fontana, *Distant Trains*, <http://www.resoundings.org/Pages/Distant%20Trains.html> and <http://echosounddesign.com/media/Berlin.mov> [Accessed 15/3/15].

But where does the transitional object, as theorised in this way, take us? What is striking about Winnicott's theorisations is that they use the transitional object not just as a developmental stage, but as a means by which an entirely new realm of experiencing may be accessed by the infant:

My claim is that if there is a need for this double statement, there is also need for a triple one: the third part of the life of a human being, a part that we cannot ignore, is an intermediate area of *experiencing*, to which inner reality and external life both contribute. It is an area that is not challenged, because no claim is made on its behalf except that it shall exist as a resting-place for the individual engaged in the perpetual human task of keeping inner and outer reality separate yet interrelated.<sup>294</sup>

This is the work of the transitional object: to exist in this area or environment of experiencing, which is the battleground, if you like, for inner and outer reality to meet, react and interrelate to each other. This returns us to the Winnicottian position of 'the holding together of two apparently opposed perspectives',<sup>295</sup> something Nicky Glover recognises puts 'the focus on the creative *process* rather than on the art *product*'.<sup>296</sup> Marion Milner, in her essay 'Winnicott and Overlapping Circles' (1977), recognises 'the tremendous significance that there can be in the interplay of edges' and that 'it is impossible to say which circle the area [the potential space] belongs to since it belongs to both'.<sup>297</sup> Therefore any attempts to resolve the paradox of a monument being used as a site for play or sex *as well as* remembrance remove a characteristic of that

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<sup>294</sup> Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*, pp.2-3.

<sup>295</sup> Juliet Mitchell, 'Commentary on "deconstructing difference: Gender, splitting and transitional space"', in *Psychoanalytic Dialogues: The International Journal of Relational Perspectives*, Vol.1 No.3 (1991), p.353.

<sup>296</sup> Nicky Glover, *Psychoanalytic Aesthetics: An Introduction to the British School*, (London: Karnac Books, 2009), p.181.

<sup>297</sup> Marion Milner, 'Winnicott and Overlapping Circles' (1977), in Jan Abrahm (ed.), *Donald Winnicott Today* (London, New York: Routledge, 2013), p.174.

monument-space. By focusing on process, not product, this place where the holding together of two opposites takes place (remembrance and destruction or inner and outer reality, for example) re-activates the monument as a meeting place for these overlapping circles, a space where all these activities should co-exist and take place in an interplay of edges. That this acceptance feels controversial and difficult would fall precisely in line with Winnicott's own thinking around psychoanalysis and behaviour.

The monument, in this reading, becomes a space for both play and aggression, as well as meeting its primary purpose of fulfilling a need we have to create something in the face of trauma. Winnicott recognises the potentiality for the transitional object to also function as a means of allaying trauma. He describes the transitional object, existing in the potential space, as being capable of carrying the infant, creating an environment that psychically holds it, in the face of the absence of the mother/holding environment. However, if this absence is too prolonged then the infant becomes incapable of using the transitional object, of accessing the potential space:

If the mother is away for more than x minutes, then the imago fades, and along with this the baby's capacity to use the symbol of the union ceases. The baby is distressed, but this distress is soon *mended* because the mother returns in x+y minutes. In x+y minutes the baby has not become altered. But in x+y+z minutes the baby has become *traumatised*. In x+y+z minutes the mother's return does not mend the baby's altered state.<sup>298</sup>

The transitional object works in this instance because of its positioning between the infant and mother, in the potential space, 'at the place in space and time where and when the mother is in transition from being (in the baby's mind) merged in with the

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<sup>298</sup> Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*, p.97. It is worth noting that Winnicott recognises that 'the vast majority of babies never experience the x+y+z quantity of deprivation'.



infant and alternatively being experienced as an object to be perceived rather than conceived of'.<sup>299</sup> Winnicott characteristically complicates this statement by reminding us that although the transitional object is providing an environment which is the conjoining of two separate things (mother and infant) it also marks the beginning of their separation, when the infant begins to recognise itself as an individual being:

The use of an object symbolises the union of two now separate things, baby and mother, *at the point in time and space of the initiation of their state of separateness*.<sup>300</sup>

Again, we must tread carefully when mapping this developmental moment onto the interactions we have with monuments: so saying, there seems to be a striking parallel between Winnicott's description of the trauma undergone by the infant in the face of the mother's absence, and the centrality of object-use to that experience of deprivation. The desire to construct a monument-object as a place of gathering in the face of the extreme trauma, a 'break in life's continuity'<sup>301</sup> experienced because of a catastrophic failure in our adult holding environment, seems even more relevant in light of this aspect of Winnicott's research.<sup>302</sup>

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<sup>299</sup> Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*, p.96.

<sup>300</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.96-97 [Winnicott's emphasis].

<sup>301</sup> *Ibid.*, p.97.

<sup>302</sup> It is worth noting the parallels between Winnicott's 'x+y+z' model and Freud's essay 'Mourning and Melancholia'. Both writers are interested in exploring the difference between something upsetting and something catastrophic to the ego, where the dividing line lies between a loss and a devastation. Both concern themselves with an inability to recover from a significant trauma, and the role of objects within that. For example, Freud's distinction of melancholia aligns itself with Winnicott's theories around 'spoiling' an object: 'love for the object – a love which cannot be given up though the object itself is given up – takes refuge in narcissistic identification, then the hate comes into operation on this substitutive object, abusing it, debasing it, making it suffer and deriving sadistic satisfaction from its suffering'. See Sigmund Freud, 'Mourning and Melancholia' (1917), in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological works of Sigmund Freud: Volume XIV (1914-1916): On the History of the Psycho-Analytic Movement, Papers on Metapsychology and Other Works*, trans. James Strachey (ed.) (London: Vintage, 2001), p.251.

I am proposing that we need to perhaps counterintuitively allow a level of interaction with and destruction or defacement of our monuments, in order to *use* them to work through a particular moment of need. This opens up significant areas of *anxiety*, manifested in the public reactions to the defacement of memorials: anxiety not simply around ‘proper’ behaviour, but also around the fate of the objects themselves. If our monuments are as perishable as our people, how does that begin to shift or undermine core narratives of state or nationhood? Crucial to Winnicott’s theory of the transitional object is its own decay, our moving on or away from it towards different objects. It is fated to the same end as those the monuments commemorate, to ‘simply fade away like the old soldier’.<sup>303</sup>

Anxiety is a little-mentioned aspect of monuments and the place they occupy within our societies. It is striking that at the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary commemorations for the liberation of Auschwitz in January 2015 the message was one of caution against new crimes, a fear that the horrific past is all too capable of repeating itself.<sup>304</sup> This kind of anxiety seems to return us to Sion’s concerns around the *Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe*: a monument that is not *clear* or *didactic* runs the risk of allowing the space for the kind of transgressive behaviour that creates ‘a convenient and comfortable space [that] helps the non-Jewish German visitors to dis-identify with the perpetrators, and offers them the same detached and neutral entry point as tourists who have no connection to the Holocaust at all’.<sup>305</sup> The anxiety that underpins Sion’s critique is based around both dis-identification and collapse on the part of the

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<sup>303</sup> Winnicott, ‘Growth and Development in Immaturity’ (1950) in *The Family and Individual Development* (1965/2006), p.41.

<sup>304</sup> See BBC News, ‘Auschwitz 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary: Survivors warn of new crimes’, 27 January 2015, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-30996555> [Accessed 11/7/15].

<sup>305</sup> Sion in Niven and Paver, p.250.

monument-goer who isn't already 'invested' in the Holocaust. What Sion seems to want is a straightforward postmemory to be imposed, via the monument, onto its public. But part of the problem with this is that a narrative becomes imposed that is pre-ordained, not spontaneously grasped at by the visitor: the danger, of course, with a visitor bringing their own experiences to a monument, is precisely that their behaviour goes against or problematises the pre-approved narrative.<sup>306</sup> In this narrative of anxiety the monument is both a pacifier and a potential enabler of such antisocial tendencies, an environment that provokes discord and harmony simultaneously.

This complicates any notion we may wish to cling onto of a straightforward postmemory narrative as reinscribed and reactivated by the carefully preserved monument, of the kind that Sion seems to want the *Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe* to become. The danger of such inherited trauma is well documented. Marianne Hirsch recognises that 'to grow up with overwhelming inherited memories, to be dominated by narratives that preceded one's birth or one's consciousness, is to risk having one's own life stories displaced, even evacuated, by our ancestors'.<sup>307</sup> Hirsch's examination of the postmemory of photographs of the Holocaust acknowledges both the benefits and problems of postmemory as a means of perpetuating remembrance. She describes the difficulty of looking at photographs of mass graves from the Holocaust, and how 'every time we look at this image, we repeat the encounter

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<sup>306</sup> Eisenman's goal was to examine and challenge such directed memorialisation, although as I have already argued his design contains its own desire to force the visitor into a certain kind of experience. Eisenman writes: 'the project suggests that when a supposedly rational and ordered system grows too large and out of proportion to its intended purpose, it in fact loses touch with human reason. It then begins to reveal innate disturbances and potential for chaos in all systems of seeming order, the idea that all closed systems of a closed order are bound to fail', in Eisenman, 'Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe', in Foundation for the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe (ed.), *Materials on the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe* (Berlin, 2005), pp.10-13], quoted in Sion, 'Affective Memory, Ineffectual Functionality', in Niven and Paver (eds.), p.245.

<sup>307</sup> Marianne Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture After the Holocaust* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), p.5.

between memory and forgetting, between shock and self-protection. We look into the pit of death, but we know that it is in the process of being covered'.<sup>308</sup> For Hirsch, these 'pits' need re-opening and re-examining; we should never close off the re-noticing of such images, which 'make it difficult to go back to a moment before death or to recognise survival'.<sup>309</sup> Hirsch recognises the paradox in which she places both herself and her readers: doomed to what can only be described as an inherited anxiety, a fear of what has happened before happening again.

The great irony is that the impending breakdown we fear, the 'new Holocaust' we anticipate, has of course already happened. This speaks directly to Winnicott's own paper, 'The Fear of Breakdown' (1963), in which he writes that 'clinical fear of breakdown is *the fear of a breakdown that has already been experienced*'.<sup>310</sup> This breakdown is, for Winnicott, catastrophic (we should bear in mind that 'Shoah' comes from the Hebrew HaShoah meaning 'the catastrophe'). But although such fear of breakdown is seen in extreme psychoneurotic cases, Winnicott theorises that is in fact something that we all share: 'there must be expected a common denominator of the same fear [of breakdown], indicating the existence of universal phenomena; these indeed make it possible for everyone to know emphatically what it feels like when one of our patients shows this fear in a big way.'<sup>311</sup> This fear of breakdown, similar to the x+y+z trauma in the loss of the mother, signifies a failure in the holding environment,

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<sup>308</sup> Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory*, p.119.

<sup>309</sup> *Ibid.*, p.120.

<sup>310</sup> Winnicott, 'Fear of Breakdown' (1963), in *Psycho-Analytic Explorations* (1989), p.90 [Winnicott's emphasis].

<sup>311</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.87-88.

which causes 'a reversal of the individual's maturational process'.<sup>312</sup> In other words, extreme trauma.

What is significant for Winnicott, and why the fear of breakdown is so powerful, is that the subject was *absent* during the initial breakdown. By this Winnicott means that there is an excess to this traumatic event that is unable to be fully grasped or integrated by the ego, 'the ego integration is not able to encompass something'.<sup>313</sup> This failure of both the holding environment *and* the ego to come to terms with this failure can only begin to be addressed by a conscious process of *remembrance*:

The patient needs to 'remember' this but it is not possible to remember something that has not yet happened, and this thing of the past has not happened yet because the patient was not there for it to happen to. The only way to 'remember' in this case is for the patient to experience this past thing for the first time in the present, that is to say, in the transference. This past and future thing then becomes a matter of the here and now, and becomes experienced by the patient for the first time.<sup>314</sup>

Postmemory would seem to work in a similar way: it is only through a re-telling, both by survivors and inheritors of trauma, that the 'past thing' may be experienced in the present.

The present time is paramount to this process of 'remembering' that Winnicott describes: 'the original experience of primitive agony cannot get into the past tense unless the ego can first gather it into its own present time experience and into omnipotent control now'.<sup>315</sup> If we were to describe what roles a monument can be said to perform then a gathering of past agonies into the present time could well be one of

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<sup>312</sup> Winnicott, 'Fear of Breakdown', p.88.

<sup>313</sup> Ibid., pp.90-91.

