Bullet Hole Constellations: Berlin's *Neues Museum,* A Case Study in Cultural Memory

A dissertation by

Rebecca Clare Dolgoy

Hertford College
University of Oxford

In fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in the subject of Modern Languages

Supervised by Dr Ben Morgan

Michaelmas Term, 2014

Intus haec ago, in aula ingenti memoriae maea.
Ibi enim mihi caelum et terra et mare praesto
sunt cum omnibus, quae in eis sentire potui,
praeter illa, quae oblitus sum. Ibi mihi et ipse
occurro, meque recolo, quid, quando et ubi egerim
quoque modo, cum agerem, affectus fuerim [...]
Magna ista vis est memoriae, magna nimis, deus,
pentrale amplum et infinitum: quis ad fundeum eius pervenit?

All this I do within, in that huge court of my memory.
For there have I in a readiness the heaven, the earth, the sea,
and whatever I could perceive in them, besides those which
I have forgotten. There also meet I with myself: I recall myself,
what, where, or when I have done a thing; and how I was
affected when I did it [...] Great is this force of memory,
excessive great, O my God; a large and an infinite roomthiness:
who can plummet at the bottom of it?

– St. Augustine, *Confessions* Book X

Acknowledgements

This project began long ago – before I was even able to articulate the questions to which I respond in these pages. It will, without a doubt, continue to change in form and perhaps even focus, though while I anticipate the underpinnings getting more and more clear, I do not anticipate them changing completely. While this dissertation is the most concrete attempt at addressing my longstanding overarching questions pertaining to memory, cultural inheritance, and creative transformation, it is not (and could not be) a definitive treatment.

There are so many people to thank: the research and writing processes has been an endless series of adventures and happy encounters with supportive friends and colleagues. The following list is by no means complete.

To Ben Morgan, for taking a chance on the project and for his calmness, clarity, and careful supervision. To Georgina Paul and Mary Cosgrove, for their generous attention, thoughtful feedback, and the new Passover memory. To Ritchie Robertson, Kevin Hilliard, and Annalise Acorn for their support and very helpful guidance. To Stephen Lay, Alice Roques, and Andrew Beaumont for their advice. To the many who accompanied me on my museum walks over the years, shared observations with me, and took photos for me (most notably Kathryn and Michael Brechtel and Turlach O'Broin). To those who gave me generously of their material and time including: Evgenija Mitin and Martin Reichert (David Chipperfield Architects, Berlin), Julian Harrap, Andreas Scholl, and perhaps most of all to Dietrich Wildung, who wandered the museum with me many times: the day he said 'our' museum and entrusted me with the task of articulating the narratives and philosophies embedded in the *Neues Museum* remains definitive in terms of my relationship with my own work. To my Berlin family: Florian Duijsens, for the edits, the photos, and the madeleines, Agata Lisiak, for the on going understanding and dialogue, Clare Wigfall, Elsa, and Imogen for being at the corner of Kollwitzstr. and Sredzkistr., Kat Bimesdörfer for the happenstance (many times over), Paula Podehl for the continuity, and Curtis Palmer for being there at the beginning. To my Oxford family: to the wonderful cohort of German postgraduate students (especially Ruth Schor, Jack Rasmus-Vorrath, Alex Marshall, Emily Spiers, and Peter Hanisch) who have shared these years with me, to those at Hertford College (especially Erica Lombard, Arlyn Culwick, Astrid Knight, Rory Hill, and Robert Carlsson) for the intangibles, and to Nick West, Dana Landau, and Claire Stockwell for all of the adventures. Of course: to my family at home (Len, Catherine, Sarah, Leah, Danielle, Gabrielle, and Arliss) – for everything.

I would also like to acknowledge the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada for funding this project.

And finally, I must give thanks to the *Neues Museum* itself for being such a beautiful and enigmatic embodiment of so much of what has both haunted and inspired me since I was little and thus both challenging me and permitting me to (start to) find my own language and forms.

Short Abstract

Bullet Hole Constellations: Berlin's Neues Museum*, A Case Study in Cultural Memory*

This dissertation explores a shift in cultural memory theory and praxis that loosely coincides with the turn of the century. With Berlin as its focus, I trace this shift through three of its museum institutions (the Jewish Museum, the *Masterplan Museumsinsel*, and the *Neues Museum*). I specifically look at three aspects: their museum practices (how history is expressed), the main narratives embodied in their spaces (what history is being expressed), and the critical contexts in which they are embedded (what do these practices and narratives mean in the wider cultural context).

Throughout, I develop the idea of a cultural memory that emphasizes how we use the past, or what we do with our cultural inheritance. This runs counter to the cultural memory that sees remembering as a categorical imperative ('never forget' or 'lest we forget'), a memory that is clearly embodied in Libeskind's Jewish Museum and is typified in critical work that either prioritizes trauma (Caruth, LaCapra) or stresses cultivating specific empathetic responses (Landsberg's 'prosthetic memory,' Hirsch's 'postmemory'). My cultural memory hypothesis fits within the general German field of Cultural Memory Studies, as typified in the work of Jan and Aleida Assmann. The outcome of thinking about memory as use, appropriation, and transformation of cultural inheritance is the characterization of the past as an analytical tool. This notion sits well amidst current work by Dekel and Arnold-de Simine who read museum/memorial spaces as facilitators of civic engagement.

This new cultural memory can be found embodied in the architectural and curatorial framing of the *Neues Museum*, in its phenomenological approach to history, its narrative of fragmentary wholeness, as well as in its placing of the twentieth century in long narratives of historical continuity. These characteristics allow me to read the *Neues Museum* as an example of contemporary thinking about modernism, and thus as part of a discourse that looks to restore and transform crucial mythological tendencies.

Long Abstract

Bullet Hole Constellations: *Berlin's Neues Museum*,
A Case Study in Cultural Memory

Re-opened in November 2009 after being closed for nearly 70 years, Berlin's *Neues Museum,* as renovated and rethought by architect David Chipperfield, challenges both theories and practices of cultural memory in Berlin. This challenge pertains to both 'how' and 'what' past is expressed in and by some of the city's major cultural institutions.

A shift in thinking and cultural expression can be traced from the end of the twentieth century to the present day: from a cultural memory that was prominent in the 1990s and early 2000s, when images of brokenness, voids, and rupture were dominant (as is represented in and by Libeskind's Jewish Museum) and discourse focusing on trauma (of which Caruth and LaCapra's work is representative) and secondary witnessing (of which Landsberg's 'prosthetic memory' and Hirsch's 'postmemory' concepts are prime examples) to the cultural memory of today that emphasises continuity and wholeness. This shift is noticeable in cultural spaces as well as the critical literature that use these spaces to elaborate the terms of contemporary Cultural Memory Studies. Grasping and articulating this shift is the challenge undertaken in my project, and I believe Berlin's *Neues Museum* is emblematic of this new and contemporary cultural memory. This cultural memory echoes earlier expressions of modernity and looks to restore and transform crucial mythological or grand-narrative tendencies.

My dissertation's main task is to articulate the cultural memory concept embodied in the *Neues Museum* and to situate its cultural relevance, thereby also participating in the creation of the necessary critical discourse. The specific questions to which my dissertation responds are: What are the narratives of cultural memory expressed in the museum? How does the *Neues Museum* facilitate encounters with the past? What do these stories and processes mean in larger cultural contexts?

The dissertation takes as its fundamental premises that 1) all cultural works are products of their times and that 2) museums, by their very nature as spaces where history is staged (in other words, museums convey both how we remember and how we want to

be remembered), allow us to engage closely with a particular generation's framing narratives of history. Museums that engage with the past reveal the cultural underpinnings of the present through the way they present the past, and the way in which visitors engage with it. The *Neues Museum* is thus a case study that both informs and is informed by contemporary Cultural Studies discourse.

I argue that there is a salient conception of cultural memory that emphasises how we use, appropriate, and transform the past, or what we do with our cultural inheritance. This idea is embodied in the architectural and curatorial framing of the *Neues Museum*; in other words, we can find it in 'how' history is embodied in the museum, 'how' the visitor is encouraged to engage with the museum, and 'what' the dominant narratives suggest about our contemporary take on history. I argue three main things:

1) The *Neues Museum*'s approach to framing history is phenomenological in nature. A museum that is phenomenological exposes history rather than tells it. Narratives are created by the visitor during his or her interactions with the objects and the spaces. The phenomenological museum does not overburden the visitor with interpretive tools and guides. Even though all museums are highly mediated spaces, the phenomenological museum's attempts to facilitate the development of a historical consciousness do not specify the parameters of this consciousness.

2) The (renovated) *Neues Museum* is a twenty-first century project in that it allows for a reading of history where the twentieth century is placed in a longer historical continuum. Unlike narratives in the late-twentieth century, which were dominated by images like rupture and voids, the narratives in the *Neues Museum* (and the *Museumsinsel* in general) highlight continuity and wholeness. Reading the twentieth century as part of a longer historical continuum ultimately displaces the Holocaust and its 'never forget/never again' categorical imperative as the first principle in the establishment of discourse, politics, and culture post World War II. This shift is slowly changing the cultural memory terrain (so bound with Holocaust memory) to a field where the idea of inheritance has started to be as relevant and interesting as remembrance.

3) Inspired by earlier themes and works of modernity, where the idea of origins appeared as an analytical category or method rather than a truth to unearth, I argue that in the *Neues Museum* the past appears as an analytic. By this I mean that the past is not something that can be found or fixed in a linear narrative.

The early part of the twenty-first century has marked a shift in relation to thinking about the past: in addition to the emphasis on digging for truth, we must now also examine how these findings have been classified and ordered in the museum. Instead of engaging with the deconstruction and breaking down of existing truths, my dissertation engages with this process of meaning construction. In sum, I argue that the *Neues Museum* facilitates a move away from thinking about the past as something that we must never forget or must remember towards thinking about the past as something we inherit, transform, and use.

My method is phenomenological in nature and engages in close readings with one eye kept on the museum space (narrative, histories, philosophies) and the other fixed on the relevant discourse (cultural memory, philosophy, reviews, conversations, literature).

The dissertation is structured to follow the emergence of the representational language of the *Neues Museum* and its accompanying critical context. As such, the dissertation is split into four parts. Parts I and IV (Conclusion) serve as the dissertation's frames and situate what is essentially the object (my main argument) in a larger cultural and scholarly framework. As I argue that the *Neues Museum* marks two things, first a shift in the contemporary Berlin cultural memory landscape, and second a transformation of earlier expressions of modernity, the 'object' part of my dissertation is comprised of both a synchronic and diachronic reading. In Part II, I give the synchronic reading by exploring the aforementioned shift by first examining the Jewish Museum as the main embodiment of the dominant theory and praxis of the late 1990s/early 2000s. I then move on to look at the *Masterplan Museumsinsel* as one of the exemplary city cultural brands of the moment. In Part III, I will give the diachronic reading, by examining the *Neues Museum* as an expression of the contemporary moment, but also as an example of an alternative genealogy of cultural memory, one that is at home in larger discourses of contemporary modernism.

The dissertation breaks down as follows:

Introduction
* The Introduction outlines the dissertation's overarching context, hypothesis, structure, methodology, and corpus.

Part I: Opening the Frames

Chapter 1 – Provisional Ordering
* The dissertation's theory chapter brings the various strands of Cultural Memory Studies 'to the table' in order to explore one of the central problems with which the discipline engages: how does an individual come to appropriate and establish their own place in a shared culture? I rely on two things, the Passover Seder, a cultural memory practice that has informed many of the discipline's major works, as well as certain concepts gleaned from phenomenology to outline my main hypothesis: cultural memory as the use, appropriation, and transformation of cultural heritage.

Part II: Turn-of-the-Century Cultural Memory in Berlin

Chapter 2 – Voids and Rupture: The Libeskind Moment
* By focusing on the historical context and museum practices of Berlin's Jewish Museum, this section seeks to understand the emblematic place of this museum in cultural memory discourse of the late-twentieth century. It also engages with the changing response to the museum which is indicative of a shift in the cultural memory horizon.

Chapter 3 – The *Museumsinsel* & Master-Planning
* After having established how the Jewish Museum model no longer works, or rather is no longer emblematic, this section looks at the *Museumsinsel Masterplan* and how it has literally and figuratively changed the cultural memory landscape of Berlin.

Part III: The *Neues Museum Hypothesis*

Chapter 4 – The Phenomenological Museum
* This chapter looks at how history has been and is embodied in the *Neues Museum*. It offers a reading of how the architects and directors have used the past and how they facilitate visitor use of the museum.

Chapter 5 – Bullet Hole Constellations: A Close Reading of the Museum
* Highlighting three of the *Neues Museum*'s main narratives: Fragments and the Whole; Ruins, Traces; and *homo faber*, this chapter responds to the 'what' question in that it establishes the *Neues Museum*'s framing of history.

Conclusion: Closing the Frames

* The dissertation's conclusion looks towards various frames in which the *Neues Museum* hypothesis may be considered. These include the synchronic (scars as emblematic of a shift in Berlin's *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*) and the diachronic (expressions of modernism and modernity).