<sup>314</sup> Ibid., p.92.

<sup>315</sup> Ibid., p.91.

them. Importantly, 'the original experience of primitive agony' needs to have happened, to be already consigned to the past, before it can be remembered in the present. The analyst's job is to help the patient to acknowledge that the breakdown, 'a fear of which destroys his or her life, *has already been*'.<sup>316</sup> Once again a paradox must be accepted: that the holding environment has *already failed us*, and that a fear of it failing us in the future is unfounded, because it has already happened to us. Winnicott is not promising (just as monuments shouldn't promise) that the holding environment might not fail us in the future, and as catastrophically. However, his aim is that 'the patient gathers the original failure of the facilitating environment into the area of his or her omnipotence',<sup>317</sup> in order to finally work through the initial trauma.

What a monument may therefore be doing is symbolic of this very anxiety, creating a site of breakdown in order for the past breakdown to be acknowledged. But monuments also represent failure, a failure of our society, our holding environment. They are a mnemonic signpost of our past breakdowns, a present-day gathering of agonies that themselves may not follow the narratives wished for, nor leave the object itself as perfect, unscathed and uncomplicated as we would like. Only by accepting this paradox, that we might have to destroy our monuments in order to use them in the way we need, can we shift our focus on them to process rather than product. They become objects that are, equally paradoxically, incomplete, a stage in development rather than an end in itself: to be extremely necessary, vital to our psychic survival, but then to become meaningless, not useful anymore. At the same time, new breakdowns will occur, new agonies that need to be painfully addressed, new monuments created-and-

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<sup>316</sup> Winnicott, 'Fear of Breakdown', p.90 [Winnicott's emphasis].

<sup>317</sup> Ibid., p.91.

found that allow us to use them to fulfil the need we have of them to transition us into a different stage, then themselves to be let go.

None of these ideas feel easy. They require a radical shift in our attitudes towards antisocial behaviour, preservation, history *and* (perhaps most difficult) what communities need their monuments to *do*, as useful objects: even if that need turns out to be play as well as remembrance, sex as well as memory, graffiti as well as wreath-laying. As Winnicott writes: 'all this is very difficult, time-consuming and painful, but it at any rate is not futile'.<sup>318</sup>

In the next chapter I shall examine the close relationship between monuments and plants, and how the latter forms a queer, ecological subtext to the former, disturbing notions of permanence and fossilisation that monuments often evoke. The focus becomes living things rather than dead ones, life in the face of despair, what Winnicott would call 'what it is that makes him or her go on living'.<sup>319</sup>

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<sup>318</sup> Winnicott, 'Fear of Breakdown', p.91.

<sup>319</sup> Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*, p.100.

## CHAPTER 4

# THE LIVING, QUEER MONUMENT

If you want a queer monument, look around you.<sup>320</sup>

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<sup>320</sup> Timothy Morton, 'Guest Column: Queer Ecology', *PMLA*, Vol. 125, No. 2, March 2010 (Modern Language Association), p.276.



Bring the rathe primrose that forsaken dies,  
 The tufted crow-toe, and pale gessamine,  
 The white pink, and the pansy freaked with jet,  
 The glowing violet,  
 The musk-rose, and the well-attired woodbine,  
 With cowslips wan that hang the pensive head,  
 And every flower that sad embroidery wears;  
 Bid amaranthus all his beauty shed,  
 And daffadillies fill their cups with tears,  
 To strew the laureate hearse where Lycid lies.<sup>321</sup>



“How can your dad fucking be proud of cunts like you?  
 How can anyone be proud of you? Look at you.”  
 Blackpool North Station, Blackpool’<sup>322</sup>

<sup>321</sup> John Milton, ‘Lycidas’ (1637), 142-151, <http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poem/173999> [Accessed 27/9/15].

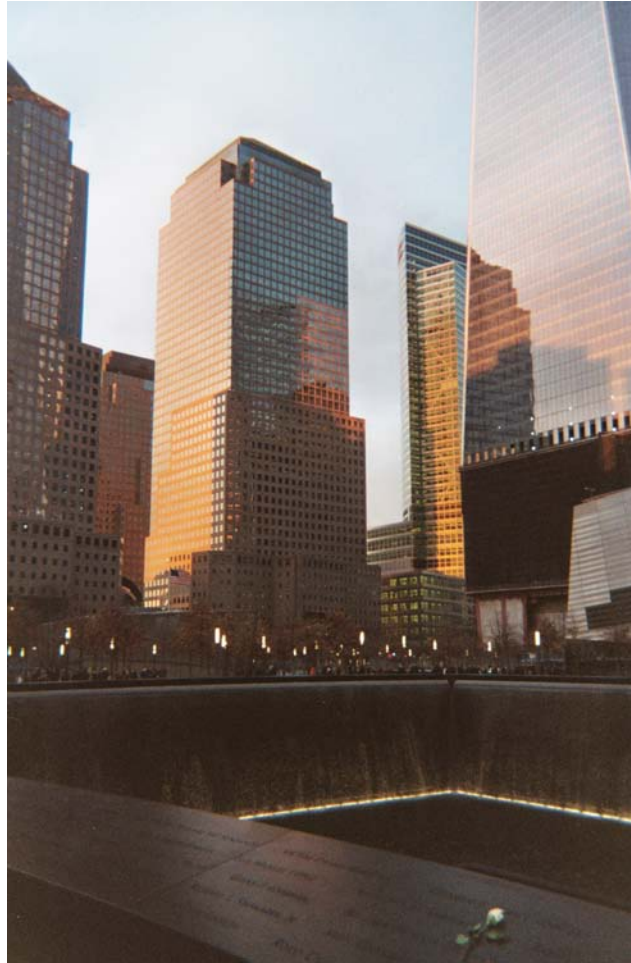
<sup>322</sup> Paul Harfleet, *The Pansy Project*, <http://www.thepansyproject.com/page8.htm> [Accessed 28/8/15].

This chapter examines the possibilities surrounding monuments and memorials that are not created to commemorate a specific event, but living plants and flowers that ‘ghost’ the tombs and monuments that we erect to remember our dead. It is my proposal that by attending more carefully to the possibilities offered by living flowers, particularly their symbolism and cultural history, we can learn something about how monuments could begin to work for us in different, queerer, less prescribed ways. Through Paul Harfleet’s *The Pansy Project*, which uses pansies to commemorate homophobic abuse, I explore the rich cultural tradition of the pansy, and the queer possibilities for remembrance that this opens up.

Flowers have always been associated with tombs and monuments, from the emblematic wreaths of poppies ceremonially laid on the Cenotaph each Remembrance Sunday to the placing of flowers at a grave or memorial site. Originally used to ‘hide the odour of decay in the days when the dead were laid out’,<sup>323</sup> flowers carry symbolic significance during the burial and mourning of bodies. Indeed, it is rare to go to any grave or memorial site without discovering there a form of floral tribute, however small:

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<sup>323</sup> Susan Drury, ‘Funeral Plants and Flowers in England: Some Examples’, in *Folklore*, Vol.105 (1994), p.101.



White rose at the 9/11 Memorial, New York City.

Evidence for the use of flowers alongside funeral rites extends back to early burials. When Tutankhamun's tomb was re-opened in 1922 the pharaoh's funerary flowers (garlands, collars, bouquets) were all found intact, over three thousand years after being sealed up: cornflowers, olive leaves, persea leaves, date palms, willow, waterlilies and others made up these *ephemera* of burial, perfectly preserved by the moistureless atmosphere.<sup>324</sup> In 2013 a 12,000 year old Natufian grave on Mount Carmel,

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<sup>324</sup> See F. Nigel Hepper, *Pharaoh's Flowers: The Botanical Treasures of Tutankhamun* (London: Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew/HMSO, 1990), pp.8-18; and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, 'Floral Collars from Tutankhamun's Embalming Cache', <http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/works-of-art/09.184.214-.216> [Accessed 21/2/15].

Israel was discovered, lined with leaves of mint and sage, providing the oldest recorded example of flowers being used in burials.<sup>325</sup>

Flowers and plants are an accompaniment to the casket, the grave marker, the inscribed stone. As the opening passage from Milton's 'Lycidas' illustrates, flowers are there to decorate, to scatter, to dress the hearse, bier or tomb, providing the corpse and its encasing architecture with aesthetic, aromatic or symbolic value. So ubiquitous is this language of flowers in our cultural history that we could be forgiven for barely noticing it. Whilst traditional customs, such as the burial of virgins with garlands (to signify both their purity and their reward in heaven),<sup>326</sup> might seem antiquated, current practices of white flowers at the funerals of children or sudden deaths still persist, with the connotations of purity intact. Perhaps the most famous example is the bouquet of white roses with the funeral card 'mummy' written by Prince William and Prince Harry for their mother Diana Princess of Wales's funeral in 1997, much-circulated in the media at the time:



[<http://partners.nytimes.com/library/world/diana/090797diana-funeral.3.jpg>]

<sup>325</sup> Ker Than, 'Mysterious Pair Buried with Flowers – Oldest Example Yet', in *National Geographic*, <http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2013/07/130701-natufians-flowers-grave-funeral-science-ancient/> [Accessed 21/2/15].

<sup>326</sup> See Drury, p.102.

In this simple image we can see how the juxtaposition of the traditional white lilies with the cream roses signifies purity, beauty and innocence, something to which the hand-written card attests. In this instance the innocence extends not only to the deceased but also to the mourners themselves, recalling Wordsworth's insistence upon the legitimacy of the mourner, the process of remembrance being for 'the common benefit of the living'.<sup>327</sup> The suddenness of Diana's death, its violence, is reflected in the purity of the colours, as well as the symbolism of the flowers. The posthumous title of 'England's Rose' that Diana earned also adds significance to the choice of white roses, the supposedly quintessential 'English' flower, alongside the more traditional funeral lilies.<sup>328</sup> These hidden-yet-visible codes of signification lend a certain air of seamliness, perhaps even legitimacy, to the act of mourning. It is the same impulse behind the use of the poppy to signify and commemorate Remembrance Sunday: to use any other flower would feel aesthetically and symbolically wrong, because of its deep-rooted association with the battlefields of the First World War.<sup>329</sup> Poppies flourished on the battlefields because the intensity of the fighting had so disturbed the ground, providing the poppies with ideal growing conditions, for 'once the ground was disturbed by the fighting, the poppy seeds lying in the ground began to germinate and grow during the

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<sup>327</sup> William Wordsworth, 'Essay Upon Epitaphs' – I (1810), in Paul M. Zall (ed.), *Literary Criticism of William Wordsworth* (Regents Critics Series) (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1966), p.96.

<sup>328</sup> Although of course the rose has an extensive and rich symbolic history dating back to at least the Ancient Greeks. See Lizzie Deas, *Flower Favourites: Their Legends, Symbolism and Significance* (1898) (Whitefish, MT: Kessinger Publishing, 2009), pp.1-22.

<sup>329</sup> Perhaps most famously evoked by John McCrae's 1915 poem 'In Flanders Fields'. See <http://www.greatwar.co.uk/poems/john-mccrae-in-flanders-fields.htm> [Accessed 28/8/15].

warm weather'.<sup>330</sup> As Jennifer Iles notes, the poppy possesses a 'symbolism of shared memory of sacrifice and regeneration',<sup>331</sup> although this too is by no means fixed.<sup>332</sup>

The juxtaposition of the poppies alongside the scenes of destruction of the First World War, the tangible index of plants to corpses evoked by *Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red*, mimics the relationship between living plants and trees (as distinct from cut flowers that will wither and die) and the burial of the dead. There is a synchronicity to this arrangement: the slowly decaying bodies under the earth and the slowly growing trees above it. Not only are cut flowers and wreaths placed at graves and monuments, but trees, bushes and plants are often integral to the landscape of many monuments, even in cities.<sup>333</sup> The man-made stone and concrete monuments which I have been discussing are in fact almost always ghosted by another network of organic, growing monuments.<sup>334</sup> Trees and plants found in burial grounds or commemorative planting schemes possess their own taxonomy of meaning, alongside and separate from the stone monuments. As Paul Gough explains:

The weeping willow (*Salix babylonica*)...derives its name from Psalm 137 which relates the story of the Jews' lament for Zion while in captivity, when they sat by the rivers of Babylon and wept and hung their 'harps in the willows'. With its gracefully wilting branches and mournful demeanour the willow became a symbol of mourning that enjoyed especial popularity in English grave monuments and funerary plaques in the mid-19th

<sup>330</sup> See <http://www.greatwar.co.uk/article/remembrance-poppy.htm> [Accessed 28/8/15].