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INTRODUCTION

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On October 16, 2009, after a decade of thoughtful renovation work conducted under the watchful gaze of press and citizens, Berlin's *Neues Museum* re-opened. This image, taken in the spring of 2010 in its Chaos and Order/World Order Courtyard (formerly the *Griechischer Hof*) is the starting point of my investigation. We see a grey speckled stone wall bathed in natural light from the windows above. The speckles are bullet holes: in the winter/spring of 1945, the Battle of Berlin burned its way through the streets of Berlin's *Mitte* district, ripping holes in the colonnades and façades of the houses on the *Museumsinsel*. Nearly 70 years later, these bullet holes still stretch their spidery threads ever deeper in the building, intentionally left behind during the architectural re-think, appearing as some strange hieroglyphic narrative – a book of the dead for the twentieth century. These bullet holes are as much a symbol of the city as its iconic architecture is. And while they are much photographed and fetishized,[1] the potential ontological status of these bullet holes has yet to be teased out in a critical setting.

[1] For some examples see: Vive Berlin, Berlin's Tour Guide Coop 'The Scars of War', <http://viveberlin.wordpress.com/2012/08/06/the-scars-of-the-war> [accessed 3 March, 2013]; Jan Steffen, 'Bullet Holes – Traces of War', <http://en.oberliner.de/2013/06/bullet-holes-traces-of-world-war-ii-in.html> [accessed 3

Bullet holes are a literal impression of history upon space, an *aide-mémoire* for what is no longer present; they are evidence that something happened, that something has been left behind. The *Neues Museum* wears its bullet holes like no other structure. Not only are they part of the everyday experience of the place, but they have become an important part of the aesthetics and conceptual language of the space. They are fundamental to understanding the museum's dominant narratives and approach to history, as well as to understanding how the museum facilitates the development of the visitor's historical consciousness. If the *Neues Museum'*s bullet holes may indeed be considered a language, then what would they say?

The title of my dissertation, 'Bullet Hole Constellations: Berlin's *Neues Museum*, a Case Study in Cultural Memory', encompasses two main ideas. The first pertains to the language of these bullet holes, which, I will argue, is reminiscent of a form of mythological narrative, what Jan Assmann might call a 'mythische Urgeschichte'.[2] Mythological narratives are often individual or shared origin stories, attempts at establishing grounding in and of history. But more importantly, according to Assmann, a myth is '[…] eine Geschichte, die man sich erzählt, um sich über sich selbst und die Welt zu orienteren […]'.[3] Origin and direction are linked for Assmann because he believes being able to find or make some kind of grounding in and out of history allows a culture to cultivate shared identity and helps individuals to find their own place in that shared

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March 2013]; Calli Duncan, 'Returning to Berlin's Museum Island', <http://haveblogwilltravel.org/berlin-museum-island> [accessed 3 March 2013].

[2] Jan Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis*: *Schrift, Erinnerung und Politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1992), p. 56. Please note that as I will be citing the work of both Jan and Aleida Assmann, I will use first names in the footnotes as well as in the main text when there is the possibility for confusion.

[3] Jan Assmann, *Das kultutrelle Gedächtnis*, p. 76.

culture. Myths differ from other kinds of stories by their recourse to meaning:[4] sometimes this meaning is an explanation for natural occurrences, sometimes this meaning offers a justification for some nefarious political choice, sometimes this meaning provides a story of why and how an individual finds themselves at a particular juncture. In all instances, a myth is a past presence brought forward to give an account of 'contemporary' culture.

Constellations are the traditional celestial embodiment of mythical truths. But constellations are also a form of argument or narrative analogous to ordering objects in a museum exhibition, arranging images and ideas in temporary coherent orders in order to explain or make sense of something enigmatic.[5] So while traditional myths have recourse to supposed 'Wahrheit höherer Ordnung'[6], they are also an actualization of a desire to create or make meaning. It is the desire for meaning rather than the desire for truth that guides the contemporary mythology I describe in this dissertation. Bullet holes, unlike stars, are born of historical contingency. Drawing imaginary lines between them to create constellations gives a personalized, dynamic, and earthbound rendering of the mythological impulse to make meaning out of history. The *Neues Museum*'s particular constellations will be explored in Chapter 5.

The second idea at the heart of this dissertation, closely related to the first, is that Berlin's *Neues Museum* may be read as a case study that both complements and challenges current trends within the interdisciplinary academic field of Cultural Memory

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[4] For a discussion on the link between myth and meaning see: Northrop Frye, *Spiritus Mundi: Essays on Literature, Myth, and Society* (Markham, Ontario: Fitzhenry and Whiteside Limited, 2006), pp. 73-89. For an analysis of various kinds of meanings and 'groundings' see Part II 'Geschichtswerdung der Geschichten', in Hans Blumenberg, *Arbeit am Mythos* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2006), pp. 163-326. Finally, on the importance of 'meaning' for the individual, see Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), pp. 50-51.
[5] On the idea of ordering and myth see Claude Levi-Strauss, *Myth and Meaning* (London: Routledge Great Minds, 2014), pp. 8-9.
[6] Jan Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis*, p. 76.

Studies and its practice in Berlin. It is because of its embedded constellations that the *Neues Museum* offers itself as an interesting and relevant case study, one that allows me to develop the model of cultural memory I put forward in this dissertation.

The overarching problem explored in this dissertation is: What is the significance of the *Neues Museum*'s bullet hole constellations within larger discussions of cultural memory? In order to get a sense of the way this case study resonates in larger critical and creative contexts, the main questions to which this dissertation responds are: How is history conveyed in Berlin's *Neues Museum*? What are the narratives of history that are on display? What effect do this praxis and these narratives have on current conceptions of cultural memory?

I argue two things: first that the re-thinking of the *Neues Museum* signifies a shift in Berlin's cultural memory landscape that loosely occurred around the turn of the twenty-first century; second that the way in which the past is embodied in the *Neues Museum* offers a model for thinking about cultural memory that, while perhaps singular in its immediate environment, echoes and transforms earlier ways of presenting and working with the past, while potentially prefiguring ways that are to come.

I will develop a characterization of the 'how' of the *Neues Museum*'s expression of history, highlighting its phenomenological aspects, which open a space of encounter between the visitor and the artefacts. This encounter is an example of the relationship between an individual and collective history. In it, the visitor is invited to use the past in constructing constellations of meaning or narratives that are resonant and relevant for them. In responding to the 'what' questions, I will explore the museum's main cultural memory narratives that will be best characterized by the expression 'non-totalizing

wholeness', or, a wholeness made up of fragments. It is a model that acknowledges the damage (fragmentation) the twentieth century wrought to our physical spaces and metaphysical well-being, while simultaneously offering a form of temporary reconciliation or suggesting new beginnings. Reconciliation here is something we 'work on', it is a process – thus it becomes possible to give up on the idea of a static wholeness (a historical consciousness that is fixed forever) and see wholeness as an on-going and dynamic process. Though departing from a similar sense of fragmentation, this kind of cultural memory differs from the models that were prominent in the 1990s and early 2000s, when images of brokenness, voids, and rupture were dominant. Integrating the phenomenological method with the museum's specific narrative constellations allows me to offer a model of cultural memory that helps define a twenty-first century context that goes beyond imperatives and trauma, all the while engaging in nascent conversation about the re-appropriation and reinterpretation of themes from earlier modernities.

In order to do this, I investigate the *Neues Museum* in two main contexts, both exploring the idea of what it means to be contemporary today. The first is synchronic, and it accounts for the museum's fundamental place in a changing contemporary cultural-memory topography; the other is diachronic, and it considers the museum from a point of view looking beyond the immediate contemporary and connecting it with previous and future expressions of cultural memory.[7] Part II of this dissertation explores the synchronic horizon while Part III engages with diachronic transformations.

[7] For a discussion of memory as a process of knowing one's diachronic identity see Jan Assmann, 'Communicative and Cultural Memory', in *A Companion to Cultural Memory Studies*, ed. by Astrid Erll, and Ansgar Nünning, (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co., 2010), pp. 109-118 (pp. 113-114). Please note that I will be citing several essays from this collection and will use an abridged version of the publication information to avoid cluttering the footnotes. Complete references for each essay cited may be found in the bibliography.

I conceive of these lines of inquiry as axes. On the one hand we have the horizontal line of history that presents a relatively linear shift from one expressive or representational modality to another. In my dissertation, this 'horizon' is addressed during my engagement with the vast literature on Berlin's cultural memory and urban landscape, particularly its museums. As outlined by Jennifer Jordan,[8] and as will become apparent in Chapter 2, Berlin is one of the epicentres of cultural memory theory (particularly Anglo-American work) and praxis: Berlin's cultural institutions and architecture figure in countless articles and anthologies. Its many cultural memory projects (museums, memorials, artistic interventions) are widely debated by the press and the public, often serving as standards against which other projects are measured. In short, it is one of the most studied cities, particularly when it comes to questions of memory, history, and the lingering effects of the twentieth century – as so much of the ideological conflicts that defined the century were staged on its streets. It thus becomes clear that the synchronic reading of Berlin's *Neues Museum*, the reading that contextualizes it with its immediate 'contemporaries', will allow me to develop a cultural memory hypothesis that resonates in the larger discourse.

On the other hand, the vertical line of memory and myth is lodged within a longer German tradition of thinking devoted to untangling various 'contemporary' expressions of mythology and transformations of archetypal images. We see this in the work of early/mid-twentieth-century thinkers such as Hans Blumenberg, Ernst Cassirer, and Aby

[8] See Chapter 1,'Landscapes of Remembering and Forgetting', in Jennifer A. Jordan, *Structures of Memory: Understanding Urban Change in Berlin and Beyond* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), pp. 1-22.

Warburg.[9] Though not German, also of note is contemporary historian Joseph Mali, whose book *Mythistory: The Making of a Modern Historiography* breaks down the stark dichotomy between history and myth while offering the reader an elegant genealogy of the 'recognition of myth'[10] in historiography from Herodotus to Hayden White. While historiography, art history, and philosophy have all engaged with myth, cultural memory (as both a discipline and a practice emphasizing the actuality of the past) is well placed to explore contemporary mythology.

Most relevant for my dissertation is Jan Assmann, whose own work traces the uses, deployment, and employment of various images culled from Ancient Egypt throughout history. His concept of *mnemohistory*, or 'reception theory applied to history',[11] is the strand of cultural memory discourse that most closely resembles my own, as it signifies the lives and afterlives of images and archetypes throughout a long history; at any moment the image can be unpacked and the intersecting socio-cultural horizon investigated. Mali meanwhile, citing Wittgenstein, makes the point that myths are not necessarily about explaining the world so much as they are 'expression[s] of how the people perceive it, a representation of the world in terms of their fears, wishes, and so on'.[12]

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[9] To illustrate this point see the following examples: the reading of the Prometheus myth in Parts III and IV of Hans Blumenberg, *Arbeit am Mythos*, pp. 327-604; the definition and discussion of man as an *animal symbolicum* in Ernst Cassirer, *An Essay on Man: An Introduction to a Philosophy of Human Culture* (London: Yale University Press, 1972), pp. 27-42; and the tracing of various dominant images throughout the history of art in Aby Warburg, *Bilderatlas Mnemosyne* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2000).
[10] Joseph Mali, *Mythistory: The Making of a Modern Historiography* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2003), p. 8.
[11] Jan Assmann, *Moses the Egyptian*: *The Mystery of Egypt in Western Monotheism* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), p. 9. I have quoted this in English as, from what I can tell, Assmann wrote it in English while on a stay in Santa Monica. The German edition came out in 1998.
[12] Mali, p. 22.

It is at the intersection between the synchronic (cultural memory landscape of today) and the diachronic (connecting to a long line of thinkers concerned with myth) that I draw my concept of cultural memory. Not only do I read the *Neues Museum* at this intersection between the synchronic and the diachronic, I argue that an awareness of the diachronic is fundamental to the ethics and aesthetics of the *Neues Museum*'s architectural and curatorial strategies. In fact, it is from the *Neues Museum*'s strategies that my own working hypothesis about the process of cultural memory is derived. This will be made apparent in Chapter 4. By exploring the way in which the past is used in the contemporary *Neues Museum,* I offer a reading of the processes of cultural memory that emphasizes the use, appropriation, and transformation of cultural heritage.

It was somewhere very early on in this research project that I essentially stopped using the words 'memory' and 'remember' altogether, other than as shorthand used to indicate a particular field of discourse. Instead of addressing the need 'to remember the past', this project has become about the question of 'what to do with cultural inheritance'.[13] Inheritance, or heritage, is something into which an individual simply comes, whether it considers this a gift, a burden, or both. Whether we come into traumatic history or an unexpected windfall, we join an on-going process of relating to and using the past. When thinking about cultural inheritance, it is not only what is being inherited that is important; heirs may use their inheritance as they choose, or as the context discloses it to them. One cannot but use this inheritance; even doing nothing or letting a legacy fall into ruin and disrepair is to do something. Analogously, we come into a language, culture, family, and historical situation. One cannot but use one's cultural

[13] This instinct is echoed in several current scholarly and cultural trends including: the proliferation of 'Heritage Studies,' particularly in conjunction with museums; and Ashgate's Heritage, Culture and Identity series (2005-present day).

inheritance. The question then becomes: How am I using (or ought I use) this inheritance? And what position to take *vis-à-vis* this use?