<sup>331</sup> Jennifer Iles, 'In Remembrance: The Flanders Poppy', in *Mortality: Promoting the Interdisciplinary Study of Death and Dying*, Vol.13, No.3 (2008), p.217. Iles's article provides an extremely full discussion of the significance of the poppy in remembrance discourse.

<sup>332</sup> See Deas pp.76-82 for a pre-First World War interpretation of the poppy's various symbolic meanings.

<sup>333</sup> Rachel Whiteread's monument is notable for the complete lack of plants surrounding it, except for the potted plants of the nearby café.

<sup>334</sup> As an example of the kind of ethnographic research undertaken around burial sites and flowers, see Amots Dafni, Efraim Lev, Sabine Beckmann and Christian Eichberger, 'Ritual Plants of Muslim Graveyards in Northern Israel', in *Journal of Ethnobiology and Ethnomedicine*, Vol.38, No.2 (2006), <http://www.ethnobiomed.com/content/2/1/38> [Accessed 21/2/15].

century.... The cypress, by comparison, may be a pre-Christian symbol of death, as it is clearly evident in the tomb gardens of Pompeii.... It was much revered as a symbol of death because it was thought that it was the only tree that once cut down would never grow again.<sup>335</sup>

In many cases we are so used to this mixture of plants and graves that it hardly seems noticeable: so focused are we on the text and context of the monument that whatever plants accompany it are only mentioned for their sensory or aesthetic qualities. But plants are in possession of less fixed, more disruptive meanings than the engraved stones of commemoration, and the two together produce a different kind of mnemonic potentiality when we start paying more attention to this 'other' network of monuments.

Plants can easily 'outlive' a grave-marker or monument, evading the destruction engraved stone can be subject to, leaving us in some cases with plants as the *only* monument, the only mnemonic trace. What role, in that instance, does a plant begin to fulfil, as a living organism existing and growing in time in a manner that stone, being eroded and weathered, does not? And does its growing, living properties make it any less 'monumental'? This chapter will consider these questions, but also explore the queer, erotic potentiality of plants not just as accompaniments to monuments, but as monuments in their own right. Plants in this context can take the form of unintentional remainders or witnesses, surviving beyond the destruction of any physical, man-made traces of atrocity, or, in the case of Paul Harfleet's *The Pansy Project*, as a deliberately anti-normative, 'spontaneous gesture' of monumentalisation. My interest here lies in living, continuous, growing monuments, rather than the ephemeral or temporary floral

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<sup>335</sup> Paul Gough, 'Conifers and Commemoration – the Politics and Protocol of Planting', in *Landscape Research*, Vol.21, No.1, p.73.



offerings such as those at roadside fatalities,<sup>336</sup> although as the immediate placing of floral tributes on the beach at Sousse following the June 2015 Tunisia terrorist attack shows, cut flowers can form an extremely powerful form of instantaneous commemoration.<sup>337</sup>

For sites of mass murder, trees and the landscape in which they grow are often the only monument to what has gone before. No more striking reminder of this exists than in Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah* (1985), a groundbreaking Holocaust documentary film which uses no recycled historical footage at all, and relies instead on eyewitness interviews against the backdrop of what was then modern-day Europe and Israel.<sup>338</sup> When interviews are taking place at the site of concentration camps, particularly those of Sobibor and Treblinka, the only real *background* to the conversation is vast tracts of forest, so dominating that even the few architectural remains of the camps are dwarfed by the trees.

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<sup>336</sup> For further discussion on temporary monuments see Erika Doss, *The Emotional Life of Contemporary Public Memorials: Towards a Theory of Temporary Memorials* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2008).

<sup>337</sup> See Richard Wheatstone, 'Tunisia hotel attack: Grieving tourists return to beach 24 hours on as UK faces "severe terrorist threat"', *Mirror*, 27/6/15, 13.00 BST, <http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/world-news/tunisia-hotel-attack-grieving-tourists-5958855> [Accessed 29/8/15], BBC News, 'Tunisia attack: Queen offers condolences to victims' families', 28/6/15 <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-33304310> [Accessed 29/8/15], *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 'Tunisia terror beach attack claims 15 British lives, toll could rise', 28/6/15, <http://www.smh.com.au/world/tunisia-terror-beach-attack-claims-15-british-lives-toll-could-rise-20150627-ghzk96.html> [Accessed 29/8/15]. As the preserved flowers from Tutankhamun's tomb show, plants may last as long as stone, and in the case of living plants, continue growing as stone monuments weather and erode, fall into ruination and disrepair.

<sup>338</sup> *Shoah* has itself become something of a monument, not only for its epic running time but its twofold commemoration of both Holocaust testimony *and* the landscapes of Europe and Israel in the 1970s/1980s, before the fall of communism. Its reliance on contemporary footage rather than historical cinereel is still remarkable, the elegant sweeping shots of cities, forests and streets becoming as much a part of its fascination as the people and stories it is narrating.





[Still from Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah*, <http://ecx.images-amazon.com/images/I/813tP7Yh2TL. SL1470 .jpg>]

In this context (and particularly as seen in this still), plants provide a monumental scale in contrast to the absence of monumental architecture. Even the impressive stone monuments in Treblinka are dwarfed by the dense forest they find themselves in, the unending vistas of trees providing the kind of silent witnessing that can feel more potent than carved stone.

*Shoah*, with its emphasis on the contemporary world in which it was filmed, is as much a documentary about the landscape of mass murder as it is about the historical facts or memories of that murder. Peter Lennon has commented that Lanzmann's technique 'delivered a more powerful sense of the reality of that stupendous crime than the explicit newsreel footage of the camps we had become accustomed to.... His film obliged us to imagine again and reconstruct the reality in our own minds.'<sup>339</sup>

<sup>339</sup> Peter Lennon, 'Ghosts of Sobibor' (Interview with Claude Lanzmann), *The Guardian*, Friday 27 July 2001, 04.38 BST, <http://www.theguardian.com/film/2001/jul/27/artsfeatures> [Accessed 22/2/15].

This reconstruction that Lennon talks about is, in fact, the work that often has to be done at any memorial site: our imagination is required to bend itself to a particular event, concept, or emotion. Monuments helps us to do this, to instruct us what we should be thinking about and why. But plants, free as they are from text, provide us with a different text altogether, one that is accretive and secretive. As Timothy Morton points out: ‘at the base of the daffodil, where it joins the stem, you see traces of how the flower looked when it started to spread upward and outward. You’re looking at the daffodil’s past, as well as at the past development of the flower as a species.’<sup>340</sup> By looking at the trees of Treblinka, we are not just being confronted by living things that are the only ‘witnesses’ to that event, but living things that contain their own symbolic, ecological and biological meanings. Whereas monuments are created, and may indeed survive beyond human consciousness, plants (whenever they are planted) pre-date this consciousness, precisely because of their genetic make-up. In this sense their living qualities make them potentially disruptive, almost fathomless, less easy to marshal into our own monumental narratives.<sup>341</sup>

Perhaps this is what Robert Pogue Harrison means when he calls the forest ‘the scene for what later comes to be known as the “unconscious”’:<sup>342</sup> the mass of trees forming a similarly mute witness, both overwhelming and unfathomable. Perhaps most

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<sup>340</sup> Timothy Morton, *The Ecological Thought* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012), p.68. Stone and concrete of course possess their own history of development locked within them, but are in the process of being eroded or broken down again by the elements: they are in a process of decay to which living plants act as a counter.

<sup>341</sup> Perhaps part of the reason why *Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red* transfigured the form of real poppies into a man-made sculpture that could be ‘planted’, controlled and manipulated to suit the desires of its creators: planting real poppies, with all the potential for ‘chaos’ that that entails (lack of uniformity, inability to aesthetically control them), would have been an extremely different gesture, and one which ultimately couldn’t have been linked to capital as successfully as the clay poppies, which were sold off for £25 each and possess a monetary value.

<sup>342</sup> Robert Pogue Harrison, *Forests: The Shadows of Civilisation* (1992) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), p.87.

affecting are the straight lines still formed by treelines at concentration camp sites, marking the barbed-wire enclosure between camp and the outside world. Visiting Treblinka now, its stone monuments aside, it is this presence of potentially limitless forest surrounding these regular clearings of mass murder that is most affecting. In this forest, accessed through the porous boundary between clearing and canopy, there lies mystery, perhaps concealed danger. There is no way of really knowing what is within or beyond the trees.



This kind of forest, a living monument to a recent past, once used to conceal the very atrocities it now bears witness to, seems to conjure both the medieval sense of forest as the *foris*, 'outside of law and human society', and the Enlightenment's 'reduction of forests to utility'. The forest serves its purpose (in the case of Treblinka and Sobibor of concealment), but now all that is left of the human is the trace we find, a kind of atrocious nostalgia or half-memory, the forest becoming 'a place of strange or monstrous or enchanting epiphanies'.<sup>343</sup>

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<sup>343</sup> Pogue Harrison, *Forests*, p.61, p.121.

Living plants are perhaps the only monuments to fully embody what Adrian Parr describes as a 'utopian trajectory of memorialisation'. The aim of Parr's work on monuments, which examines what she perceives as a 'debilitating mechanism of a traumatic memory that condemns public remembrance to a melancholic look to the past without any glimmer of hope for what the future may hold',<sup>344</sup> is to re-examine them through an unashamedly utopian lens. For Parr, the perceived atrophy and fascism<sup>345</sup> inherent in the melancholic look backwards precludes any kind of positive futurity, and hence needs to be re-imagined so that we can 'conserve the force of trauma as it endures in the witness without preserving it in a transcendent or repressive structure'.<sup>346</sup> It can be argued that preserving trauma (rather than dissipating it) is in itself a potentially damaging move, one that monuments by their nature perpetuate. Is it possible that a 'living monument' provides an effective witness to trauma without necessarily locking it into 'a transcendent or repressive structure'?

Plants used specifically *as* memorials (rather than as an accompaniment to them) are relatively few, and most, such as commemorative trees, rely on on-site text to tell the viewer that the plant is performing a specific commemorative function. But Paul Harfleet's *The Pansy Project*, located across multiple sites throughout Europe and America since 2005, is exceptional because it contains no such on-site text. Moreover, its commemoration of homophobic abuse, and its deliberate anti-monumental means of commemoration, have led to a monument that opens up new mnemonic possibilities:

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<sup>344</sup> Adrian Parr, *Deleuze and Memorial Culture: Desire, Singular Memory and the Politics of Trauma* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008), p.187, p.12.

<sup>345</sup> For Parr 'fascism' comes about through the desire to preserve trauma as part of a directed, 'monumental', repressive structure. These sentiments are not dissimilar to Gillian Rose's explorations of fascism and remembrance in *Mourning Becomes the Law*.

<sup>346</sup> Parr, p.188.

Artist Paul Harfleet plants pansies at the site of homophobic abuse, he finds the nearest source of soil to where the incident occurred and generally without civic permission plants one unmarked pansy. The flower is then photographed in its [sic] location and posted on this website, the image is entitled after the abuse. Titles like "Let's kill the Bati-Man!" and "Fucking Faggot!" reveal a frequent reality of gay experience which often goes unreported to authorities and by the media.

This simple action operates as a gesture of quiet resistance, some pansies flourish and others wilt in urban hedgerows. The artist began by planting pansies to mark his own experience of homophobia on the streets of Manchester (UK) though he plants pansies for others both on an individual basis and as part of various festivals and events. Perhaps most poignantly The Pansy Project also marks locations where people have been killed as a result of homophobic attack, for example a pansy for Michael Causer who was murdered in Liverpool in 2008.<sup>347</sup>

The pansies are planted as a commemorative act as well as a mnemonic one, performing as markers for something fleeting, acting as a kind of Winnicottian 'spontaneous gesture' of remembrance. By photographing the site of the planting, Harfleet is committing it to a permanent visual record, building an archive of homophobic abuse which, using these small markers, indicates the true magnitude of an often unrecorded and unmonumentalised societal problem. As well as the photographic record, providing visual proof of the memorialising act, the pansy itself, for however brief a time, becomes a living organism which, rather than ossifying the act of trauma, grows it upwards and outwards towards the future, even though left exposed and untended, it has no guarantee of survival.

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<sup>347</sup> [www.thepansyproject.com](http://www.thepansyproject.com) [Accessed 14/1/14]





“For Michael Causer” Huyton, Liverpool’

[<http://www.thepansyproject.com/page15.htm>, Accessed 31/8/15].

That *The Pansy Project* seeks no approval from governmental authorities for its existence<sup>348</sup> distinguishes it from most memorial projects, which must often go through a rigorous and protracted public consultation and development process. This aligns it more closely with temporary roadside or shrine memorials, monuments that spring up from a spontaneous need rather than governmental policy, taking up, as Harfleet puts it, a spirit of ‘quiet resistance’.<sup>349</sup> This resistance comes in the form of a simple, regenerative and organic act, that of planting a flower which will die or survive, be removed or flourish, depending on circumstance. As Harfleet comments:

<sup>348</sup> With the exception of larger projects such as the *Homotopia* collaborations. See <http://www.thepansyproject.com/page15.htm> [Accessed 31/8/15].

<sup>349</sup> Paul Harfleet, Interview with the author, 6 July 2013.

The project is informed by roadside memorials to accidents, which change that location and allow it to be read in a different way... because the pansies are a living plant they can grow or die and you can grow also. In an ideal world all the pansies would grow and flourish.<sup>350</sup>

As with roadside floral tributes the location of the pansy planting is specific, not only because it marks the site of abuse, drawing 'sorrow outwards towards these markers of tragic death',<sup>351</sup> but also because it calls a homosexual man into existence on that spot, un-ghettoised and unmediated. In that way *The Pansy Project* combines two striking qualities of the plant, for 'not only does the word refer to an effeminate or gay man: The name of the flower originates from the French verb; pensar (to think)'.<sup>352</sup>

The pansies Harfleet plants are not just living organisms containing their own ancestral genealogy of evolution, they also inhabit a complex world of language and symbol. The pansy becomes, unlike a sculpted monument, a pre-existing entity that carries with it its own meanings, narratives and histories. In this way the pansy is *already* monumental, or at the very least mnemonic, even before its appropriation by Harfleet into *The Pansy Project*. Although seldom discussed, it is the complex history of this plant as a cultural signifier that I intend to explore now, in order to reveal the richness of it as a flower-monument, providing an excess of meaning that in its proliferation becomes a distinctly queer, anti-normative form of remembrance.

This form of remembrance, the 'noticing' or 'thinking' that Harfleet acknowledges, forms the etymological root of 'pansy', a late middle-English word corrupted from the

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<sup>350</sup> Paul Harfleet, Interview with the author, 6 July 2013.

<sup>351</sup> Karen Wilson Baptist, 'Diaspora: Death Without a Landscape', in *Mortality: Promoting the Interdisciplinary Study of Death and Dying* 15:4, 294-307 (2010) (Routledge)

<sup>352</sup> Paul Harfleet, *The Pansy Project*, 'How it began...', <http://www.thepansyproject.com/page2.htm> [Accessed 2 September 2015].

French *pensée*, which means ‘thought’.<sup>353</sup> Hence the pansy coming to signify not remembrance exactly, but a thinking. As Ophelia says, pansies are ‘for thoughts’, not ‘for remembrance’.<sup>354</sup> Frances Freeling Broderip writes in 1869 that ‘the pansy is also somewhat endued with a soft shadow, not necessarily of grief, but solemn and quiet, indeed grave, as thought should be’.<sup>355</sup> This is an important distinction, one that Milton alludes to in ‘Lycidas’. The ‘pansy freaked with jet’ is there, not to remember the dead Lycidas, but to scatter on his hearse so that he is thought of, because his body is not inside the tomb, but lost to the ocean. Milton is not simply remembering his dead friend, but thinking about him, around him and beyond him into something else; his death not provoking a mourner’s eulogy but instead foretelling the fall of the Clergy. This kind of thinking which the pansy possesses, symbolises and invites takes us beyond remembrance into thinking about something *other*, something outside of ourselves, something not entirely graspable. This contrasts with Wordsworth’s conception of the monument and its epitaph as bringing ‘satisfaction to the sorrowing hearts of the Survivors, and for the common benefit of the living’.<sup>356</sup>

Herbalist John Gerard published the beautifully illustrated *The Herball, or Generall Historie of Plantes* in 1597, a stunning text of over a thousand pages detailing the properties and history of a wide range of plants, the work itself a translation of an earlier *Herball* by Rembert Dodoens in 1554. Whilst not the most rigorously scientific work, Gerard’s engaging writing style ensured that it remained a popular gardener’s

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<sup>353</sup> OED, ‘pansy’.

<sup>354</sup> William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, 4.5.171, in *The Complete Pelican Shakespeare*, ed. Stephen Orgel and A.R. Braunmuller, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2002). Ophelia’s previous line is: ‘There’s rosemary, that’s for remembrance’ (*Hamlet* 4.5.170).

<sup>355</sup> Frances Freeling Broderip, ‘A Handful of Pansies’, in Mrs. Henry Wood (ed.), *The Argosy*, Vol. VIII, July-December 1869 (London: J. Ogden and Co., 1869), p.72.

<sup>356</sup> Wordsworth, ‘Essay Upon Epitaphs’, p.96.



almanac well into the nineteenth-century.<sup>357</sup> Gerard's description of the pansy, coming after extremely lyrical praise of the violet, is worth quoting:

The upright Pansie bringeth forth long leaves, deeply cut in the edges, sharp pointed, of a bleak or pale green colour, set upon slender upright stalks, cornered, jointed, or kneed, a foot high or higher; whereupon do grow very fair flowers of three colours, that is, of purple, blue and yellow, in shape like the common Hartesease, but greater and fairer; which colours are so excellently and orderly placed, that they bring great delectation to the beholders, though they have little or no smell at all.<sup>358</sup>

Although here describing an upright, bushy pansy, quite distinct from the type used by Harfleet, Gerard's prose conveys something of the fair-yet-hardy properties of this often overlooked flower, which he later describes as 'gallant and beautiful'.<sup>359</sup> It is also a description of some contrasts: the 'bleak' leaves, the 'fair' flowers with their lack of scent, the 'slender' stalks but bushy and robust appearance, that it is 'like' the common heartsease or viola, but markedly different.<sup>360</sup>

Gerard also adds to the long list of colloquial names for the pansy: the *Heart's-ease*, *Herb-Trinitie* ('by reason of the triple colour of the flowers'),<sup>361</sup> *Love-in-idleness*, *Three-faces-in-a-hood* and *Call-me-to-you*. But the pansy's names extend far beyond these five, and it has one of the most profligate, excessive lists of colloquialisms of any plant, including but by no means limited to: *Kiss-me-at-the-garden-gate*, *Cat's-faces*, *Godfathers and Godmothers*, *Kiss (Me) Behind The Garden Gate*, *Faces In A Hood*,

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<sup>357</sup> See the entry for John Gerard in Marcel De Cleene and Marie Claire Lejeune (trans. Gregory Ball), *Compendium of Symbolic and Ritual Plants in Europe. Vol. I: Trees and Shrubs* (Ghent: Man and Culture Publishers, 2003), p.61.

<sup>358</sup> John Gerard, *The Herball, or Generall Historie of Plantes* (London, John Norton, 1597), p.703. For ease of reading I have largely replaced the archaic spelling with modern syntax.

<sup>359</sup> *Ibid.*, p.704.

<sup>360</sup> A concept of being the same-yet-different that seems to chime with ideas surrounding homosexual visibility.

<sup>361</sup> John Gerard, *The Herball*, p.704.

*Bleeding Heart, Kiss-her-in-the-Buttery, Kiss Me Ere I Rise, Kisses, Flamy, Wild Love And Idle, Kitty Run The Streets, and Johnny-jump-up.*<sup>362</sup> Perhaps most striking is the anthropomorphism present in these colloquial namings: indeed it makes the Latin *viola* (denoting the colour purple) seem strangely insufficient at conveying the energy this plant invokes. Like Oberon's speech in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the pansy here can be seen to encompass an erotic, declarative symbolism alongside its quiet, grave properties. Oberon's mythologizing of the pansy suggests that its once white blooms were stained purple by Cupid's bow, a flower that has become wounded, bruised by love:

OBERON

Yet marked I where the bolt of Cupid fell.  
It fell upon a little western flower,  
Before milk-white, now purple with love's wound,  
And maidens call it love-in-idleness.<sup>363</sup>

This excess of meanings that the pansy possesses speaks to a queerness that goes beyond its appropriation as slang for 'an effeminate man; a male homosexual'.<sup>364</sup> This queerness resonates from the pansy acting as a symbol for several identities or

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<sup>362</sup> See De Cleene and Lejeune, *Vol. 1*, p.541 for a more complete list. The colloquialisms are a curious mixture of quiet contemplation and expressive gestures or commands. *Love-in-idleness* conveys time and thought (the idle lover having plenty of time to think), and the religious associations of *Three-faces-in-a-hood* and *Herb Trinitie* gesture towards something spiritual, otherworldly or deathlike, but with a curious temporal stillness, perhaps conjured by the 'hood' image. Compare these sensations to *Call-me-to-you*, *Kiss-me-at-the-garden-gate* and *Johnny-jump-up* and we seem to be describing a different flower altogether, one which possesses a definite erotic energy in its simple, joyful commands: 'call me', 'kiss me', 'jump up'. Something of this erotic energy is captured in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, its boisterous confusion suiting Oberon's magical love pansy as well as Ophelia's sombre thought-provoking pansy.

<sup>363</sup> William Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 2.1.165-72, in *The Complete Pelican Shakespeare*, ed. Stephen Orgel and A.R. Braunmuller (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2002).

<sup>364</sup> OED, 'pansy'.

meanings, refusing to be fixed to one name or one narrative, shifting between different registers, even genders (encompassing a female name and slang for a gay man).<sup>365</sup>

One further aspect of the pansy's queerness lies in its cultivation. Unlike many species, which tend to be homogenous in their flower colours unless specifically crossbred, pansies pollinate with each other to produce 'hybrid' offspring, which in turn produce more hybrids, ensuring that whilst they are all part of the same species, there is an almost limitless combination of flower colourings, patterns and characteristics. The 1871 edition of *The Country Gentlemen's Magazine* details their early appearance in Gerard's book to their first commercial propagation by Lady Mary Bennett and Mr. Lee of Hammersmith in 1813:

Hybrids are... obtained by fertilising the stigma of one beautiful flower with the pollen of another equally fine. These hybrids generally retain in a degree the peculiar markings of each parent. Besides partaking of the varied colours of their progenitors, they also possess their peculiarities.... Innumerable are the varieties now cultivated; there are upwards of a thousand named sorts catalogued by the English florists.

Mrs. Loudon says, in her 'Ladies' Flower Garden', that 'the varieties of forms and colours which appear in the plants raised from seed are indeed so great that few floricultural pursuits can be more interesting than to sow a bed of Pansies, and watch when they flower, for the varieties desirable to perpetuate'.<sup>366</sup>

The anthropomorphism of the pansy seems apparent, particularly in the first paragraph.

The description of the plant's characteristics are seen in terms of a child and its parents,

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<sup>365</sup> 'Queer' is, I acknowledge, not an easy term to appropriate or use. Without wishing to dwell on the complexities around the term, I do recognise that 'queer' in itself does not occupy a single meaning that can be nicely appropriated into a project such as this. However, it is extremely fruitful to put the pansy into a queer-influenced mode of enquiry, if only to draw out its many fascinating connections more fully. As William B. Turner writes, 'we cannot fully understand any of these domains except as we understand how they interact'. See William B. Turner, *A Genealogy of Queer Theory* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2000), p.4.

<sup>366</sup> *The Country Gentlemen's Magazine*, Vol. VIII (London, Simpkin Marshall & Co., 1871), p.112.

the idea of ‘peculiarities’ lending itself easily to the aura of individuality which makes *The Pansy Project* so successful. Also notable is the pansy’s ‘face’, perhaps most famously exaggerated in the Walt Disney movie *Alice in Wonderland* (1951), but quite clear in any photograph, and noted by Henry Phillips in his *Flora Historica* (1829): ‘you may almost as well seek a perfect likeness in two faces, as hunt for Pansies of the same tint’.<sup>367</sup> Striking in all of this is that despite being a plant, the pansy seems to embody or portray human characteristics or qualities, mimicking faces, making them alive or recognisable.<sup>368</sup>

And running alongside these other meanings lies the main reason that Paul Harfleet is planting pansies at sites of homophobic abuse: the name is a slang term for a homosexual or effeminate man. This slang is a twentieth-century phenomenon, and can be traced back to recorded use in 1929:

M. LIEF *Hangover* 210 ‘Say, what do you know about this?’ he said.  
‘One of those pansies was trying to date me up!’.

J. DEVANNY, *Riven*, xvii. 112 ‘Thanks. Don’t bother.’ The voice was warm... A rich telephone voice. To an artist a pansy voice; a purple pansy.<sup>369</sup>

Max Lief’s *Hangover* was first published in October 1929 and garnered enough ‘buzz’ to put it into its third printing by December that year.<sup>370</sup> *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle* on August 24<sup>th</sup> 1929 tells its readers that ‘there have been over a thousand advance

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<sup>367</sup> Henry Phillips, *Flora Historica*, p.74.