The aim of this dissertation then is to investigate both the idea of using, appropriating and transforming cultural heritage in general, and one example of cultural heritage, or of a legacy – that of the *Neues Museum* – in particular. In other words, the aim is to both forge an object (reading of the *Neues Museum* as both emblematic of a shift and as part of a longer narrative) and its critical frames. 'Frames' implies a contextualization. Framing, as a strategy, is what museums do when they make curatorial, architectural, and interpretive choices. It is also what institutions, nations, and individuals do when giving a grounding or justificatory account of themselves. Framing narratives are the results of these choices. Reading them allows us to grasp a museum, institutional, national, or individual self-understanding. Reading them slightly against the grain allows us to get closer to the core of the historical consciousness that engendered this self-understanding. Throughout this dissertation, I will be using the expression 'framing narratives' to signify not just how museums approach history, but also to note the meta-level of this approach: it isn't just what we 'do', it is the awareness and directionality of the doing.

The structure of the dissertation follows these aims and is split into four parts. The first and fourth parts outline the frames while the second and third parts construct the object being framed. Part I: Opening the Frames, containing Chapter 1: Provisional Orders, functions as the dissertation's theory chapter. I structure my analysis around one of the fundamental problems addressed by Cultural Memory Studies discourse: When it comes to memory, how do the individual and culture as a whole relate to each other?

Given that we cannot but come into history, how do we grasp it or make it our own? In other words, how to 'be historically'?

In order to respond to these questions, I rely heavily on the quintessential example of the Passover Seder, because it was not only useful for me in developing my own hypotheses, it also appears in the work of nearly every Cultural Memory Studies theorist writing in the last several decades.[14] Besides looking at the way the various theorists use the Seder and offering my own reading, I introduce phenomenology, both in the sense of a philosophy and an architectural/curatorial practice, as a helpful tool when thinking about the relationship between an individual and culture.

Part II: Turn-of-the-Century Cultural Memory in Berlin, gives the synchronic reading and examines the shift in cultural memory discourse and praxis. It is composed of two chapters, each focusing on a specific case study that is emblematic of a particular discourse: Chapter 2, Voids and Rupture: The Libeskind Moment, looks at how Berlin's Jewish Museum both expresses and informs the cultural memory discourse of the late 1990s/early 2000s, whereas Chapter 3, The *Museumsinsel* & Master-planning, uses Berlin's *Museumsinsel* as an example of how the current image of the city has developed into one promoting unity and long narratives of history that include the twentieth century in a continuum rather than conceive of it as a rupture.

Part III, The *Neues Museum* Hypothesis, gives the diachronic reading and presents the cultural memory concept embodied by the *Neues Museum* over two chapters: Chapter 4, The Phenomenological Museum, looks at how history is expressed in the *Neues Museum*; Chapter 5, Bullet Hole Constellations*,* offers a close reading of the space. The concluding part, Closing the Frames, establishes the *Neues Museum*'s critical context.

[14] All of the various uses will be explored in Chapter 1, Part II.

Because I am arguing for a concept of cultural memory that emphasises how we use our cultural inheritance, I approach the case studies in a similar manner: I begin by examining the case study's history in order to see what histories are embodied in the space/buildings. I then move on to a close reading that will allow me to establish both what stories are being told in the space and how. Finally I am able to look at the critical discourse surrounding the projects in order to see what these stories mean in the wider cultural and critical context.

My material includes: scholarly and non-scholarly written sources, newspaper articles, archival material, images, and informal conversations I have had with architects and museum directors. Since the *Neues Museum* itself, a space, is my primary material, this project is very much informed by the many visits I have made to the museum, photo sessions I have done with friends, walks though the collection I have taken with Dietrich Wildung, former director of Berlin's *Ägyptisches Museum*, and one of the main people responsible for developing the *Neues Museum*'s current museological concept, and workshops I have conducted with students and colleagues. My methodological approach could generally be considered a combination of 'thick description'[15] and phenomenology. By this I mean that, like some of the main proponents of philosophical phenomenology (in my case Martin Heidegger, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Edward Casey), I engage closely with the space, objects, and images in order to uncover their theoretical and narrative underpinnings.

[15] For a discussion of this methodological approach, see Chapter 1, 'Thick Description: Toward and Interpretive Theory of Culture', in Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1973), pp. 3-32.

PART I: Opening the Frames

Chapter 1: Provisional Ordering

בְּכָל־דּוֹר וָדוֹר חַיָּב אָדָם לִרְאוֹת אֶת־עַצְמוֹ,
כְּאִלּוּ הוּא יָצָא מִמִּצְרָיִם.

In each generation, every
individual should feel as
though he or she had
actually been redeemed
from Mitzrayim

- Passover *Haggadah*[16]

The Passover *Haggadah*, the book that guides the Passover Seder – a ritualized intergenerational meal that Jewish families have shared for millennia – may at first seem an odd place to begin an investigation into contemporary Cultural Memory Studies. However, the annual communal recounting of the Exodus story via readings, singing, symbolic food, and the particular traditions developed and handed down in each family actually forms a natural starting point for what in essence amounts to an examination of

[16] Please note that I am using the *Haggadah* that was put together under the auspices of the Conservative Judaism Rabbinical Assembly. The editors made some very particular choices including keeping the Hebrew word *Mitzrayim* rather than Egypt, the English translation. This decision was motivated by *Mitzrayim*'s '*tz-r*' root, meaning 'narrow'. *Mitzrayim* then is literally translated as 'from the narrows'. For the editors, '[t]he violent vicissitudes of history have endowed Mitzrayim with broader connotations, so that it has come to represent repression and tyranny. Mitzrayim transcends the longitudes and latitudes of geography. Mitzrayim is every place and any place in the world where people have been (or still are) persecuted'. *Passover Haggadah: The Feast of Freedom*, ed. by Rachel Anne Rabinowicz (New York, NY: The United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism Book Service, 1982), p. 9. The editors' interpretation of *Mitzrayim* anticipates the cultural memory hypothesis I put forward in this chapter. I will subsequently refer to this text as *Passover Haggadah*.

the importance of making, interpreting, and telling stories. Moreover, the Seder has been used by many of the major thinkers in Cultural Memory Studies, and this will be explored in detail in Part II of this chapter. The word *Haggadah* (הַגָּדָה) comes from the Hebrew verb *lehaggid* (לְהַגִּיד) – meaning to tell or to recount. Thus the celebration and observance of Passover, one of the fundamental acts binding members of the Jewish culture together, is essentially an act of storytelling; the Jewish people were a people of the book long before they were people of a land. Seder (סֵדֶר) means order, and in the case of Passover it amounts to an 'order of service'. Ordering, as a concept, is incredibly relevant to cultural memory as a praxis (particularly for museums and any curated space): all storytellers know that the key to effective storytelling is an affecting arrangement of story elements and a compelling (and individualized) way of telling.[17] The Seder ritual combines the synchronic and diachronic aspects of cultural memory: on the one hand the act of having a Seder stretches diachronically through time, as Jewish families throughout history have performed the same rituals and passed down the same stories; on the other hand the ritual is synchronic because all of the 'contemporary' families sit down at the same time on the fifteenth day of the Hebrew month of *Nisan*.

But it is not just the ritual itself that perches on the intersection between the synchronic and diachronic, the actual telling, *Maggid* (מַגִּיד), also derived from the verb *lehaggid*, connects those participating to both a long history and an immediate community. *Maggid* is the part of the Seder when the actual story of the Exodus is read, recited, sung, and discussed. The *Maggid* is itself fastidiously ordered and begins by setting the tone ('This is the bread of affliction', 'All who are hungry, let them enter and eat', and 'This year we are slaves, next year we will be free', – something that is mirrored

[17] This is reminiscent of Blumenberg's description of myth, *Arbeit am Mythos*, pp. 40-67.

as the final act in the Seder when 'Next year in Jerusalem' is sung). It then addresses the 'why' questions – 'why is tonight different from all other nights', or in other words, 'why are we here together tonight' – when the youngest person present asks the 'Four Questions'. Moving on to the 'what' questions, the actual story is told via the reading of carefully selected passages. It is noteworthy that these passages not only recount the story itself, but also include some of the various debates and interpretations that have persisted throughout the years (eg. with regards to reciting a specific prayer 'all the days of your life' the rabbis question whether all the days include the nights). It thus becomes apparent that the story cannot be separated from its reception, or specifically the various generational and individual interpretations. This signifies the living nature of the story and its openness to new interpretations and uses.

The answer to the 'why' question blends with the answers to the 'what' questions: not only are we here to be together with our immediate friends and family, we are also here to commune with our transcendental family. To further emphasize this point, *Maggid* includes the text quoted at the beginning of this chapter: 'In each generation, every individual should feel as though he or she had actually been redeemed from Mitzrayim'. This text indicates that at the Passover Seder, each person plays three roles: an individual, someone part of a generation, and someone implicated in a longer history. The cumulative effect is that during *Maggid* those present at the Seder are meant to contemplate both history and its actuality; it obliges those reciting to assume a personal dialogue with those long dead and those yet to be born while simultaneously discussing the Exodus story in a contemporary setting. Many families also have their own *Maggid* traditions that involve bringing current events or personal questions into the discussion as

well. The *Haggadah* published by the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism's Rabbinical Assembly gives the following instructions: '[…] each of us should speak of our own Exodus – in the language that we understand, in the context familiar to us, and with the knowledge and experience we have acquired'.[18] We can clearly note here that the commandment goes far beyond simple identification with ancestors. Rather than prescribing the Seder participants to imaginatively time travel to Ancient Egypt, the Seder compels us to seek the contemporary meanings and resonance of the mythological (and foundational) narrative: *Mitzrayim* here becomes an analytical tool rather than an end in itself. By bringing the past forward and transforming the story into lenses through which to contemplate the contemporary world, in other words, by thinking of the past as an analytical tool, we are simultaneously compelled to contemplate what this inheritance means for us. This question will be examined in great detail later in the chapter.

Because the Passover Seder is an interesting meeting space between generations, individuals, and history, it may be considered a bridge between what Jan and Aleida Assmann describe as the mythical, primordial, and heavily mediated cultural memory and the generational, historical, and passed-down communicative memory.[19] It necessitates an exploration of the relationship between the individual, the group, and long narratives of cultural history – a relationship that is at the core of the academic discipline and creative practice of cultural memory.

But attempting to grasp this relationship is not new. In fact, understanding the relationship between the individual and a culture or a collective is one of the oldest

[18] *Passover Haggadah*, p. 8.
[19] For a concise explanation of the difference between communicative and cultural memory see the chart that distinguishes between them in Jan Assmann, 'Communicative and Cultural Memory', *A Companion to Cultural Memory Studies*, ed. by Erll and Nünning, p 117. A similar chart may be found in Jan Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis*, p. 57.

challenges of philosophy. From Plato imposing an analogical relationship between city and soul in the *Republic*[20] to the Jungian concept of the collective unconscious,[21] via the oft-invoked metaphor of the 'body politic,'[22] many thinkers and artists have struggled to articulate how the individual soul and its larger cultural context inform and condition one another. It has certainly been at the core of Cultural Memory Studies as an academic discipline since its formal inception, often attributed to the 1925 publication of Maurice Halbwachs' *Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire*.[23] Halbwachs' work on the social framing of memory came about in a context of great curiosity concerning time, its passage, and the ways memory may be a tool to wield against its ravages. Late-nineteenth/early-twentieth-century philosophical works including Bergson's *Matière et mémoire* (1896), which established pure and habitual memory, and also explored ideas with a duration beyond our experience,[24] as well as Husserl's various attempts at sketching phenomenological *Zeitbewußtsein* (1893-1917)[25] are but two indicators that 'time' and

[20] As the soul was too small, Socrates suggests that the investigation into the problem of the just life could be analogically transferred to the city. See Plato, *The Republic*, trans. by G.M.A. Grube, rev. by C.D.C. Reeve (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Inc., 1992), pp. 43-44.

[21] For a discussion of the 'collective unconscious' see the following essays: 'Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious' and 'The Concept of the Collective Unconscious', in Carl Gustav Jung, *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, trans. by R.F.C. Hull, 2nd edn (London: Routledge, 1990), pp. 3-53.

[22] Thinking about a political community as a 'body politic' is a common metaphor in political theory. Perhaps it is most famously portrayed in Hobbes' *Leviathan* where individuals submit a portion of their freedom to a sovereign in order to enjoy shared commodious living. See Chapter XVII 'Of the Causes, Generation, and Definition of a Commonwealth', in Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 111-114.

[23] Halbwachs looks at how individuals are placed within frameworks such as the family and sets out the original terms of the discipline's task. Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, trans. by Lewis A. Coser (London: University of Chicago Press, 1992), pp. 41-83.