<sup>368</sup> The Italian for pansy, *Viola flammea* – Violet flame – and *Viola farfalla* – Violet butterfly – also point towards qualities other than mentation, linking the pansy with both an element and an insect.

<sup>369</sup> *OED*, ‘pansy’. Max Lief’s *Hangover* (New York: Horace Liveright, 1929) is also credited with the first recorded use of the word ‘homo’. See *Out History*, ‘Leo Adams: A Gay Life in Letters, 1928-52’, <http://outhistory.org/exhibits/show/leo-adams-a-gay-life-in-letter/reading-material> [Accessed 5/3/15].

See Lief, *Hangover*, p.100.

<sup>370</sup> Lief, *Hangover*, publisher’s plate.

copies of Max Lief's "Hangover" sold from the catalog description alone...'.<sup>371</sup> Lief, a successful journalist and Broadway lyricist,<sup>372</sup> situates *Hangover* firmly in the alternative, gossip world of the New York theatre scene of the time,<sup>373</sup> and it was described as 'a swell, intimate, newsy tome'.<sup>374</sup> Frank in its portrayal of the 'immoral' underworld of Broadway, the book is peppered with sly asides towards the not-quite-offstage homosexuality surrounding it.

Pansies queer this text: they are entirely themselves, impossible for the protagonists of *Hangover* to ignore, occupying a lived and visible existence:

They arrested the entire company and loaded them into the police vans for a ride to the station-house. Laughing and chattering gayly, they lifted their skirts and boarded the wagon. One of the boys slapped a police sergeant in the face when the officer tried to take his lipstick away from him.

'Say, what do you know about this?' he said. 'One of those pansies was trying to date me up!'  
'Believe me,' said Louise, 'they're the safest thing in pants for a respectable young girl to go out with these days.'

'Why don't you go up to the Drag they're running in Harlem next week?' said Jack. 'You can see your boy-friends in all their glory there.'  
'The poor things,' said Louise, 'I pity them.'  
'Why pity them? They're perfectly happy as they are.'<sup>375</sup>

<sup>371</sup> Rian James, 'Staccatos', in *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, New York, Saturday August 24<sup>th</sup>, 1929, p.9. <http://fultonhistory.com/Newspaper%205/Brooklyn%20NY%20Daily%20Eagle/Brooklyn%20NY%20Daily%20Eagle%201929%20Grayscale/Brooklyn%20NY%20Daily%20Eagle%201929%20a%20Grayscale%20-%2000036.pdf> [Accessed 18<sup>th</sup> January 2014].

<sup>372</sup> See 'Parents of 8 Professional Men Delight in Sons' Books' in *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, New York, Friday October 25<sup>th</sup>, 1929, p.18. Accessed via <http://bklyn.newspapers.com/image/59852771/> [Accessed 5/3/15].

<sup>373</sup> See Rian James's *Dining in New York* (New York: John Day Company, 1930), for a contemporary insight into New York's close-knit restaurant scene at the time. Lief and his brother are mentioned as being frequenters of *Sardi's*, 'the Mecca for theatrical and newspaper New York'. See pp.18-19.

<sup>374</sup> Rian James, 'The Inky Way', in *The Brooklyn Eagle Magazine*, Sunday December 1<sup>st</sup> 1929, p.14, <http://www.newspapers.com/image/58267892/> [Accessed 5/3/15].

<sup>375</sup> Lief, *Hangover*, p.97, p.210, p.211.

Whatever the archaisms of description or attitude, *Hangover* is an important text in any narrative of queer literary history, because the portrayal of gay characters and relationships is so casual, in keeping with the book's tone of unflinchingly flippant satire and provocative dismissal of conventional morals.<sup>376</sup> And even if there is a distinct tension in the text between giving gay characters visibility and ridiculing them (or displaying unease around them), *Hangover* sets out to shock, to satirise, to disregard whatever rules are supposed to be followed.<sup>377</sup>

In a twist to the story that exposes the fragility of pansies/homosexuals and their survival, *Hangover* was re-published in 1950 as *Wild Parties*, in which process the text was heavily edited to 'de-queer' it, and rather disingenuously described on the cover as 'specially revised and edited'. Whilst the 'pansies' comment remains intact, the title of character Queenie Quatrain's Broadway-shocking play, 'Man to Man' is changed to 'Male and Female' and the description significantly altered, with many of the other references to visible homosexuality quietly dropped.<sup>378</sup> If we needed reminding of the fragile presents commemorated by *The Pansy Project*, the act of editorial homophobia exercised against *Hangover* is a key starting-point.

Jean Devanny's book *Riven*, whilst listed by the *OED* alongside *Hangover* as the pansy-as-queer "Ground Zero", is an extremely different text, almost entirely the opposite. Written in her native New Zealand, Devanny is approaching 'pansy' from a

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<sup>376</sup> For example, an announcement is placed by character Cosmo Humphrey reading 'Mr. Cosmo Humphrey and Miss Queenie Quatrain beg to announce to all their friends that they are now living in sin'. Lief, *Hangover*, p.99.

<sup>377</sup> Rian James's pen portrait of Lief, 'The Inky Way', is a perfect example of this kind of journalistic wisecracking: 'His [Lief's] column, called "Snapshots", was so intelligent that it only lasted a month'. See James, 'The Inky Way', p.14. Unfortunately I cannot find any contemporary reviews of *Hangover* outside of James's numerous articles on Lief. Further research would be needed to see just what kind of effect the book produced and where it sits with regard to the Harlem Renaissance, for example.

<sup>378</sup> See Max Lief, *Wild Parties* (New York: Diversey Publishing Corp., 1950), pp.55-56 and compare to Max Lief, *Hangover*, pp.96-98.

contrasting perspective to that taken up by the urbane Lief. Instead of the fast-paced world of Broadway, *Riven* is set in interwar Wellington and follows the emotional upheavals and changing relationships within an upper middle-class suburban family of whom Marigold is the mother and chief protagonist. Almost from the beginning of the book it is clear that beneath the suburban normalcy there are extraordinary tensions, desires and frustrations: if *Hangover* is all on the surface then *Riven* is entirely the opposite, a theme Devanny constantly draws attention to ('she never leant close enough to the waters to see down to the ooze beneath').<sup>379</sup>

But like *Hangover*, *Riven* is a book positioned defiantly against a 'common sense' morality or heteronormative viewpoint. The story, which charts the awakening of the naïve Marigold to the world around her, unfolds a narrative of adultery, abortion, prostitution, fluid sexualities and incestuous obsession. But this isn't merely 'potboiler' territory: Devanny's portrayals of men and women are in themselves slippery, queer, constantly refusing any kind of normative description. Reading the book one is struck by the presence of something 'other' within the narrative, something intangible and hard to grasp, something alongside or underneath the 'simple escapist imperialist romance'.<sup>380</sup> *Riven* is smuggling other things in with it,<sup>381</sup> as can be seen in this bizarrely unsettling description:

Marigold stopped in the doorway, trembling violently. Her womanhood was blurred with the force of her emotion. The lines of her face, her whole figure, were unfeminine. At first sight of

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<sup>379</sup> Jean Devanny, *Riven* (London: Duckworth, 1929), pp.25-26.

<sup>380</sup> Nancy L. Paxton, 'From Cosmopolitan Romance to Transnational Fiction: Re-Reading Jean Devanny's Australian Novels', p.218.

<sup>381</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.218-221.

her Alicia was struck with a wild and violent notion that Marigold was a man.<sup>382</sup>

This kind of gender metamorphosis happens throughout the novel, concerned as it with appearance and reality, what is on the surface and what is beneath. Although we might wish to reject Devanny's essentialist viewpoint (that 'womanhood' both exists and can become 'blurred'), this performance of gender, or rather the tension between outer performance and inner emotion, is an important one, linked inextricably to the subjection and potential of women in the novel.<sup>383</sup> This kind of blurring occurs throughout, characteristics and characters seeming to slip easily between different positions and states, occupying an intriguing space of flux and unreadability.<sup>384</sup>

This brings us to the use of 'pansy' in this work, in a manner that is, in fact, entirely inscrutable. If pansies in *Hangover* are visible, obvious, being bundled into police vans and performing themselves brazenly, *Riven* exposes the more complicated, less certain literary uses of the flower. Whilst the *OED* seems confident that 'pansy' denotes a homosexual man in *Riven*, Devanny in fact uses it to describe Marigold's husband's mistress:

'Thanks. Don't bother.' The voice was warm. An ardent quality infused even the commonplace words. A rich telephone voice. To an artist a pansy voice; a purple pansy.

A little woman, but not *petite*. A body slim as a girl's; clothes like a girl's in fawn satin coat with heavy fawn fur at collar and cuffs,

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<sup>382</sup> Devanny, p.315.

<sup>383</sup> See Paxton, pp.219-220.

<sup>384</sup> See Devanny, particularly pp.45-54 when Marigold's son Hadrian announces he is going 'home' to London, and pp.161-164 when Justine (Marigold's ex-prostitute sister-in-law) 'dresses up' for dusting, seduces, confronts then crumbles before next-door-neighbour Charlie with her niece Fay as a witness to this constantly shifting scene of sexuality. The asexuality of another of Marigold's daughters, Lilith, is coded convincingly by Paxton as belonging to 'the spotlight cast on lesbian sexuality by Radclyffe Hall's notorious censorship trial in England in 1928' (Paxton, pp.219-220).



reaching to the knee. Little fawn hat to match. Gloves, stockings, shoes, bag, all fawn. Her colouring dark as the purple richness of her voice. Her face might have come from the pansy bed. She dropped her soft brown orbs beneath the barrage of feminine hostility and hurried to the door, which the young man held open for her.<sup>385</sup>

It seems unclear what 'pansy' could possibly mean here. If a covert reference to homosexuality, are we meant to infer masculinity, campness or just 'queerness'? Whatever the *OED* says it doesn't seem to quite work: more likely the pansy's trick of disturbance is being used. Not only is the purple a contrast to the vividness of the orange marigold, directly bringing Marigold and the mistress into opposition, but the characterisation of the woman's voice and face as being a pansy, 'from the pansy bed', invokes both a richness and a hiddenness. Like the pansy under the north-facing hedgerow the mistress is shadowy in her fawn and purple, contrasting with the sun-loving marigold. The purple of the pansy as a wound, *qua* Shakespeare, also comes to mind, with the mistress being perhaps in possession of a truer erotic potential than Marigold, but also stained, sullied, 'purple with love's wound'.<sup>386</sup>

The mistress's presence in the text is minimal (we only learn her name, 'Kiddy', indirectly and towards the end of the novel), and she is curiously undeveloped by Devanny, cipher-like, invisible in her visibility:

The two faced each other for two seconds, perhaps, Marigold's regard mildly pleasant – (a 'customer', she thought. 'How nice'. Meaning the startled little figure) – The other's, on seeing her, grown strangely tense and virile. Then the little brown figure with the pansy face murmured: 'Pardon,' stepped aside and dropped her head.<sup>387</sup>

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<sup>385</sup> Devanny, p.112, p.113.

<sup>386</sup> Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 2.1.165-72.

<sup>387</sup> Devanny, p.251.

Although demure, dropping her head, the woman is both ‘tense and virile’ (another ‘masculine’ quality). Although a brief exchange, it is this later encounter between the two women that leads Marigold to consciously recognise what she already knew: her husband’s infidelity. ‘Pansy’ is being used by Devanny to convey this noticing, this bringing-to-consciousness, this queer (in all ways) visibility. And whatever the differences between *Riven* and *Hangover*, they both form part of a moment in the pansy’s symbolic life that is crucial to its identity. This kind of monumentalisation is part of every pansy’s cultural heritage and appropriation.

1929 seems to be ‘the year of the pansy’. Not only were *Hangover* and *Riven* published in this year, but it marked the fabulously short-lived Broadway production *Pansy*, an ‘all colored musical novelty’,<sup>388</sup> which starred queer jazz singer Bessie Smith and ran for only three days, due to abysmal reviews. It was also the year that D.H. Lawrence published *Pansies*, which was to be the final work published in his lifetime.<sup>389</sup> Lawrence’s work, inspired by Pascal’s *Pensées* and rooted in ‘real doggerel’,<sup>390</sup> is imbued with anti-establishment feelings, with Lawrence writing ‘from an impulse to attack English middle-class complacency, a mode of attack to which [he] often returned during

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<sup>388</sup> See first page of the Playbill images for *Pansy*, ‘*Pansy* on Broadway’, *Playbill Vault*, <http://www.playbillvault.com/Show/Detail/9011/Pansy>. See also ‘*Pansy*: Original Broadway Production (1929)’, *OVRTUR* database, <http://www.ovrtur.com/production/2888659> [Accessed 2 September 2015]. A *SparkNotes* entry for Bessie Smith reveals that ‘the show was a flop and closed after three days, even though reviews conceded that Smith’s performances were a break in an otherwise bad show’. See <http://www.sparknotes.com/biography/bessiesmith/section6.rhtml> [Accessed 2 September 2015]. The plot of *Pansy* appears to have been loose at best, following a girl named Pansy through variously thrown-together musical numbers, of which Smith’s was one. The ‘all colored musical novelty’ was tapping into the fast-waning ‘Negro vogue’ of the mid-20s.

<sup>389</sup> Whilst both the musical and Lawrence’s work are not using the term in its slang sense, it is certainly a strange coincidence. It remains unclear if Lawrence would have attributed any importance to the slang term of ‘pansy’ for this title (it seems to be more closely related to pansy-as-thought), but the title still resonates with its queer slang meaning.

<sup>390</sup> D.H. Lawrence, ‘Letter to the Huxleys’, December 1928, quoted in Christopher Pollnitz, *D.H. Lawrence and the Pensée* (Paris: Carrefour Alyscamps, 1995), p.6.

his last year of poetry, and for which he found doggerel an effective form'.<sup>391</sup> Again, pansies here seem to be acting as countering or disruptive force.

1929 would also herald the start of the short-lived 'Pansy Craze', when underground gay clubs in Manhattan were visited by heterosexual white 'slummers' to witness the famous drag balls and female impersonators of the time. By December 1930 a club had even opened called *The Pansy Club* at 48<sup>th</sup> Street and Broadway, the centre of theatrical New York.<sup>392</sup> Borne off the back of the so-called 'Negro Vogue' of the mid-1920s, the Pansy Craze was more-or-less the last hurrah of the Jazz Age: once the Depression hit these clubs closed and the drag balls went back underground.<sup>393</sup> In this intersection of the underground gay world and the visible heterosexual world, it's possible to trace the term 'pansy' as undergoing something of a cultivation of its own at this period, coming to mean quite a specific 'flowery' kind of man, but one showing, in the performance of his queerness, a form of strength, even resistance.

As George Chauncey writes about queer performer Jean Malin (one of the biggest, most high-profile stars of the Pansy Craze), '[he] was regarded as a gay man whose nightclub act revolved around his being gay, not as a "normal" man scornfully mimicking gay mannerisms or engaging in homosexual buffoonery, as was the case in most vaudeville and burlesque routines'.<sup>394</sup> Malin's act:

Embodied the complicated relationship between pansies and 'normal' men. His behaviour was consistent with their

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<sup>391</sup> Pollnitz, p.17.

<sup>392</sup> See George Chauncey, *Gay New York*, "'Pansies on Parade": Prohibition and the Spectacle of the Pansy', pp. 310-330, also The Bowery Boys, 'Welcome to The Pansy Club: leave your wig at the door', 18 June 2010, <http://www.boweryboyshistory.com/2010/06/welcome-to-pansy-club-leave-your-wig-at.html> [Accessed 2 September 2015].

<sup>393</sup> To be famously documented sixty years later in Jennie Livingston's film *Paris is Burning* (1990).

<sup>394</sup> Chauncey, p. 316.

demeaning stereotype of how a pansy should behave, but he demanded their respect; he fascinated and entertained them, but he also threatened and infuriated them.<sup>395</sup>

Something in Chauncey's description of Malin as being both visible and infuriating strikes a chord both with Lief's pansies in *Hangover*, and with *The Pansy Project*: the visibility of the homosexual performance, the performance of a gay man by a gay man (in short, making the gay man visible) as a threatening, beautiful, entertaining spectacle.

Just as the original pansy seemed to 'spring up' in the fifteenth-century, so this out, queer hybrid bloomed in 1929, seemingly overnight. In terms of its literary origin it is a product of the Jazz Age, having walked a seemingly invisible line from prized Victorian cultivar to universal signifier of 'unmanliness' in only thirty years. In the twenty-first century it is seen as an archaism, along with 'Nellie', 'Mary' or 'Nancy Boy' (all female names). But, as *The Pansy Project* shows, the slang-term resonates. This 'coming out' of the pansy into both queer and homophobic parlance tracks the performativity of the word, with the pansy marking not just a specific site of homophobic abuse, but enfolding into that narrative a greater historical arc of queer disruption and homosexual 'noticing'.

Judith Butler writes that 'the subject who is "queered" into public discourse through homophobic interpellations of various kinds *takes up* or *cites* that very term as the discursive basis for an opposition'.<sup>396</sup> In this light each pansy Harfleet plants becomes a dragged-up double of each victim, quite literally enacting the 'pansying-

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<sup>395</sup> Chauncey, p. 317.

<sup>396</sup> Judith Butler, 'Critically Queer', *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, Vol. 1, No.1, November 1993 (Duke University Press), p. 23.

up<sup>397</sup> of their own transference into homophobic abuse, and back again into *The Pansy Project*'s queer re-claiming. The pansy is put in a position of performing or mimicking the human pansy who received the original abuse as well as performing its own queerness (the history I have briefly traced). But, as Chauncey's description of Malin indicates, these pansies are simply performing themselves: pansies being pansies.

What do I mean when I say the pansy is 'dragging up' the victim it is planted to commemorate? Unlike other memorial projects, which either use a single monument to signify a range of people or commemorate individual sites of violence, *The Pansy Project* acts neither as single focal point nor graveyard-like listing of names. At the site itself there is no plaque, no sign to tell the passerby that "here lies monument", allowing these pansies, in a manner reminiscent of homosexual codes, to still go undetected by society.<sup>398</sup> And yet *The Pansy Project* is clearly functioning as a monument or memorial. As with Milton's 'Lycidas', flowers are placed on a site without a body to lead our thoughts to that *other* site, where the body is. Even if there is no body, the site itself is given importance by the monument, Harfleet's pansies enabling him to explore 'the way that the locations later acted as a prompt for me to explore the memories associated with that place.'<sup>399</sup>

Part of the uniqueness of *The Pansy Project* as memorial is its documentation. Not only does Harfleet plant each pansy himself (aside from collaborations such as *Homotopia* in 2009), but he also photographs them *in situ*. Each photograph bears the

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<sup>397</sup> This is apocryphally taken as the origin of where pansy-as-effeminate man comes from, with all the residual connotations of 'glamming up' or 'dragging up'. This idea of 'pansying up' seems to connect to the older colloquial names for pansy such as *Johnny-jump-up*.

<sup>398</sup> Queer codes such as the Polari language, the wearing of a green carnation or different-coloured handkerchiefs were all designed to pass relatively unnoticed in the 'straight' world but to advertise to other homosexual men the sexuality or sexual interests of the wearer. It is interesting that a book such as *Hangover* throws away any such notions of codes or repression in its open depiction of homosexuality.

<sup>399</sup> Harfleet, *The Pansy Project*, 'How it Began', <http://www.thepansyproject.com/page2.htm> [Accessed 2 September 2015].

title of the verbal abuse and the location. The only exception to this rule is if physical abuse was enacted, in which case the title becomes, for example:



'Attacked "with bottles and sticks", The George & Dragon, Hackney Road, London'  
[<http://www.thepansyproject.com/page14.htm>. Accessed 5 March 2015].

Here words are seen as 'missing': they have to be created in order to describe the violence enacted upon the victim. It is only through this naming that *The Pansy Project* allows the unreported, wordless violence of homophobic abuse to be commemorated and given voice to. Pansies which commemorate a fatality are simply titled, for example:



'For David Morley, Southbank, London'  
<http://www.thepansyproject.com/page14.htm>, accessed 5 March 2015]

Here the description of violence is itself transcended to 'for', a poignant reminder of the end-point of violence, and the need for the dead to be given something in return for their loss of life. In this instance the tiny pansy struggling to grow on London's Southbank seems even more fragile, perhaps because we know that in this case its growth goes against that of its human doppelgänger, already dead.

In all the other plantings a voice is recorded, the abusive words transcribed and applied as signifiers to what would otherwise be an unremarkable spot. Titles from the London plantings include: "You Fucking Queer Cunts!", "Fuck Off and Die Faggots!", "Queer Fucker!", "Let's Kill the Batty-Man!", "We're Going to Kill You, Faggot!" and "You Fucking Bender!".<sup>400</sup> These titles are coupled with the beautiful, close-up photographs of the pansies and the unemotional notation of their geographical location, juxtaposing violence and hate with an apparently serene image of a flower. But the pansies could even be read, given their potential to have a 'face', as 'speaking' these words of hate

<sup>400</sup> <http://www.thepansyproject.com/page14.htm> (all descriptions from the London plantings).



back at the viewer. Although the titles are meant to place the viewer in the position of the attacker, the ventriloquism of the pansy allows for us to simultaneously experience the effect of being called those words, a reversal of meaning that promises no resolution, allowing an open exchange to exist between monument, image, text and viewer.

The preservation of each pansy on the website, itself a tangible documentation of homophobic abuse, goes against the short life of these plants, which die or are removed within days of their planting. Harfleet positions this vulnerability against the urban setting the pansies usually find themselves in, stating that: 'in the photographs I take of the site I've tried to bring the pansy into greater focus, to make it as grand, epic and strong as the architecture surrounding it'.<sup>401</sup>



"Beaten" Belfast Bus Station, Belfast'

[<http://www.thepansyproject.com/page4.htm>. Accessed 5/3/15.]

<sup>401</sup> Interview with Paul Harfleet by the author 6<sup>th</sup> July 2013.



This desire for the pansy to appear as 'strong' as the urban cityscape is compelling, challenging any preconceptions we may have of urban space being dominated by architecture. It is this destabilising of the traditional relationship we as viewers are used to having with architectural monuments that pushes *The Pansy Project* away from 'remembrance' towards a much more complicated way of thinking through the living.

This 'thinking through the living' is framed by the organic growth of each pansy: that when we notice the pansy we notice its growing, and that through this growing the pansy itself becomes an accretive monument to its own existence.<sup>402</sup> As living organisms planted in an urban environment to act as 'stand-ins' for homosexual men, the pansies are shifting the position of the viewer in the process in a way that queers or destabilises that viewpoint. It is what Claire Colebrook calls a space where 'one must claim to speak as a self, but can do so only through an other who is *not* oneself',<sup>403</sup> and that William B. Turner links to a desire in queer theory to question supposedly 'given' or perceived identities.<sup>404</sup> This placing of ourselves, or re-contextualising of ourselves in relation to the space mapped out for us by the pansy, is brought about because of this noticing of self (our self, the pansy's self, the victim's self, the attacker's self). The pansy is not just reflecting our space, it is marking its own space, reclaiming a site for its own purposes. There is something in this act of appropriation that performs a queer assertion, a taking back of threatening (in this context) heteronormative/homophobic space, symbolically done with a non-threatening (abusive) flower. This disturbing of the regularity of the

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<sup>402</sup> See Timothy Morton, 'Ecology as Text, Text as Ecology', *The Oxford Literary Review*, Vol.32 No.1 (2010) (Edinburgh University Press), p.5: 'the base of the flower where it meets the stem is a snapshot of the past of the algorithm, while the crinkly edges of the petals show what the algorithm was up to yesterday'.

<sup>403</sup> Claire Colebrook, 'On the Very Possibility of Queer Theory', in *Deleuze and Queer Theory*, ed. Chrysanthi Nigianni and Merl Storr (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), p.20.