[24] Perhaps the most clear description of Bergson's concept of memory is his 'inverted cone' image where memories move in and out of consciousness. See Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory,* trans. by N.M. Paul and W.S. Palmer (New York, NY: Zone Books, 1991), pp. 133-177. This image might be read as anticipating Merleau-Ponty's use of Proust's 'pyramid of past life image' as well as Aleida Assmann's *Funktions-* and *Speichergedächtnis* concept, which will be discussed in Parts III and II of this chapter respectively.

[25] Husserl addressed the idea of the *Zeitbewußtsein* throughout his work culminating in a three-part structure of temporal consciousness: impression, retention, and protension. See Edmund Husserl, *Zur*

'memory' were problems that drew the attention of turn-of-the-century thinkers. Though the malaise was not only experienced by philosophers. Experimental works of High Modernism were also preoccupied with time. The most oft-cited examples, at least those that appear most often in academic literature, are Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu* (1913-1927) and Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922). Both works experiment with time by following an individual's efforts to recover it or break it down.

Clearly we 'remember' more than we have experienced first-hand. Accounting for this is at the very core of the study of cultural memory.[26] Beyond the analogical and metaphorical, the central question is whether the attributes of an individual, such as remembering, can be enlarged to encompass an entire culture and conversely, whether collective culture can be imprinted upon an individual. While it isn't startling to claim that individuals are products, parts, and producers of community, Cultural Memory Studies, as a discipline, explores the 'how', 'what', and 'why' questions surrounding this exchange: 'remembering' is often the shorthand used to signify this exchange. Part I of this chapter explores how some of the main cultural memory theorists respond to these questions. Part II introduces my own hypothesis by returning to the Passover Seder. Part III continues to develop my hypothesis by introducing phenomenology as an effective strategy for understanding the porosity between an individual and its cultural world. This

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Phänomenologie des inneren Zeitbewußtseins: Mit den Texten aus der Erstausgabe und dem Nachlaß, ed. by Rudolf Bernet, (Hamburg: Meiner Felix Verlag GmbH, 2013), pp. 21-78.

[26] I am indebted to the first chapter, 'Von individuellen zu kollektiven Konstruktionen der Vergangenheit', of Aleida Assmann's book *Der lange Schatten der Vergangenheit* for helping me configure the relationship between the individual, the group, and culture as one of the fundamental challenges of Cultural Memory Studies as a discipline. Her very clear analysis of the structures helped me see how thinkers in other branches of the discipline (e.g. Trauma Studies, theorists who engage with secondary witnessing, Museum/Memorial Studies) grapple with the same dilemmas and tension. While I have taken Assmann's systematic categorizations and descriptions as guidelines rather than as givens, I am grateful for their clarity and usefulness. For a clear articulation of these concepts, see Aleida Assmann, *Der lange Schatten der Vergangenheit: Erinnerungskultur und Geschichtspolitik* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2006), pp. 21-61.

chapter will conclude by situating the hypothesis in the museum (specifically the *Neues Museum*). While depending upon the foundational work done by cultural memory theorists who explore processes and means of mediation and transmission, my work primarily responds to the 'now what' question: now that we have come into and become aware of our cultural inheritance, what can we do with it?

I) Everyone at the Table

The idea that cultural memory is not a literal act of 'remembering' is not particularly controversial; 'to remember' means to incorporate something from the past into a contemporary worldview. This incorporation involves acknowledging a relation to history that is already there, written into our lives by the very process of socialization. This section explores the main 'how,' 'why,' and 'what' questions as they relate to the ways in which various kinds of cultural memory theory account for the individual's appropriation and transformation of shared cultural heritage.

A) How?

The responses to the question, 'how is the past incorporated into a contemporary worldview?' are numerous, diverse, and not mutually exclusive. All of them seem to concur on the point that there is some form of mediation: an individual comes into culture through an experience or via a process of engagement. This section looks at three main kinds of mediation: via practice, metaphor/analogy, and indirect or modified transmission.

Practice is a wide category. It involves engagement with the space, execution of the ritual, and use of the object that characterizes the act of cultural memory. Some

cultural memory theorists turn to our attention to heritage spaces and sites (Nora, *les lieux de mémoires;*[27] Winter, First World War battlefields and their *in situ* memorials[28]) or urban space (Boyer, architecture, 'maps';[29] Huyssen, urban palimpsests[30]). Others call upon our enactment of mnemonic practices (Olick, collective memory as something that we *do* rather than *have;*[31] Jan and Aleida Assmann's cultural memory as designated by its emphasis on symbolic forms and rituals[32]). We might also look to various cultural media such as literature or film as means of transmitting and expressing culture. Sometimes cultural media might even be said to bear witness (Laub and Felman, literature and art as modes of witnessing, testimony, and transmission[33]).

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[27] Nora's great work, *Les Lieux de Mémoires*, is a four volume series on French cultural memory. For a succinct discussion of his concept, see Pierre Nora, 'Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire', *Representations*, 26 (Spring 1989), pp. 7-24.

[28] To get a sense of the importance of *in situ* memorials, see 'Introduction', in Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 1-12.

[29] Boyer gives an interesting read of the city as a series of 'maps': as work of art, as a panorama, and as spectacle. See 'City Images and Representational Forms', in Christine M. Boyer, *The City of Collective Memory: Its Historical Imagery and Architectural Entertainments* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996), pp. 31-70.

[30] For the definition of an 'urban palimpsest', see Andreas Huyssen, *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003), pp. 6-10. He names the centre of Berlin as a prime example. This will be explored in Part II when I engage with the critical material available on Berlin's Jewish Museum and *Museumsinsel*.

[31] For a discussion of collective memory as a form of social practice, see Jeffrey K. Olick, 'From Collective Memory to the Sociology of Mnemonic Practices and Products', in *A Companion to Cultural Memory Studies*, ed. by Erll and Nünning, pp. 151-162 (pp. 156-159). Olick's point is echoed in Schmidt's argument about how space and objects do not contain memory so much as permit memory to be made in Siegfried J. Schmidt's essay 'Memory and Remembrance: A Constructivist Approach', *A Companion to Cultural Memory Studies*, ed. by Erll and Nünning, pp. 191-202.

[32] This is outlined in many sources but the most succinct example is Jan Assmann's chart already cited in note 19.

[33] One of the most interesting examples of this is Shoshana Felman's exploration of the relationship between trauma, testimony, and pedagogy. She reflects on a seminar she ran at Yale that moved from examining works of literature to video archives of Holocaust testimonies. She describes the emergence of a crisis situation where the act of participating in the screening was traumatic for the students but also where what ensued after the screening constituted a form of survival. This initiated the transfer of the trauma but also the idea of the need to bear witness to witnessing. This case study can be found in: Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (Abingdon: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 1992), pp. 1-56. One wonders whether the transfer (and transformation) of traumatic experience through witnessing someone's testimony and subsequently offering a testimony of this experience of witnessing, might harmonize with LaCapra's claims that writing about trauma and writing trauma are often hard to distinguish one from the other. See Dominick LaCapra,

But perhaps most relevant to this study is a specific kind of practice that occurs in spaces that are specifically designated as sites of cultural memory: we go to museums and memorials in order to perform acts of remembering, commemoration, and willed connection with the past. Art historian Donald Preziosi writes that museums 'mak[e] the visible legible'.[34] By this he means that visitors go to museums specifically to learn about the past and to contemplate (and ultimately use) their cultural inheritance. Whereas the quotidian ways in which we use our cultural inheritance (eg. language, symbols) are normally unconscious, visiting a museum is a conscious act aimed at cultivating a sense of cultural heritage. Museums thus render visible that which is normally invisible, or they allow what is 'visible' to become 'legible': by putting a roof over ordered artefacts they become houses of history.

Cultural memory theorists take this particular character into account when writing about memorials (Young, Holocaust Memorials in general;[35] Jordan, Berlin memorials;[36] and Dekel, the *Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas*[37]) and museums (Arnold-de Simine, 'memory museums'[38]).

For some of these thinkers, most notably Dekel and Arnold-de Simine, these spaces do not figure exclusively as tell-tales or reminders of something that happened.

Writing History, Writing Trauma (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), pp. 181-220.

[34] This is the title of the introductory essay of *The Art of Art History: A Critical Anthology*, ed. by Donald Preziosi (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009) p. 7.

[35] For this reference as well as 36 and 37, I've merely cited the works that illustrate the point being argued. See James E. Young, *At Memory's Edge: After-Images of the Holocaust in Contemporary Art and Architecture* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000) and James E. Young, *The Texture of Memory* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993). They will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 2.

[36] See Jordan, *Structures of Memory*.

[37] See Irit Dekel, *Mediation at the Holocaust Memorial in Berlin* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

[38] Arnold-de Simine prefers the term memory museums to memorial museums because it allows her to focus on the narrative dimensions rather than their particular 'sub-genres'. Silke Arnold-de Simine, *Mediating Memory in the Museum* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), pp. 10-11.

Instead, many of these memorials and museums spark and facilitate 'civic engagement'[39] or 'social consciousness'.[40] Arnold-de Simine's wide-ranging investigation of various 'memory museum' case studies, including the Imperial War Museum (IWM), the GDR Museum, the Pitt Rivers Museum, and 18 Folgate Street and 19 Princelet Street (Spitalfields), shows that many 'contemporary' museums use technologies and representational strategies to facilitate the performance or enactment of remembering – and here both performance and enactment convey the idea of action.[41] For Arnold-de Simine, the museum and memorial have become more than a 'storehouse' or grave-marker; they are now 'inseparable from social consciousness'[42] and can thus be counted among the premier cultural institutions for facilitating historical awareness, while in turn developing new narratives of shared history that are often culled from the plurality of individual experiences. In other words, these memory museums function in a manner that would accord with the Seder's depiction of *Mitzrayim* as an idea or narrative category rather than an isolated geographical and historical incident.

Let us look at one example that is part memorial and part museum. It is perhaps somewhat ironic that the *Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas*, the monument and corresponding Information Centre that seem at first glance to be most embroiled in what I will describe in Chapters 1 and 2 as a cultural memory of categorical imperatives, is one that poses the most direct challenge to twentieth-century categories. For Dekel, the

[39] Dekel, p. 2,
[40] Arnold-de Simine, p. 11.
[41] Arnold-de Simine, pp. 1-2. The Pitt Rivers Museums, originally opened in1884, may be considered among 'contemporary' museums as it underwent rennovations in 2008/2009. Arnold-de Simine classifies it among those museums exploring the question of nostalgia (or post-nostalgia). See her discussion on pp.129-134.
[42] Arnold-de Simine, pp. 11-12.

Denkmal's 'architecture of feelings/affect'[43] allows for, and even necessitates, an individualized emotional and ultimately critical response to what is being memorialized: according to its architect Peter Eisenman, the stones themselves have no fixed meaning; in order for there to be meaning, constellations must be accidental and invented.[44] Dekel's sociological research has led her to conclude that most visitors come to the memorial both expecting transformation and seeking some kind of meaningful narrative. The transformative performance is enacted in the labyrinthine memorial, where the visitor goes from being lost to finding something and, in so doing, is obliged to confront and cultivate their own sense of history, as well as their own relationship to it.[45] She outlines three phases –getting in, getting lost, getting it – through which the visitors ultimately 'underg[o] the compulsion to articulate [and] realize themselves as members of this moral, mature community'.[46] While the field of stelae, may, in some light and to some people, appear as collective symbolic gravestones, the *Denkmal*, like many cemeteries, is also a place for the living. If we are to be haunted here, it is not purely in order to mourn the unquiet murdered. The facilitation of meaning making (or the uncovering and confronting of meaning) ultimately turns one's experience at the memorial outwards – the act of commemoration is transmuted into a critical act aimed just as much at contemporary culture as at the specific historical event being commemorated.

The above-ground experience is enhanced by the below-ground experience of the Information Centre, which Dekel describes as a '[…] multi-directional mediation in

[43] See Dekel's discussion of Eisenman on p. 56.
[44] Dekel, p. 38.
[45] Dekel introduces the idea on p. 9 and then develops it in Chapter 1, 'Navigating Experience', pp. 25-54.
[46] Dekel, p. 135.

which a visitors look at victims looking back […] [thus] a collective space of observation is framed in the Holocaust Memorial'.[47] The borders between past and present, individual and cultural history are blurred. Through close observation of visitors, discussions with hosts/guides, and interviews, Dekel is able to demonstrate how the memorial and Information Centre are not just about the Holocaust, but rather are using the Holocaust as a 'litmus paper for the examination of memory politics, signifying an outward look'.[48] Both turns – the one inward, towards the individual coming to some kind of terms with the Holocaust, and the one outwards, toward critical engagement – constitute the mediation occurring at the *Denkmal*. The past comes to the visitor via a process of mediation, but the past also functions as a means of mediation through which to encounter contemporary culture.

The museums and memorials addressed by Dekel and Arnold-de Simine are shared cultural spaces that both house heritage objects and become heritage objects. They facilitate individual encounters with the past and enactments of cultural memory. While all heritage objects facilitate encounters, what is interesting about Dekel and Arnold-de Simine's case studies is the kind of response these particular heritage objects aim to elicit from the visitor. Rather than being a passive receptor of culture, the visitors are engaged on an active and subjective level. We can see how museums and memorials are far from the 'mausoleums' they were once thought to be.[49]

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[47] Dekel, p. 6.
[48] Dekel, p. 19.
[49] The source of this association may be traced to Adorno's comments about how museums and mausoleums are etymologically (and conceptually) linked in Theodor W. Adorno, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 20 vols (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Taschenbuch, 2003), X.1: *Kulturkritik und Gesellschaft I*, (2003), p. 181.

But there are other theories aimed at understanding the ways through which an individual comes to recognize their place in a shared culture that rely on both traditional forms of mediation (via objects, space, and practice) and on traditional ways of understanding the relationship between an individual and collective culture (eg. metaphor and analogy). The next couple of paragraphs will look at how Trauma Studies and secondary witnessing strategies (prosthetic memory and postmemory) account for this relationship.

While a diverse and non-homogenous field, one thing that many Trauma Studies theorists have in common is a turn to a more metaphorical or analogical way of understanding the relationship between the individual and the collective by the adoption of psychological terminology (Leys, Post-traumatic Stress Disorder[50]) or psychoanalytical principles (LaCapra, acting out/working through;[51] Caruth, belated experience/latency[52]). Invoking Freud's claims that 'wounds' may be 'inflicted upon the mind',[53] that history may have a traumatizing effect on the individual,[54] and that trauma

[50] Leys writes about how the traumatized mind is split during trauma: 'The experience of the trauma, fixed or frozen in time, refuses to be represented *as* past, but is perpetually re-experienced in a painful, dissociated, traumatic present'. Ruth Leys, *Trauma: A Genealogy* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), p. 2.

[51] 'Acting out' and 'working through' are two of LaCapra's key concepts. They relate to how traumatic experience and knowledge is processed by the individual, particularly when trauma becomes a structuring feature of cultural life rather than specifically historical, or when a specific loss becomes a more general conditioning absence. 'Acting out' may be summed up as 'possession' by the past that is relived and re-enacted partially in fear of betraying the trauma. 'Working through' is a process of acknowledging, affirming, and confronting the 'absence' and recognizing it as such. These terms and the development of these concepts appear throughout LaCapra's work but perhaps the most succinct exegesis is found in Chapter 2, 'Trauma, Absence, Loss,' in Dominick LaCapra, *Writing History,* pp. 43-85. It is also worth noting that LaCapra finds the idea of the analogy between individual and collective to be suspect and 'flimsy'. For him, psychoanalytical concepts like 'acting out' and 'working through' are helpful when 'undercut[ting] the binary opposition between the individual and society […]' as they are 'processes that always involve modes of interaction, mutual reinforcement […]'. Dominick LaCapra, *History and Memory After Auschwitz (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998*), p. 43.

[52] On 'belated experience' and 'latency', the time between an event and when its effects become apparent, see Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), pp. 7 and 17.

[53] Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*, p. 3.

is fundamentally unspeakable/the un-representable,[55] Cathy Caruth, one of the main proponents of Trauma Studies, suggests that being initiated into culture or history necessitates a traumatization. Her claim also takes terms and analytical tools usually employed within the bounds of an individual's therapy and applies them to the collective. For Caruth, there appears to be a frozenness that goes beyond the limits of normal repression and results in an endless circle of mutually-inflicted trauma: individuals cannot get over trauma because it is embedded in collective culture, and conversely collective culture cannot move beyond the traumatic event because it is comprised of traumatized individuals.[56]

Some, like Dominick LaCapra, find this to be misleading, as for him, Caruth fails to delineate between historical trauma (the Holocaust and other historical events) and structural or existential trauma.[57] Distinctions aside, it would seem that whether it is the general human condition of ephemerality or the ever-lingering effects of specific historical events, Trauma Studies, at its heart, depends upon a fundamental analogy: what traumatizes at the level of the individual also traumatizes at the level of culture or collective.

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[54] For discussions of the traumatic effect of history on individuals, Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*, p. 18 and LaCapra, *Writing History*, pp. 22-24.

[55] Caruth uses the idea of 'latency' and how the traumatic event is often difficult if not impossible to narrate to show how trauma is deflected and sometimes refracted through other less direct expressions, throughout the examples she gives in *Unclaimed Experience* including: Freud and his Moses analysis, and the two characters in the film 'Hiroshima mon amour'. On the idea of trauma as sacred and thus ultimately unspeakable and un-representable, see Leys' critical reading of Caruth and van der Kolk in, *Trauma*, p. 253. LaCapra notes and is critical of similar claims made by Lyotard and Friedlander when it comes to the 'unrepresentable' nature of traumatic events. See LaCapra, *Writing History*, p. 91.

[56] Caruth writes about individuals being implicated in one another's traumas. See Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*, p. 24.

[57] For the distinction between historical and structural trauma see note 51 above but see also LaCapra's discussion of how the need to distinguish between the two modes of trauma was part of the Historians' Debate (*Historikerstreit*), in which the application of psychoanalytic language to a collective and historical situation was tested. LaCapra, *History and Memory*, pp. 43-72

One final main approach to characterizing how individuals come into their own historical consciousness is through various processes of secondary witnessing, or modified indirect transmission. In general terms, secondary witnessing takes the analogy/metaphor of collective trauma and employs various media/communicative forms in order to transmit this trauma. The main expressions of this strategy are Alison Landsberg's 'prosthetic memory' and Marianne Hirsch's 'postmemory'.

Prosthetic memory is where '[…] the technologies of mass culture and the capitalistic economy of which they are a part open up a world of images outside a person's lived experience, creating portable, fluid, and non-essentialist forms of memory'.[58] Prosthetic memories are 'not natural […] [they are] worn on the body […] mark[s] of trauma […] interchangeabl[e] [and] [exchangeable[e] […] and usefu[l] […] they help condition how a person thinks about the world and might be instrumental in articulating an ethical relation to the other'.[59]At the core of Landsberg's argument is the idea that it is possible to artificially acquire someone else's traumatic memories. While never 'natural', these memories are tools of sorts that may make individuals more empathetic. Perhaps on the surface this would appear similar to Dekel's reading of mediation at the Holocaust Memorial, though Dekel herself articulates the difference: rather than 'produc[ing] living memories in those who did not experience events [by] assum[ing] some kind of physical and emotional proximity to the act and will of remembering […] the Holocaust memorial relies instead on accidental engagement with memory through curiosity about the Field of Stelae, its history and experience'.[60] For

[58] Alison Landsberg, *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2004), p. 18.
[59] Landsberg, pp. 20-21.
[60] Dekel, pp. 164-165.

Landsberg, the prosthetic might simulate the necessary 'physical and emotional proximity', but for Dekel, no simulation is required, as curiosity and contingency are amply sufficient. Proximity and distance are important for both Dekel and Landsberg – we care most about what feels closest, though what feels closest is effected by the means through which the past is mediated.

The other main secondary witnessing strategy, postmemory, pertains to a transfer of traumatic experience. Hirsch, the concept's main proponent, specifically describes a 'hinge generation' or the '"generation after" [that] bears […] the personal, collective and cultural trauma of those who came before'.[61] 'Guardianship' of traumatic history is transferred from those who experienced the trauma to this next generation.[62] But it becomes more than simply bearing witness. Because of the extreme proximity to those who literally did experience the traumatic events, members of 'the generation of postmemory'[63] are so 'overwhelm[ed] [by] inherited memories [and] dominated by narratives that preceded one's birth or one's consciousness [that they] risk having [their] own life stories displaced, even evacuated by [their] ancestors'.[64] As with prosthetic memory, postmemory depends upon the degree of proximity: children of trauma survivors assimilate their parents' trauma, thus the transmission becomes more than the communicative memory (a story passed by one generation), the traumatic or 'limit

[61] Marianne Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture After the Holocaust* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2012), p, 5.
[62] Hirsch, *Generation of Postmemory*, p. 1.
[63] This is the title of Hirsch's book but it is also the general way in which she describes the 'second generation', or the children of survivors and while she does not explore this in great depth in her book, the term is likely applicable to the children of perpetrators. This will be discussed in greater detail when looking at Aleida Assmann's examination of the 68er generation in Part II of this chapter.
[64] Hirsch, *Generation of Postmemory*, p. 5.

event',[65] to use LaCapra's term, actually becomes limiting. As with the traumatic event of which one cannot speak and from which one can never recover, the 'hinge generation' remains fixed in place and fixated by the experiences of the previous generation.

In both instances, prosthetic memory and postmemory, the traumatic cultural past and the individual in the present are literally and artificially bound together - either by metabolizing someone else's experiences (Hirsch) or through grafting via films, novels, or 'experiential museums' (Landsberg).[66] We may here note the language pertaining to the body, as it will surface again when considering phenomenology as a means of embodiment of the individual in the world/*Situation*. We may also note that for both Landsberg and Hirsch, secondary witnessing involves the incorporation of something 'unnatural' in something natural: at best, the experience of others always remains somewhat artificial, at worst, they cannibalize our own.

These 'how' strategies: mediation, metaphor/analogy, and indirect transmission are not mutually exclusive, they all work together to give the past an actuality. They also help us get closer to the more difficult-to-answer 'why' questions: Why do we remember? Why are certain pasts always before our eyes, while others seem to be at a distance? My analysis of the museums in Parts II and III of this dissertation will attempt to understand the 'contemporary' resonance of how these historical collections and buildings are presented. But as we are still developing the theoretical framework of the project, we should now look towards the 'why' questions at the level of the general

[65] Though LaCapra writes about the idea of a 'limit event' throughout his work, he uses it in conjunction with the Holocaust at the outset of his investigation. See LaCapra, *Writing History*, p. 3. The Holocaust is also described as the 'watershed of our times […]' in Felman and Laub, *Testimony*, p. xiv.
[66] For a discussion of 'experiential museums' as 'transfer sites' see Landsberg, *Prosthetic Memory*, pp. 129-140.

discourse. For Cultural Memory Studies as a discipline, these 'why' questions are inextricable from the 'what' questions.

B) Why? What?

The 'why' and 'what' of cultural memory offer the material and the impetus for the mediation practices outlined in the previous section of this chapter. As was the case during the examination of how an individual is initiated into longer narratives of culture and comes to grasp these narratives for themselves, navigating one's horizons of experience evokes questions of proximity and distance: What images and stories feel near and relevant to us? Why? What ought to feel near? Why?

While the roots of Cultural Memory Studies run deeper, the discipline came of age during the latter half of the twentieth century, largely coinciding with efforts to contend with its violence, most notably the Holocaust.[67] Certainly the specific cultural memory strands associated with Trauma Studies and secondary witnessing is directly tied to strategies for understanding and directing long-term efforts to work through and transmit Holocaust memory and other difficult pasts, such as slavery. Other strands, most notably the German Cultural Memory Studies tradition, emanating from the work of Jan and Aleida Assmann, while not utterly preoccupied with the Holocaust per se, is driven by the need to understand structures and processes by which individuals are initiated into

[67] It is interesting to note that the first extensive disciplinary handbook, Erll and Nünning's *A Companion to Cultural Memory Studies*, was first published in 2008 (in hardcover and under a slightly different name, *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*). The book of essays explores the genealogy of the discipline as well as many of the pathways of this emerging field. With the exception of a very critical essay (and filed under the section called 'Psychological Memory Studies'), Trauma Studies is entirely absent. So while it is a discipline that is certainly driven by how to deal with difficult and sometimes even traumatic pasts, it would be wrong to think of this impetus as its sole driving force. For a lucid discussion of this point, see Wulf Kansteiner and Harald Weilnböck, 'Against the Concept of Cultural Trauma', in *A Companion to Cultural Memory Studies,* ed. by Erll and Nünning, pp. 229-240.

culture and through which they cultivate an awareness of what this means. This section will first look at the compulsions associated with remembering traumatic history. It will explore the limits of this kind of remembering and show how the Assmanns' tradition helps us move beyond these limits. All of this is in preparation for a more extensive discussion of my own hypotheses outlined in the Part II of the chapter.

There are two main reasons why traumatic history must be remembered: the first is a debt to the past, and the second is a promise to the present and future made via engaging with the past. Both the debt and the promise involve an individual in synchronic and diachronic cultural narratives: we commit ourselves to involvement in long histories and open ourselves to caring for those who share our immediate horizons.

The first reason, the debt to the past, may be traced to Adorno, one of the important early theorists of the process of German *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, or coming to terms with the past. Adorno writes: 'Hitler hat den Menschen im Stande ihrer Unfreiheit einen neuen kategorischen Imperativ aufgezwungen: ihr Denken und Handeln so einzurichten, dass Auschwitz nicht sich wiederhole, nichts Ähnliches geschehe'.[68] For Adorno, to remember (or to 'never forget')[69] is a fundamental part of submitting to this categorical imperative.[70] To remember, then, is to perform a moral duty, and the first

[68] Theodor W. Adorno, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 20 vols (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Taschenbuch, 2003), VI: *Negative Dialektik und Jargon der Eigentlichkeit* (2003), p. 358.
[69] The origin of the political slogan is unclear, though it has long been associated with Holocaust memory. It definitely seems an inversion of the sentiment 'we shall remember them,' from Laurence Binyon 'Poem for the fallen,' in *Poetry of the First World War: An Anthology*, ed. by Tim Kendall, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 44. The slogan is used in other contemporary memory practices such as the official 9-11 memorial and museum where official 'never forget bracelets' are sold. For an example, see the National September 11 Memorial and Museum/World Trade Center Memorial <http://www.911memorial.org>, [accessed 20 December, 2014].
[70] Adorno writes about forgetting as a last indignity in Theodor W. Adorno, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 20 vols (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Taschenbuch, 2003) X.2: *Kulturkritik und Gesellschaft II* (2003), p. 558.

obvious level of the duty is to remember and mourn the dead who have no descendants to mourn them.