<sup>404</sup> 'Rather than assuming identities grounded in rational, dispassionate reflection as the basis for scholarship and politics, queer theorists wish to ask how we produce such identities'. See William B. Turner, *A Genealogy of Queer Theory* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2000), p.5.

urban city is identifiable with a queer agenda, a subversion of the accepted norm, a tweak to the supposedly firm ground we walk upon, 'which both partakes in the norm... and destabilises that norm'.<sup>405</sup> In this sense, and as Paul Harfleet notes on *The Pansy Project* website, the project has become as much about activism as it has about homophobia.<sup>406</sup>

This activism of *The Pansy Project* is rooted in the kind of queer ecology discourse popularised by Timothy Morton, Catriona Mortimer-Sandilands and others. Its express purpose is to align queer theory with ecological thinking, taking environmental literature away from its heteronormative bias.<sup>407</sup> Mortimer-Sandilands, in her discussion of filmmaker Derek Jarman's AIDS diagnosis and his famed garden in Dungeness, Kent, reminds us of the vitally important erotic links between plants, sex, queerness and environment:

The violent insinuations of death and homophobia into sex – through AIDS and Thatcher both – have brought into Jarman's being an uneasy requirement to rethink gay male sexuality away from a sort of pastoral embrace of innocent erotic abundance and toward a new respect for survival, tenacity, struggle, and small pleasures gathered in unlikely places. Jarman's garden is both an embodiment of this sexual trajectory – as his own body turns toward a more immediate dying, as his friends die, and as his generation's abundant sexual culture withers in a homophobic Britain, his hardy rosemary, sages, and marigolds survive and flourish despite all odds – and also a testament to the survival of the erotic-

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<sup>405</sup> Colebrook in Nigianni and Storr, p.15.

<sup>406</sup> See Harfleet, *The Pansy Project*, <http://www.thepansyproject.com/page25.htm> [Accessed 3 September 2015].

<sup>407</sup> It is important to note that queer ecology does not necessarily equal a queer subject. *The Pansy Project* is unique in that its queer ecological credentials 'as a marker of spatial disorder' expose the marginalities present in our urban landscape, bisecting neatly with its queer subject matter. See Matthew Gandy, 'Queer Ecology: Nature, Sexuality, and Heterotopic Alliances', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, Vol. 30, Issue 4, 2012, 727-747, <http://www.envplan.com/contents.cgi?journal=D&volume=30> [Accessed 17 January 2014], p.733.

ecologic possibilities that, for Jarman, were integral to the gay male culture of his generation.<sup>408</sup>

If Jarman's garden becomes a site where gay male sexuality has to be re-thought in ecological terms (what survives 'against the odds'), and where any kind of homosexual futurity is marked by AIDS and death, then *The Pansy Project* can be seen as continuing this somewhat uneasy relationship between 'erotic abundance' and 'survival, tenacity, struggle... small pleasures gathered in unlikely places'. In this queer context memory is partly hidden, invisible, non-conforming, 'a sensuous, sensual world of plants, shingle, wind, salt'.<sup>409</sup> *The Pansy Project* becomes, like Jarman's garden, 'the "sacred sodomitical space"' that inserts 'an alternative, queer temporality into dominant and monumental understandings of history and knowledge'.<sup>410</sup>

It is these 'unlikely places' of queer temporality that *The Pansy Project* deliberately makes us notice. The tiny patches of earth that go ignored or are not seen as part of the overarching grand narrative of the controlled urban space mimic the moments of homophobia Harfleet commemorates: unreported, unremarked, unnoticed within the grand narrative of 'History' or monumentalisation. Like the so-called 'edgelands' of cities, *The Pansy Project* situates itself in hostile, marginal environments, unlike most other monuments. As with the Guerrilla Gardening movement, to which *The Pansy Project* owes some of its origins and ethos, there is a distinctly radical approach to urban space, who controls it and who gets a say in what it looks like.<sup>411</sup>

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<sup>408</sup> Catriona Mortimer-Sandilands, 'Melancholy Natures, Queer Ecologies', in *Queer Ecologies: Sex, Nature, Politics, Desire*, ed. Catriona Mortimer-Sandilands and Bruce Erickson (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2010), p.350.

<sup>409</sup> Ibid., p.351.

<sup>410</sup> Ibid., p.350. Even though I am classifying *The Pansy Project* as monument, it is an extremely different kind of monumental experience from that of, say, the Cenotaph.

<sup>411</sup> See Richard Reynolds, *On Guerrilla Gardening: A Handbook for Gardening Without Boundaries* (London: Bloomsbury, 2009) and *The Guerrilla Gardening Homepage*, <http://www.guerrillagardening.org>

The ethos behind Guerrilla Gardening owes much to aesthetics: perceived patches of wasteland or unlovely urban space are deliberately transformed through covert, unsanctioned acts of planting flowers and crops, a gesture of dissatisfaction but also a gesture of gentrification, an uneasy pairing.<sup>412</sup> The idealism of the Guerrilla Gardening movement, whilst admirable, enacts a process of aesthetic intervention comparable to that associated with the faceless planners ‘controlling’ the urban space.<sup>413</sup> Guerrilla Gardening’s anti-capitalist, sometimes anti-governmental stance still plays into the perception that only cultivated, ‘attractive’ plants are worthwhile: ‘wasteland’, edgelands or scrublands are not. So although Guerrilla Gardeners style themselves as people who ‘care about the land in the wake of an authority who doesn’t’, their intervention paradoxically reinforces the ‘corporate-plaza’ notion that space cannot simply be *left*, but must be appropriated, managed, landscaped in some way.

In contrast, Paul Farley and Michael Symmons Roberts write eloquently on ‘unlovely’, excessive, marginalised environments in *Edgelands* (2011), their exploration of the ecologies that exist on the fringes of our consciousness. These ecologies are

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[Accessed 4 September 2015]. Although there are crossovers between *The Pansy Project* and the guerrilla gardening phenomenon (Harfleet has his own membership number), Harfleet *only* plants pansies where there is a located history of homophobia to be uncovered or pointed towards: they are site-specific, in that no pansy would be planted if the site of homophobic abuse did not exist before it. With many (but by no means all) guerrilla gardening projects the only “meaning” behind the site is that it is perceived as being derelict or inhospitable, broken in some way. In this sense the process is remarkably non-specific: it just happens to be wherever urban decay is perceived, or where urban decay exacerbates an already-disenfranchised urban community. Guerrilla gardening seems to be about things looking (and therefore feeling) nicer, enacting a total transformation of a site from “marginal” to “vibrant”. The Pansy Project, however, seems to be about using “nice” things to make us think about the darker complexities of the place around us, whilst still allowing for the marginality of its sites (the sides of kerbs, the scrub beneath trees or underneath litter bins) to remain intact.

<sup>412</sup> A pairing that is mimicked in the aspirations and frustrations of the Guerrilla Gardening website, which bills itself as a ‘growing arsenal for anyone interested in the war against neglect and scarcity of public space as a place to grow things’, ‘caring for neglected public space’.

<sup>413</sup> It is not my intention to be unduly negative towards the Guerrilla Gardening movement, which has created some transformative projects in spaces of urban neglect: however I do think that as a phenomenon it needs to be more carefully and critically examined.

distinctly queer, non-normative, and still produce (as the moral zeal of the Guerrilla Gardening movement attests to), a profound anxiety, particularly for local councils, business park owners, etc.: ‘the overwhelming urge, is to tidy up, to make everywhere look like a kind of pleasing-on-the-eye parkscape’.<sup>414</sup> For Farley and Symmons Roberts the edgelands are potentially the richest areas because they exist on the borders between the ‘watched and documented’ urban and rural spaces; as such, they occupy a conceptual terrain remarkably similar to *The Pansy Project*, being at once seen and unseen:

England’s edgelands include not just fields but ash copses between broken factory walls, fathomless lakes, scrublands vivid with wild flowers, almost all unmapped and unseen. How ‘unseen’? This is the paradox of edgelands. Feral as they are, a no-man’s-land between the watched and documented territories of urban and rural, the edgelands are a passing place, backdrop for countless commuters, shoppers, rail travellers. Seen, but unseen. Looked at, but not into.<sup>415</sup>

What kind of remembering, memorialisation or monumentalism does this passage evoke? As backdrops to the journeys of commuters they are, like Robert Musil’s monuments, ‘part of the street scenery...you would be momentarily stunned were they to be missing one morning’.<sup>416</sup> Yet, when they are noticed they spark anxiety, because they are uncontrolled spaces, sites of potentially radical interventions, disobedience, dissidence, sexual expression and natural chaos: they are not ‘watched and documented’. Harfleet’s pansies, planted in tiny patches of earth, evoke the ongoing

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<sup>414</sup> Paul Farley and Michael Symmons Roberts, *Edgelands: Journeys into England’s True Wilderness* (2011) (London: Vintage Books, 2012), p.145.

<sup>415</sup> *Ibid.*, p.73.

<sup>416</sup> Robert Musil, ‘Monuments’ (1927), in *Posthumous Papers of a Living Author* (trans. Peter Wortsman), originally published in German as *Nachlass zu Lebzeiten* (Hygeine, Colorado: Eridanos Press Inc., 1987), p.62.

marginality of both homosexual men *and* queer<sup>417</sup> space, existing within what is still a hostile environment. It is at this conceptual meeting-place which the pansies provide that queer ecology may be seen to come into play as a means to inform how we view our monuments. Because the pansies become an ecological, queer performance of resistance, they serve to highlight the tight controls, measures and rituals placed upon most other monuments, foregrounding what Matthew Gandy calls the 'specific conceptions of morality and public culture'<sup>418</sup> which many conventional monuments covertly perpetuate and promote.

Gandy explicitly links the public performance of sexuality with marginal space:

The juxtaposition of sexuality within the marginal spaces of the city reveals a tension between an imaginary locus of cultural authenticity and the ideological inputs of uncultivated nature or material decay as a catalyst for desire and corporeal transgression.<sup>419</sup>

Men using *The Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe* as a site of homosexual encounters rather than Holocaust remembrance is viewed as one such corporeal transgression, where the excess of sex is out-of-place, unwanted, *contra* remembrance.

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<sup>417</sup> I use this term as being positioned away from (although not necessarily against) a more assimilationist idea of a 'gay' space which encourages the kind of state-sanctioned, normative, non-transgressive homosexuality that the passing of the same-sex marriage bills in the United States, much of the UK and elsewhere is seen as promoting. Although written before the same-sex marriage bills were passed, Michael Warner's *The Trouble with Normal: Sex, Politics, and the Ethics of Queer Life* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2000) still provides one of the most nuanced critiques of this 'move toward normalcy' gay activism is seen as experiencing. See Ch.3, 'Beyond Gay Marriage', pp.81-147. Works such as Lee Edelman's controversial *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2004), José Esteban Muñoz's *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York: New York University Press, 2009) and Dean Spade's *Normal Life: Administrative Violence, Critical Trans Politics, and the Limits of Law* (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2015) all examine the tension between a 'normative' agenda of LGBT rights and the transgressive, non-conforming potentiality of queer thinking.

<sup>418</sup> Matthew Gandy, 'Queer Ecology: Nature, Sexuality, and Heterotopic Alliances', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, Vol. 30, Issue 4, 2012, 727-747, <http://www.envplan.com/contents.cgi?journal=D&volume=30> [Accessed 17/1/14], p.731.

<sup>419</sup> Ibid., p.739.

Monuments are for the most part erected in spaces that have been previously set aside for them, the product of legislation rather than spontaneity. This reduces the potential for a spontaneous, queer gesture of erotic memory, particularly if that memory is challenging a perceived notion of identity or narrative. As Gandy writes, 'the inherently conservative idiom of the pastoral, even in its homoerotic guise, should be considered differently from the queering of space as a form of political appropriation'.<sup>420</sup> Harfleet's pansies are not mapping out the quasi-pastoral landscape of a cemetery or graveyard, nor are they cut flowers that pose no threat because they are already dying. Instead they call into being a queer sexual space, one which has been violated, threatened, prevented from flourishing.

As French gardener Gilles Clément simply puts it, 'flowers sprouting in a path present the gardener with a choice: to conserve the path or the flowers'.<sup>421</sup> Harfleet's pansies, situated as they are within cracks in the pavement or disused spaces under bins or trees, ask us the same question: what do we choose to preserve, or monumentalise, and why? But whereas Clément puts the choice as either/or, Harfleet's work opens out the question: he is not, in fact, asking us to choose, but to accommodate both path and flowers, heterosexuals and queers. By planting pansies in disused space he is showing that there is categorically room for all.

Just as roadside flowers force us as we are walking or driving past to reconsider that site as one of past violence, so Harfleet wants our attention to be drawn towards (rather than averted from) the brutal reality of homophobic abuse. If the 'Totem and

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<sup>420</sup> Gandy, p.739.

<sup>421</sup> Gilles Clément, *Gilles Clément: Une écologie humaniste* (Geneva: Aubanel, 2006), p.19, quoted in Jonathan Skinner, 'Gardens of Resistance: Gilles Clément, New Poetics, and Future Landscapes', *Qui Parle: Critical Humanities and Social Sciences*, Vol. 19, No. 2, Spring/Summer 2011 (University of Nebraska Press), p.263.