However, this moral duty does not end with mourning. For Adorno, the socio-economic forces that led to the Holocaust are still at large in the structures underpinning our culture. Any kind of *Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit*[71] that is to go beyond the superficial must engage with the deeply-set 'objektiven gesellschaftlichen Voraussetzungen'.[72] Yet Adorno never really does tell us how to do this, besides indicating that there must be a revitalization of the critical subject.[73] The trouble is that the individual is always part and producer of culture. Cold societies produce cold citizens, who, in turn, produce more cold societies until the cultural landscape is but a permafrost with traumatic history trapped inside like tiny radioactive stones emitting their subtle poison. Adorno describes the result of this process as *verdinglichtes Bewußtsein*[74] (reified consciousness), whereby the individual becomes more object than subject of the Culture Industry, or, rather, whereby the individual's subjective status becomes compromised. Such an individual, a traumatized individual, would be doomed to repeat harmful and numbing patterns of behaviour,[75] as it would be impossible to step outside of one's circumstances in order to obtain sufficient critical perspective. The simultaneous need to step outside one's synchronic conditions and the impossibility of ever escaping the Culture Industry leaves us at an impasse. 'Never again Auschwitz' fails as a categorical imperative because we have been unable to imagine new categories.

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[71] Please note that 'Was bedeutet: Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit' is the title of Adorno's seminal essay. 'Aufarbeitung' is normally translated as 'working through'. It is interesting to note the linguistic parallel between Adorno and LaCapra.
[72] Adorno, *Kulturkritik und Gesellschaft II*, p. 567.
[73] See Adorno's essay 'Erziehung nach Auschwitz', in *Kulturkritik und Gesellschaft II*, pp. 674-690.
[74] Adorno, *Kulturkritik und Gesellschaft II*, p. 684.
[75] See note 51 where I outline LaCapra's differentiation between structural and historical trauma and how this relates to his notions of 'acting out' and 'working through'.

Hoping to find ways for the subject to connect with others, the second reason – the promise to the present and future consecrated by engagement with the past – essentially tries to convert this *Aufarbeitung* into empathy. Landsberg's theory of prosthetic memory best expresses this idea. However, as Arnold-de Simine claims, secondary witnessing strategies may not actually succeed in making us more empathetic;[76] in fact, they might hinder empathy by eliminating the sense of difference between the self and the other. She warns of potential over-identification or 'surrogate victimhood' that would 'feed masochism or self-righteousness […] [cultivating a] self-indulgent sense of superiority'.[77] This act allows an individual to assume the position of moral authority without assuming moral responsibility and consequences of actually having undergone the historical experience.[78] Susanna Radstone also wonders whether processes of prosthetic identification might act 'as replacement for more traditional modes of political allegiance formation'.[79] Both of these consequences reiterate Adorno's worry about the weakness of the subject. Only a critical subject can experience the examined and conscious solidarity that connects us with others and with the warmth of shared cultural life.

Both Radstone and Arnold-de Simine's concerns point towards the uncomfortable intersection between Trauma Studies and secondary witnessing: the instrumentalization of traumatic history on the one hand and its sacralization on the other. With regards to instrumentalization, at best the hope is that traumatic history may lure individuals into a

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[76] Arnold-de Simine, pp. 27-28.
[77] Arnold-de Simine, p. 113. LaCapra notes a similar potential danger with 'vicarious victimhood'. See LaCapra, *Writing History*, p. 47.
[78] Arnold-de Simine, p. 28. She is referring to the following text: Anne Rothe, *Popular Trauma Culture: Selling the Pain of Others in the Mass Media* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2011).
[79] Susanna Radstone, 'Memory Studies: For and Against', *Memory Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (Jan., 2008), pp. 31-39, quoted in Arnold-de Simine, p. 92.

particular kind of schematic empathy and solidarity. At worst, the fear is that the individual will be unable to sustain empathetic bonds because their subjectivity has been evacuated.

Whether or not the instrumentalization of traumatic history succeeds in producing empathetic subjects, the sacralization or privileging of traumatic experience is not without danger. While on the one hand the forming of a group or individual identity through trauma may be effective, it essentially amounts to a quick fix with potentially troubling consequences. Trauma, like anything macabre, might initially draw our attention by evoking feelings of emotional nearness, but people's inability to work through it makes developing a dynamic and mature relationship with history rather difficult. Wulf Kansteiner and Harald Weilnböck offer several reasons for why this might be the case: conflation of concrete suffering and ontological ambivalence as well as what Trauma Studies (Caruth in particular) sees as traumatic history's lack of narratability or representability and the ensuing therapeutic impossibility.[80] By making trauma sacred, the unspeakable void about which we cannot stop talking or that is continuously 'acted out', the desire to heal or undergo therapy would both appear to be pathological. Here again we see that the debt to the past cannot ever fully be paid off and neither can the promise to the future be fulfilled, because individuals are frozen in a relationship of self-perpetuating traumatic culture. Dekel, arguing for a way of thinking about traumatic

[80] See Kansteiner and Weilnböck's essay 'Against the Concept of Cultural Trauma', in *A Companion to Cultural Memory Studies*, ed. by Erll and Nünning, p. 237. Leys makes similar points about the debasing of trauma by overextending it and the dangers of non-narrative claims. See Leys, pp. 16-17 and pp. 105-109. Some of these points may echo LaCapra's criticisms of the failure to recognize the difference between loss and absence as outlined in note 51.

events that goes beyond the limiting structures of trauma theory,[81] suggests that it is perhaps time to move past the claim that trauma is simultaneously unrepresentable and singularly ubiquitous, and instead focus on performance or *Speakability*.[82]

But how would performance and *speakability* look? How to think about the 'what' and 'why' of cultural memory in a way that does not dwell exclusively in the traumatic? How to find a model that allows for a more expansive notion of what does and ought to matter to us? An answer might be found by returning to the questions posed at the beginning of this section: What images and stories feel near and relevant to us? Why? What ought to feel near? Why?

In order to respond to these we must recall the image of cultural memory as perched at the intersection between the synchronic and diachronic by turning towards the cultural memory model developed by Jan and Aleida Assmann. To the Assmans, remembering need not only be an experience of being weighed down by traumatic history, cultural inheritance is also enabling. As Aleida Assmann writes in the 'Arts of Memory', the English-language conclusion to *Cultural Memory and Western Civilization*: 'Sitting upon the shoulders of giants [our] lives are always already enveloped in the memory of those who came before and those who follow after'.[83] 'There are always deeper layers,'[84] she writes, when it comes to cultural memory – a sentiment that confirms the proposition

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[81] Dekel explicitly states moving from cultural memory models that are explicitly bound purely with traumatic history and that emphasize witnessing to one that facilitates civic engagement as one of the goals of her investigation. See Dekel, pp. 1-2.

[82] Dekel defines *Speakability* as follows: '*Speakability* is a social condition enabled by discussions in and around the memorial, and a larger discursive change which relies on the rules of democratic articulation and at the same time serves as a negative to the inability to speak about the Holocaust'. Dekel, p. 74.

[83] Aleida Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Western Civilization: Arts of Memory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 395. She uses a similar reference in her essay 'Canon and Archive', in *A Companion to Cultural Memory Studies*, ed. by Erll and Nünning, pp. 97-108 (p. 97). I have quoted the English version of Assmann's book because I could not find a similar reference in the conclusion to the German version which is entitled: 'Zur Krise des Kulturellen Gedächtnisses'.

[84] Aleida Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Western Civilziation*, p. 395.

that memory is indeed a vertical line of reception and transformation, or *mnemohistory*. Not only does cultural memory allow us to think about what we 'owe' the past, but it also enables us to find and forge a metaphysical grounding in and of history, to find ways in which it is meaningful for us.

While particular pasts or memories might not have specific values, they do have specific uses and functions that change throughout time: something that feels near and relevant right now might feel far and peripheral later. Aleida Assmann helpfully distinguishes between canonical and archival memories or ways of remembering.[85] While her categorization might seem unnecessarily rigid on first glance, as it gives the impression that particular memories are doomed to specific fates,[86] her subsequent categories of *Funktions*- and *Speichergedächtnis* do seem more permeable. Like the canon, *Funktionsgedächtnis* is a way to characterize the past that is in regular use, while, like the archive, *Speichergedächtnis* can categorize the past not actively in use. [87] Some images and certain pasts never really lose their grip on the cultural imagination. However, just because today one particular image is popular does not mean that it will never give way to another as trends change. While traumatic history (and, consequently, vicarious traumatic experience) is *de rigueur* at the moment in what Landsberg describes as 'experiential museums'[88] and Arnold-de Simine calls 'memory museums',[89] other kinds of history may also stimulate the imagination and merit more attention. For Huyssen,

[85] Aleida Assmann, 'Canon and Archive', in *A Companion to Cultural Memory Studies*, ed. by Erll and Nünning, pp. 99-104.
[86] Arnold-de Simine suggests that while this formulation is useful, that the 'classification can at best function as heuristic tools', Arnold-de Simine, p. 23.
[87] See Aleida Assmann, *Erinnerungsräume Formen und Wandlungen des kulturellen Gedächtnisses* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1999), pp. 130-141.
[88] See note 66.
[89] See note 38.

while trauma 'may well represent one of [cultural memory's] major articulations',[90] thinking only about one layer of memory prohibits us from encountering the past and spaces in which it is embodied as complex palimpsests.

It is hard to know what will be important for future generations, what light posterity will cast upon our own deeds or why certain moments from the past seem more illuminated than others. Perhaps that is why a version of reception theory[91] might be just as useful for Cultural Memory Studies as trauma theory when wanting to think about open and changing narratives of the past rather than narratives that are frozen in the voids left by traumatic wounding. Hans Robert Jauss, widely regarded as among the originators of reception theory, offers a good anecdote about two French novels written around the same time and with similar stories, Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* (1856) and Feydeau's *Fanny* (1858): one work ultimately became a 'turning-point in the history of the novel […] [while the other is mere[ly] yesterday's bestseller'.[92] Canons change and research interests are not impervious: the past may be as unpredictable as the future in that we never know what something will come to mean, or what paradigm permutations will occur when new bones and bits of pottery are brought back to the earth's surface. Shifting synchronic practices might invite us to look backwards to trace alternative genealogies in attempts to give an account or find grounding and meaning for our interests, actions, and choices. While we cannot ever leave our synchronic condition, cultural memory allows us to imaginatively move up and down the diachronic narrative as various new images are uncovered or various known images become relevant. This amounts to a search for other

[90] Huyssen, *Present Pasts*, p. 9.
[91] See the discussion of Jan Assmann's *mnemohistory* in Introduction.
[92] Hans Robert Jauss, *Towards an Aesthetic of Reception*, trans. by Timothy Bahti (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), pp. 27-28.

possibilities that may ultimately allow us escape the logic of cold societies and cold individuals constituting one another. Moreover, it can be curiosity as much as the idea of a debt or a promise that may draw us along these vertical lines of memory

As institutions, museums are incredibly adept at preserving, modifying and transforming canonical narratives. They bring together objects – some canonical and others unexpected, or seemingly from the back catalogue (at least for a non-specialist audience). One very specific, pointed, and topical example of this is the *Germany: Memories of a Nation* exhibition at the British Museum (16 October, 2014 – 25 January 2015). Neil MacGregor, the director of the British Museum, made a deliberate move with this exhibition: at a time when the familiar image of Germany as the enemy is appearing in the majority of British museums in the context of their reflections on the centenary of World War I, Germany here is presented in an unfamiliar way. It is depicted as a complex and fragmented 'nation' rather than as a monolithic culture with a clear and unified history.[93] This move has been both lauded as bold and criticized as somewhat banal.[94] Regardless of whether or not it is entirely successful, the exhibition attempts to re-write the image of Germany for the visitors of the British Museum. Still, like all objects that fall within the British Museum's general 'History in (often one hundred) Objects' strategy, these objects have now become part of a canonical narrative.

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[93] See 'Introduction', in Neil MacGregor, *Germany: Memories of a Nation* (London: Allen Lange, 2014), pp. xxv-xxxix.

[94] See the following reviews: Rebecca K. Morrison, 'Germany: The Memories of a Nation by Neil MacGregor, Book Review: Past is Another Country', *Independent*, 30 October 2014, <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/reviews/germany-the-memories-of-a-nation-by-neil-macgregor-book-review-past-is-another-country-9828621.html> [accessed 23 November 2014]; and Mark Hudson, 'Germany: Memories of a Nation, British Museum Review: Alarm Bells Ring From the Start', *Telegraph*, 14 October 2014, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/art/art-reviews/11161572/Germany-Memories-of-a-Nation-British-Museum-review-alarm-bells-ring-from-the-start.html> [accessed 23 November 2014].

As objects, memories, and historical events do not have fixed ontological values, their meaning and use depends on the synchronic contexts in which they are unpacked: what questions do we ask of our cultural heritage? If indeed we transform our existing relation to history when certain parts are illuminated by our shared encounters with them, then how is this reflected in our notions of self-identity and our worldviews? In the next part of this chapter, I will be able to outline my cultural memory hypothesis which, while very much perched upon the shoulders of those who came before, is mostly interested in the part of cultural memory that comes after the 'how', 'why', and 'what' aspects of the study, and responds to the question 'now what?'

II) הִנְנִי מוּכָנָה (*hineni muchana*): 'Here I am, ready'

'Here I am, ready' begins קַדֵּשׁ (*kadesh*), the prayer for the first cup of wine with which the Seder commences. Usually translated as 'I am ready', I've chosen to render הִנְנִי (*hineni*) as 'here I am' because הֵנָּה (*hineh*) means 'here' and the idea of being 'here' – at the Seder in the presence of friends, family, those who came before, and those who will come after, is important, in other words, at the intersection of my synchronic and diachronic communities. 'Hereness' is inextricable from being: I cannot be without a context. After the brief propaedeutic in the previous section, I am now able to elucidate my own hypothesis, which relies upon the notion of being 'here' at the intersection of the synchronic and diachronic.

I began this framing chapter with the following sentence, 'In each generation, every individual should feel as though he or she had actually been redeemed from Mitzrayim', and will return to it now as it is an important sentence for Cultural Memory

Studies in general and my own understanding of cultural memory in particular. We may note two main directives regarding how an individual ought to fulfill their Passover duty: the first is that they are part of a generation, and the second is that they must establish their own 'as if it were me' relationship with it. Not only must every generation establish its own guiding or framing narratives of history, but every individual is obligated to take their own stance within their generation with regard to these narratives. In other words, the *Haggadah* is not advocating a simple intergenerational model of cultural transmission, it commands every individual to connect him- or herself to long narratives of culture and history and stipulates that this act be an act of appropriation and transformation. History is not somebody else's story, it must always be 'my' own: What does this mean for me? How does this shared story resonate personally? How to contend with an inherited ordering of the past?

What does the *Haggadah*'s famous dictum mean for the various branches of Cultural Memory Studies? As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the Seder does seem to be a bridge between the Assmanns' notions of communicative and cultural memory, as here an ancient story is passed down and transformed from one generation to the next.[95] It also appears in the work of many other Cultural Memory Studies theorists from Arnold-de Simine citing it as an example of an active and literal means through which cultural heritage is mediated,[96] to LaCapra cautioning against the Passover Seder's potential to facilitate 'unchecked identification'.[97] However, it is in the work of those thinkers who

[95] See note 19.
[96] Arnold-de Simine draws parallels between the Seder and Christ's passion: 'To listen to narrative can never be enough because the fusion of past and present has to be acted out and – literally – digested', Arnold-de Simine, p. 40.
[97] LaCapra, *Writing History*, pp. 27-29. Though I have yet to find a direct reference to the Seder in Caruth's work, the idea of repetition, re-enactment, and coming into a traumatic cultural history of slavery (albeit one whose story ends in redemption) might resonate with her concept of trauma as unclaimed or belated

are most interested in uses and transmission of the past as well as secondary witnessing (Jan and Aleida Assmann, Landsberg, and Hirsch), that we find the most interesting references to the Seder as a site where memory is transferred and the burden of traumatic history is thus renewed. The following sections examine the two components of the Seder's memory dictum: 'in every generation', and 'as though it were he/she'.

A) In Every Generation

The first part of the dictum allows us to critically evaluate whether a generational perspective on history, or a particular framing narrative that resonates most profoundly, is possible. The generational perspective sits within the structures given to us by the Assmanns' canon/archive, *Funktions-/Speichergedächtnis* model, because every generation asks their own questions or, in the case of the Seder, asks the questions in their own way. This is one of the fundamental premises of historiography, reception theory, and, as I will explore here, cultural memory theory.

Aleida Assmann uses a German translation of American pragmatist G.H. Mead's famous sentence: 'Every generation rewrites its history – and its history is the only history it has of the world',[98] as one of the epigraphs for her chapter 'Verkörperte Geschichte: zur Dynamik der Generationen' in her book *Geschichte im Gedächtnis*. In this book, she develops the idea that it is possible for a group, a family, or even a

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experience. However, if one conceived of the Seder as a process through which experience is claimed and through which history is worked through then it would no longer work within the boundaries of Caruth's conceptual frames.

[98] Quoted in Aleida Assmann, *Geschichte im Gedächtnis: Von der individuellen Erfahrung zur öffentlichen Inszenierung* (Munich: Verlag C.H. Beck, 2007), p. 31. The original source is: George Herbert Mead, 'The Nature of the Past', in *Essays in Honor of John Dewey*, ed. by John Coss (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1929), pp. 235-42 (p. 240).

generation to have a general response to, or fundamental framing narrative of, history; in other words, every generation has its own cultural memory.[99]

Though she does not write about the Seder in explicit terms here, she does evoke it when developing her theory of *Funktionsgedächtnis* (and how a generation might have its own *Funktionsgedächtnis*) in her book *Erinnerungsräume: Formen und Wandlungen des kulturellen Gedächtnisses*. She writes that one task of *Funktionsgedächtnis* is *Distinktion*, essentially the '[…] symbolischen Äußerungsformen zu verstehen, die der Profilierung einer kollektiven Identität dienen […]'. She then gives the example of religious identity being mediated through rites and festival: 'Im Judentum zum Beispiel gilt dies ebenso für das Pessach-Fest […]'.[100] The Passover meal is an ideal example of this *Distinktion* because not only is it one of those *Erinnerungsräume*, a space where cultural memory becomes active and has a very distinct function, it also helps in the development process of *Wir-gruppen*.[101] The *Wir-gruppen* can take on many different *Zeitdimensionen* – from the family, to the neighbourhood, generation, society, nation, and culture. *Distinktion* is important because it functions as the border between who is in a community and who is not, whether belonging or exclusion are matters of personal choice or external classification. Assmann could not have picked a more suitable way of describing this phenomenon in the context of Passover, as one of the first tasks of the Seder is to ask the Four Questions, which are essentially four ways of asking: why is this night different than all other nights? Not only do these questions distinguish the Seder

[99] Dekel also refers to this aspect of Aleida Assmann's work. She calls it a '[…] "historical index" that is shared and is embodied by members of a certain generation in relation to how they experience history […]'. Dekel, p. 9. This is important for Dekel as she establishes how various groups respond to the *Denkmal*, but perhaps it is also important when trying to think about ways of conceiving of traumatic history beyond the limits of trauma theory. See note 81.
[100] Aleida Assmann, *Erinnergungsräume*, p. 139.
[101] Aleida Assmann, *Der lange Schatten der Vergangenheit*, pp. 21-23.

night from all the others, but it also distinguishes this *Wir-gruppe*, the group around the table, as different from all others. The Seder is thus about becoming aware of difference and of shared continuities.

For Assmann, every generation may be characterized by a particular response to history, a *Horizont des Generationensgedächtnisses*,[102] a claim that is particularly relevant for the Seder and for cultural memory in general. In *Der lange Schatten der Vergangenheit*, Assmann gives a brief excursus on the 1968 generation,[103] in *Geschichte im Gedächtnis*, she offers a far more extensive and sensitive genealogy of twentieth-century German generational cultural memory as it pertains to the Holocaust and National Socialism.[104] In her narrative, there are generations who ask questions, who choose not to, and who do not even know how to ask.

The sense of a generational response to the Holocaust resonates profoundly with Hirsch's discussion of postmemory, essentially a second-generation response to the Holocaust.[105] She also turns to the Passover Seder to make her point:

> We cannot understand the workings of Holocaust postmemory without also considering the particularities of a Jewish memorial tradition that is based on identification and ritual reenactment, the sense that "we are all as slaves coming out of Egypt." Yet the experiences of the Holocaust also pose particular challenges to this tradition, since the identification of Holocaust postmemory, I believe, must be marked by the distance that characterizes the second generation's incapacity ultimately to comprehend and thus to internalize the extremity of parental trauma. It

[102] Aleida Assmann, *Der lange Schatten der Vergangenheit*, p. 26. Assmann is not the only one with this idea. For example, in the Preface to the *Concept of Anxiety*, Kierkegaard writes: 'Every generation has its own task', Søren Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Anxiety: A Simple Psychologically Orienting Deliberation on the Dogmatic Issue of Hereditary Sin*, ed. and trans. by Reidar Thomte (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980), p. 7. A similar idea can be found in Gumbrecht's analysis of 'collective mood' or '*Stimmung*' in post-war Germany. See Hans Gumbrecht, *Nach 1945: Latenz als Ursprung der Gegenwart* (Berlin: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2012), pp. 13-50.
[103] Aleida Assmann, *Der lange Schatten der Vergangenheit*, pp. 27-28.
[104] See Chapter 'Verkörperte Geschichte: zur Dynamik der Generationen' in Aleida Assmann *Geschichte im Gedächtnis*, pp. 31-69. There is a helpful chart on p. 59. For Assmann, there are generations of upheaval and paradigm shifts (45ers, 68ers, 85ers) and then there are *Zwischengenerationen*, p. 64.
[105] We might perhaps consider Hirsch's 'generation of postmemory' to be an American expression of what Assmann describes as the 68ers.

> can never be even a ritual reenactment like that of the Passover Seder, for example.[106]

For this 'hinge generation',[107] the Holocaust might fall somewhere between the Assmanns' cultural and communicative memory, given that the children of survivors grew up with either first-hand stories or the absence of stories should their parents have been unwilling or unable to speak, yet for Hirsch it is neither cultural nor communicative memory that is enacted here. In both instances, whether stories are transferred or potential tellers remain silent, any kind of transmission through reenactment is compromised. I find Hirsch's reading of the Seder as 'reenactment' to be limited, as will become evident in my discussion of Jan Assmann's reading and as I develop my own later on in this section. Nevertheless, for Hirsch, the particularities of the second generation's predicament – the simultaneous extreme proximity and impossible distance – is problematic and may even result in 'an uneasy oscillation between continuity and rupture'.[108] As will be examined in great detail in Chapter 2, rupture and voids as metaphors for history and emblems of cultural memory are synonymous with the 'generation of postmemory'.[109]

But what of future generations? Of my own generation? Assmann's taxonomy of the various generational responses to the Holocaust ends with the 1985 generation,[110] the children of the generation of 1968 and the first one to be described as 'kriegesschadenfrei'.[111] The newer ones (basically the generation loosely described in

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[106] Marianne Hirsch, 'Surviving Images: Holocaust Photographs and the Work of Postmemory', *Yale Journal of Criticism*, 14.1 (2001), pp. 5-37 (p 35).
[107] Hirsch, *Generation of Postmemory*, p. 1.
[108] Hirsch, *Generation of Postmemory*, pp. 5-6.
[109] See note 63.
[110] This is Assmann's term for those born between 1965 and 1980. See Aleida Assmann, *Geschichte im Gedächtnis*, pp. 64-67.
[111] Aleida Assmann, *Geschichte im Gedächtnis*, p. 67.

general language as 'millennials') are just now coming into critical maturity.

I just make the cut for the 85ers and am well aware that the cultural memory concept I put forward here is part of larger cultural dynamics: we are, after all, both products and producers of culture. Though clearly it is difficult to characterize an on-going process, I would suggest that for the 85ers, the grandchildren of survivors, those who grew up with the Holocaust in school, encountered it through various media (museums, films, novels), and discussed around the family table – some versions of the Passover Seder, like my own family *Haggadah*, have incorporated the *ani ma'amin* (אֲנִי מַאֲמִין), ('I believe') prayer, a song often associated with Holocaust memory into the Seder – *Speakability*, as eloquently outlined by Dekel, seems a more appropriate strategy for constellating a relationship with the past rather than sacralizing it or leaving it stranded in unspeakable voids. The move from unspeakable voids to *Speakability* or storytelling will become very apparent in the synchronic reading of Berlin's cultural memory landscape in Part II of this dissertation. That section's depiction of the changing responses to the Jewish Museum perhaps forms the clearest example of a generational shift in how to ethically incorporate the Holocaust into a worldview and historical consciousness. Even though it is speculative, I would suggest that the 85ers were the first generation who had the possibility of 'looking through'. By that I do not mean looking beyond the Holocaust or ignoring it. I mean that, because the Holocaust and the twentieth century have started to slip out of communicative memory and into cultural memory proper, that it perhaps has started to become possible to use it as a lens through which to examine the contemporary world rather than as something sacred that necessitates averting one's eyes. This will be explored in greater detail in Part III.