Taboo' website collects images which queer a specific monument with acts of homosexual desire, *The Pansy Project* locates this desire in a living organism called into being in place of a larger monumentalising narrative that is, in fact, lacking. In the instance of *The Pansy Project* the monument is commemorating a victim who is in most cases still alive, a 'survivor' of homophobic abuse who is by no means inured from further attack. Each pansy is, to use Winnicott's terminology, a marker of both a breakdown and a failure of the holding environment. The fragility of each pansy, situated alongside its potential for perpetual growth, makes no promise of future safety but acknowledges its potential, whilst forming a testimony, however fleeting, to the change that has been wrought upon the site by this act of violence:

What I noticed is when I was walking along the street where this [verbal abuse] had happened the day before I would remember this location and think about what had happened and I wanted to... do something similar so that other people might notice something about that location in a slightly similar way.<sup>422</sup>

Harfleet is encouraging us to notice the pansies, and by noticing them to think about why they are there, what they represent, and the history of violence they record. The ephemerality of the pansy-as-monument means that it might not have time to be noticed before it is destroyed, and its anti-monumental scale ensures that even if it is afforded a few hours or days of growth, it may be passed obliviously, or even more intriguingly, noticed but not registered (after all there is no plaque or text to inform the viewer that it is, in fact, a monument). Only through research online, or prior knowledge of the project, can the viewer of the pansy know exactly what its purpose is, but even

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<sup>422</sup> Richard Reynolds and Paul Harfleet, 'Tactic Talk' (23 September 2012) at the "*Truth is Concrete*" 24/7 marathon camp on artistic strategies in politics and political strategies in art, Graz, Austria <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9bRWrlfW47M> [Accessed 16 January 2014].



without this knowledge the pansies still act as sites of disruption, or noticing.<sup>423</sup> Their effect is one of destabilisation: rather than explaining their presence to us they simply exist, serving as a disruption to the streetscape in the same way the clearings of Treblinka disrupt the forests around them.

The pansies though, are not always or necessarily memorials to death.<sup>424</sup> Through commemorating verbal and physical abuse, 'near-death' situations if you like, *The Pansy Project* sets up a different kind of exchange between monument and spectator, one that is less linear than the more familiar 'dead-mourner' relationship:

I felt that planting a small unmarked living plant at the site would correspond with the nature of the abuse: A plant continues to grow as I do through my experience. Placing a live plant felt like a positive action, it was a comment on the abuse; a potential 'remedy'.<sup>425</sup>

What does the commemoration of an act of violence, rather than an act of murder or death, change about our expectations from the monument? In this case, it would seem that we are being called upon to be more than 'just' survivors or mourners; we are spectators and participants in a network of noticing that Harfleet sets up to deliberately mimic the very abuses being commemorated.<sup>426</sup>

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<sup>423</sup> A similar effect to the one I note on pp.133-134, where I first came across the *Stolpersteine* project by Gunter Demnig. See <http://www.stolpersteine.eu/en/> [Accessed 31/8/15].

<sup>424</sup> Some of the pansies, such as those planted for Liverpool's *Homotopia* festival in 2007 and the LLGFF at the BFI Southbank in 2009 in remembrance of David Morley, mark locations where people were murdered because of their sexuality.

<sup>425</sup> Harfleet, *The Pansy Project*, <http://www.thepansyproject.com/page2.htm> [Accessed 2 September 2015].

<sup>426</sup> Most homophobic attacks go unreported by their victims, and are often 'unnoticed' by institutions or bystanders. See the *True Vision* website on reporting hate crime and hate crime data for the UK, [http://www.report-it.org.uk/hate\\_crime\\_data1](http://www.report-it.org.uk/hate_crime_data1) [Accessed 2 September 2015].

I became interested in the public nature of these incidents and the way one was forced into reacting publicly to a crime that often occurred during the day and in full view of passers by.<sup>427</sup>

By exposing the pansies to this same complex dynamic of noticing/not noticing that the sufferers of homophobic abuse face, Harfleet is, in effect, putting a pansy in place of a pansy. He is allowing the viewer to 're-notice' a pansy, in place of the human pansy that had been ignored, failed by their holding environment. The person being commemorated, and the abuse they received, becomes re-performed by the living plant, an extension or embodiment of the person being commemorated.<sup>428</sup>

Queer monuments don't have to survive, they don't have to even be seen, but they absolutely have to be enacted and acted-upon. Harfleet recognises that there is no end to this, because there is no end to homophobic abuse. Instead of more remembrance, perhaps more thought is what is really required.

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<sup>427</sup> Harfleet, *The Pansy Project*, <http://www.thepansyproject.com/page2.htm> [Accessed 2 September 2015].

<sup>428</sup> This can be directly compared with *Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red*: each poppy there commemorating each English soldier killed in the First World War. But here the poppies are ceramic, mimetic signifiers pointing at other poppies, somewhere else, in a different location. Unlike the growing, tough-and-fragile pansy, there were no poppies at all at the Tower of London in 2014, just things that resembled them, which could break or be destroyed, but could not wither or die.

## CONCLUSION

COMPLETE THEORIES DO NOT FALL READY-MADE FROM THE SKY AND  
YOU WOULD HAVE...GROUNDS FOR SUSPICION IF ANYONE PRESENTED  
YOU WITH A FLAWLESS AND COMPLETE THEORY AT THE VERY  
BEGINNING OF HIS OBSERVATIONS.<sup>429</sup>

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<sup>429</sup> Sigmund Freud, 'Five Lectures on Psycho-Analysis: First Lecture' (1909), in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Vol. XI (1910): 'Five Lectures on Psycho-Analysis', 'Leonardo da Vinci' and Other Works*, trans. James Strachey (London: Vintage Books, 2001), p.20.

The intention of this thesis has been to challenge, methodologically and structurally, how we interact with, write about, and theorise the monument as a cultural object. To that end, I have taken a deliberately interdisciplinary approach, one grounded in phenomenological observation, creative critical work, queer theory and psychoanalysis. Like the pansy, it is a hybrid thesis, one that gestures to different disciplines and approaches, and I hope demonstrates the connections, possibilities and richness afforded by the cross-pollination of ideas, methodologies and disciplines.

The basis for this work has been monuments and monument-theory, and the field of criticism surrounding trauma and memory studies. In that sense, it has been my intention to take issue with some of the accepted parameters of this field, the greatest of which are the so-called 'binaries' that infect its discourse: history/memory, remembering/forgetting, and so on.

I used psychoanalysis as my principal mode of enquiry largely due to the fascinating parallels between monumental discourse and the work of Nicolas Abraham, Maria Torok, and D.W. Winnicott. Winnicott's groundbreaking work on the transitional object, the object used by the infant as it detaches from its dependence on the mother or holding environment, and begins to come into itself as a conscious individual, is hugely influential when we consider the space monuments occupy between an imaginative world (*qua* Aristotle) and a geographical reality. In that sense they are objects that become portals to other times, evoking a range of different emotions and remembrances, an interior landscape that is counterbalanced by their position in the external world. This echoes Winnicott's conception of the transitional object as occupying a similar space: 'it is assumed here that the task of reality-acceptance is never completed, that no human being is free from the strain of relating inner and outer

reality, and that relief from this strain is provided by an intermediate area of experience...which is not challenged'.<sup>430</sup> The potential space, in which the transitional object exists, is created by and influences the object.

This is a space of creativity and imagination for Winnicott, a place where inner and outer realities merge: it is something we create but also something that creates and shapes us, 'a resting-place for the individual engaged in the perpetual human task of keeping inner and outer reality separate yet interrelated'.<sup>431</sup> The transitional object, then, is not just a means by which the infant can begin to engage with an objective reality, it is also the facilitator that enables us to create a space both within and not-within ourselves where we may retreat 'creatively' in a subjective-objective space, held in a paradoxical balance. Part of this thesis is therefore asking about this balance, between creative and objective space, and where the monument lies on this boundary between inner and outer reality, as an object that occupies both.

The balance that Winnicott describes is not benign: it is a space in which the infant constantly enacts a ruthlessness upon the object to test its reality. This is not necessarily or wholly destructive, but implies that reality-testing through modification, change or harm needs to happen for us to go on being able to accept that the object is not part of ourselves. Winnicott is unashamedly uncomfortable about this realisation. When he writes 'this is the difficult part of my thesis, at least for me',<sup>432</sup> we do not get the sense that he is talking just about the intellectual demands of the concept, but that emotionally it is difficult to accept that 'destruction plays its part in making the reality,

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<sup>430</sup> D.W. Winnicott, *Playing and Reality* (1971) (London: Routledge, 1992), p.13.

<sup>431</sup> *Ibid.*, p.2.

<sup>432</sup> *Ibid.*, p.91.

placing the object outside the self'.<sup>433</sup> What happens if we put Winnicott's insight alongside contemporary studies in trauma, memory and memorialising? What role does 'destruction' (or interaction) begin to play?

Winnicott viewed the transitional object and the potential space as part of the realm where creativity, imagination and expression overlap, shown as 'the delicacy of what is preverbal, unverballed, and unvariable except perhaps in poetry'.<sup>434</sup> The monument can be therefore seen, in a Wordsworthian sense, to form part of the work of art and poetry in occupying a realm of creative potentiality.<sup>435</sup> In my view this re-activates our conception of what a monument is and what it can do: that cultural products are by their nature 'unfinished' or transitional, carrying the artist and viewer from one stage to another. If my thesis reaches any conclusion as such, then this theorisation of the monument as transitional could well be it.

If we begin to think of *all* monuments (whatever their design) as transitional objects, then their possibilities become liberating, rather than anxiety-inducing. If we begin to accept the monument as a transitional object, based around a necessary process, rather than as a final, fixed art-object, we could equally reduce our own anxieties about its 'seemliness' or ability to perform all the many functions we require of it. It is perhaps only by recognising the limitations and usefulness of the monument that we can begin to embrace its potential as an object for helping us, its public, through a particular time or moment. As Winnicott writes:

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<sup>433</sup> Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*, p.91.

<sup>434</sup> *Ibid.*, p.112.

<sup>435</sup> Winnicott's linking of potential space to poetry is significant, and something that Mary Jacobus has explored. See Mary Jacobus, *The Poetics of Psychoanalysis: In the Wake of Klein* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

This [transitional] object is halfway between everything...it is the perfect compromise. It is neither part of the self nor part of the world. Yet it is both. It was conceived of by the infant and yet he could not have produced it, it just came. Its coming showed him what to conceive of. It is at one and the same time subjective and objective. It is at the border between inside and outside. It is both dream and real.<sup>436</sup>

Much of my research diary occupies this borderline between inside and outside, psychic and physical reality: one bleeding into and affecting the other. And concepts that I have used throughout the thesis (the crypt, the transitional object, erotic excess, queer identity) all tread similar lines, navigating between interior and exterior worlds. And perhaps this tension between the outer and inner oppositions leads to the site where the productive work of monument criticism can begin, in an exploration of a third way of approach, a way marked out both by queer theory and Winnicottian thinking. Abraham and Torok, on the other hand, expose the tensions and oscillations of psychoanalysis: their conceptualisations of the Magic Word, psychoanalytic crypt, the Kernel/Envelope and exquisite corpse all ideas that are elegant in their irresolvable perpetuation. If they expose the rigidity and destructiveness of opposing forces then it is Winnicott who allows a way through that. Where queer theory and Winnicott intersect is, for me, in this ability to disrupt binary thinking. It would require another thesis to fully explore the queer potential of Winnicott's work, but the intersections are potentially fascinating and capable of pushing both Winnicott and queer into new territories.

On a methodological level this thesis performs itself as a product of intellectual labour that is not comfortable with (hetero)normative viewpoints. In some places this

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<sup>436</sup> Winnicott, 'Growth and Development in Immaturity' (1950), in *The Family and Individual Development*, p.41.

has lead to the advocacy of some controversial conclusions. For example, we should let our monuments be destroyed if that is what we need from them; memory and sexual excess are often to be found side-by-side; we cannot be sure that through memorialisation we aren't in fact promoting the atrocities we commemorate. I am not suggesting that there are answers to any of the questions this thesis raises around trauma, representation, society and the role of the monument within these. But it is my hope that by going some way to exploring how monuments *can* be used, *can* be seen as objects that are ultimately there to help us, not to make us beholden to them, that we can embrace a less rigid, messier, queerer approach to our needs as social, imaginative, sexual and emotional individuals.



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