B) 'As if it were me'

The second part of the Passover passage is the part that necessitates the individual performing the 'as if it were me' exercise. Though the text in the *Haggadah* is translated as, 'as though he or she had actually been redeemed from Mitzrayim,' I want to simplify the idea by using the expression 'as if it were me', leaving the 'had actually been redeemed from Mitzrayim' implied. I prefer incorporating 'me' because this honours the way each individual must respond to the dictum. And finally, the words 'as though' and 'actually' are quirks of the *Haggadah* I am quoting here. Many translations use the word 'if', a word I find more evocative of the exercise than 'though'. Finally, most versions also omit the adverb 'actually' entirely.[112] There is no adverb in the Hebrew. For me the lack of adverb is more accurate because I will argue that the act is not a re-enactment so much as an appropriation and transformation.

'As if it were me' could be interpreted in two main ways, both having to do with an imaginative flight of time travel: either the individual imagines themselves back in the past, or the past is brought forward. Does it facilitate empathy with those in the past by binding an individual to a collective culture or does it give us a new critical tool for examining the present? This section explores both of these strategies, first by looking at how Landsberg uses the Seder when developing her prosthetic memory concept, second by turning to Jan Assmann's reading of the Seder. It is ultimately upon his conception that my theory of cultural memory is built.

[112] In his book *Zakhor*, Yerushalmi gives a sensitive reading of the 'I' in Jewish memory in general and in the Passover in particular. See Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 1996), pp. 43-45.Yerushalmi's translation of this sentence does not employ an adverb.

Landsberg's reading of the Passover Seder is the most emblematic of the cultural memory strategies that join the contemporary individual to a collective past by affective time travel and facilitate an individual becoming aware of and owning his or her cultural inheritance. She lauds examples like the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, where visitors receive a passport and follow the museum accompanied by a literal ghost whose unfolding life (and likely death) becomes their way into the past. The contemporary visitor binds their lives to the victim of traumatic history. She gives another example, the slave ship in the permanent exhibition of the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History in Detroit, where contemporary Detroit school children were used as models for the sculpture.[113] In both instances we note two things: first the fact that the present overlays the past; and second the extreme degree of identification that is employed as a strategy to produce empathy in the visitor.

The Passover Seder, however, differs from the experiential museums Landsberg describes: there is no act of transubstantiation whereby the *matzah* actually becomes the bread of affliction eaten by the ancestors. Most importantly, we are not instructed to become our ancestors. Landsberg duly counts the Passover Seder among what she describes as 'mnemotechnics': 'techniques by which societies, cultures, and even individual persons systematically attempt to remember, as well as cultural strategies for passing on memories to future generations […]'.[114] For Landsberg, the Seder does not need to be experiential in the same way as the museums and films she mentions because the Exodus 'belong[s]' to the group of people at the Seder – it is 'naturally – ethnically,

[113] See Landsberg, pp. 81-110.
[114] Landsberg, p. 26.

racially, or biologically [these people's] intended inheritance'.[115] For Landsberg, the Seder works largely because of the 'biological' belonging of memories, and thus, if one were to follow this argument, someone who wasn't Jewish would not necessarily experience the same implication at a Seder.

Landsberg's interpretation of the Seder's dictum is problematic for several reasons. The first problem is that for Landsberg's prosthetic memory, the 'as if' function transports the individual to a collective past that is suppose to mean something to them because it is their 'intended inheritance'. As was the case with reaching the limits of traumatic history, what touches the individual is more a matter of proximity and distance rather than one of biological inheritance: the reasons why an individual may be more likely to engage with particular narratives may have more to do with exposure rather than 'intended inheritance', and why certain pasts resonate with certain people at certain times is ultimately difficult to explain. Certainly Landsberg's experiential museums offer the opportunity for a prosthetic trauma experience to all of its visitors. Moreover, what is at stake here is not the simple assimilation of cultural identity. While this first assimilation is obviously important, for there to be any empathy, ethical development, and creative empowerment, a second step must be taken: what does this cultural identity mean for me? How am I to practice it? Failing to ask these questions perpetuates reified subjectivity; unless I establish my own relationship to this inheritance, I am merely enacting a pre-determined performance, or re-enacting. Even grieving or emotional distress when one learns the fate of one's Holocaust Memorial Museum avatar is mere pre-determined performance without the step that claims the experience for one's own.[116]

[115] Landsberg, p. 26.
[116] Perhaps this could be read as a counterpoint or antidote to Caruth's concept of 'unclaimed experience'.

The second problem with prosthetic memory also relates to the idea of what is mine and what is not. Perhaps on the surface it seems as though prosthetic memory gives us a model whereby the use of the past is what becomes important; after all, prosthetics are not purely for decoration, they become part of us, a way we interact with the world. However, the problem is that Landsberg forcefully draws the line between what is naturally 'mine' and what is artificial; a contradictory distinction, because at what point does something that we use and that forms part of our identity become our own? Can we ever function as an integrated whole?

The final problem with Landsberg's reading of the Seder surfaces when, as shown in the previous paragraph, the prosthetic memory never really does get entirely incorporated; because thinking 'as if it were me' in Landsberg's way is time travel backwards, the contemporary resonance of the past may be passed over. Perhaps in the case of the Seder, 'we were slaves in Egypt' is so far back in history that it does not necessarily feel as immediate as trafficked children in the contemporary world. What might resonate, however, is the idea of displacement, a ubiquitous phenomenon today. Bringing the past forward, as will be examined in the next section, might be a more effective strategy for strengthening community bonds with both those around us and those on whose shoulders we stand.

'As if it were me' could also signal another, slightly older strain of Cultural Memory Studies outlined by Jan Assmann. Assmann begins his book *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis: Schrift, Erinnerung und politsiche Identität in frühen Hochkulturen* with an analysis of the Passover liturgy, specifically focusing on the famous 'Midrasch der vier Kinder'. To my knowledge, Assmann is the only Cultural Memory Studies theorist who

actively invokes this fundamental passage, one that is also found in *Maggid*. This set of readings give us clues on how to perform the 'in each generation/as if it were me' operation. The passage speaks of four children: the wise, the wicked, the simple, and the one who does not know how to ask.[117] Each child presents their response to the Passover story in the form of a series of questions. Of note here is the difference between the wise and the wicked child: while both question the meaning of the Passover story, the wise child's responses uses language like 'for me' and 'for us', while the wicked child uses language like 'for you' and 'for him'.[118] The wise child accepts its cultural inheritance by asking what it means 'for me' and the wicked child cannot, thus failing to fulfil its duty to think of the story 'as if it were me' and rejecting redemption from slavery. Only the wise child questions and then comes to some kind of personal terms with the past. The past as something 'for me' forms the backbone of much of Assmann's analysis of Egyptian culture, perhaps nowhere more so than his studies of Thomas Mann and the Moses character. It is also at the very core of his concept of cultural memory as *mnemohistory*[119] and of my interpreting this as a diachronic reading of images, or the vertical axis of myth intersecting with the horizon of history.

The story of the four children offers us the tools to think about cultural inheritance as something beyond simply establishing new ways of bearing vicarious witness to various traumas. Their questions invite us to contemplate the ways in which the past may help illuminate the present. It is not enough to simply imagine what it would have been like to be a slave, to be redeemed, or to be in a concentration camp – empathy and

[117] Jan Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis*, pp. 15-16.
[118] See *Passover Haggadah*, pp. 38-39
[119] See note 11.

identification will only go so far.[120] What is important is that the commandment to fulfil the duty of thinking about the Exodus story 'as if it were me' has a condition: the story must be thought of as if it were 'for me', rather than 'for you'. This necessitates a highly individualized and personal contemplation of the contemporary resonance of the story and prompts each individual to ask the question: what does the story mean for me now?

III) What Does It Mean For Me?

Building upon Jan Assmann's introduction of the 'for me' idea to the academic discussion of cultural memory, I would like to offer the hypothesis that the past may be conceived as an analytical tool that is neither instrumentalised, nor an end in itself: using it necessitates an act of transformative appropriation, a conscious constellating of one's relationship with it. I will discuss this idea in greater detail here and then test it throughout the rest of my dissertation. Drawing upon Assmann's work, sitting beside Dekel and Arnold-de Simine's studies, nestled within an artistic context of works such as Safran Foer's *Everything is Illuminated* (essentially a work of Jewish magic realism where traumatic history is portrayed in terms that go beyond trauma theory), and sitting upon the shoulders of those who came before, such as Mali, Warburg, Blumenberg, Cassirer, Burckhardt, Jauss, and even Frye, all of whose work traces diachronic lines through cultural history, my response is both part of a generational narrative and connects to long discussions. One element that I would like to add to the general cultural memory discourse is phenomenology because phenomenology offers tools that help us resolve

[120] *Passover Haggadah*, p. 8.

some of the tensions and problems encountered in the work of other cultural memory theorists.[121]

Inheriting the Hegelian and Marxist *Ding für uns* rather than the unknowable Kantian *Ding an sich*, phenomenologists generally do not emphasize things so much as the structures through which things are encountered, appropriated, and ultimately become part of our experiential horizons. From a cultural memory perspective, the *Ding* in question here is the past and the structures to be uncovered are both temporal and spatial. And phenomenology does offer responses to the 'how' question of Cultural Memory Studies: how does an individual come into history, both in the sense of being initiated into a shared culture and, more importantly, in the sense of each individual making it their own. The phenomenological responses to these questions avoid categorical imperatives, convoluted collective psychologizing, and artificially induced empathy. For the phenomenologists whose work I explore in this section – Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Martin Heidegger, and Edward Casey – we come into a world that exceeds us, and we make it ours through our interactions and encounters. This section will begin by looking closely at three conceptual tools phenomenology offers Cultural Memory Studies. It will conclude by situating these tools in the museum and thus moving from the dissertation's framing to the object itself.

[121] I am not alone in bringing Phenomenology to the discussion of memory. Paul Ricoeur does this in his work *Memory, History, Forgetting*. Part I, Memory, is 'placed under the aegis of phenomenology'. Paul Ricoeur, *Memory, History, and Forgetting*, trans. by Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2004), p. xv. The chapters offer a phenomenological analysis of memory. For another example of applying a phenomenological method to the study of memory, see Edward Casey, *Remembering: A Phenomenological Study* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2000). I will look at Casey's study in this section of this chapter.

A) Memories and Being in the World

Heidegger's neologism coined to convey one of the basic structures of being, *In-der-Welt-sein*, a structure in which the traditional notion of subject as separate from objects and world ceases to make sense, is the starting point for this brief investigation into phenomenological tools. For Heidegger and the other phenomenologists discussed in this section, the border between world and self dissipates: being means to be in a world, to be in a shared culture, to appropriate this culture, and to transform or 'have a take' on one's appropriation. The next couple of paragraphs trace this general development.

i) Permeability Between World and Self

For the three phenomenologists I examine here, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, and Casey, the need to bridge a division between individual and culture is unfathomable: we come into a world that is on-going, we grasp it by doing (e.g. speaking, participating, moving), which occurs when we are with others. This section examines some of the terminology and structures that permit such a characterization. The aim here is to see how phenomenology is useful for a conception of cultural memory emphasizing the use, appropriation, and transformation of the past.

Heidegger insists that ontology, the very science of being, is to be found in the world of shared lived experience. *Dasein*, his enigmatic way of writing 'the subject'/individual/being of this entity, necessarily means being there – *Da-sein*, or being in the world.[122] *Dasein* is thrown (*geworfen* ¶29)[123] into a world in medias res, a *Situation*.

[122] For a good analysis of this see Casey, *Remembering*, p. 215.
[123] For Heidegger I will not use many direct quotations because he develops his terms throughout the work in a cumulative and continuous manner. For sake of ease in finding references, I indicate where in the text

Because of this *Geworfenheit*, we are always in a situation of *Schuld*/debt. As Casey notes, unlike the idea of a debt to the past or a promise to the future, this kind of *Schuld* for Heidegger is ethically neutral insofar as it is merely a description of one of the structural features of the human condition.[124] Like with Assmann's thinking about heritage, we never start from scratch, we are perched on the shoulders of giants.[125] However, in *Sein und Zeit*, Heidegger does not focus on the monumental creations of our hands or our grand institutions of memory. Instead after *Dasein* is thrown, it gets swept up in the practices of daily living. *Dasein*'s being-in-the-world is described as *Faktizität*, or the being of everyday experience (¶12). *Dasein* encounters the world of tools (*Zeug*), references (*Verweisung*), signs (*Zeichen*), involvements (*Bewandtnis*), and significance (*Bedeutsamkeit*) that are available for use. These are called *Zuhandenes*, and *Seiendes* (¶15-16): tools are present for us and alongside us.[126] The process through which they are encountered is called *Umsicht* (¶15) implying that proximity is incredibly important: we look around, encounter tools, references, and signs, and discover (or uncover) that we are already engaged in a series of involvements. For Heidegger, the being of *Dasein* and the being of the world cannot be separated. By using these tools and reading these signs, *Dasein* is implicated in the world. In turn, the tools are only tools when in use and the references only have significance when they are read. The world here is cultural. In the cultural memory context, we could interpret *Zeug* and *Verweisung* to mean images, and

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he introduces concepts. I am referring to the following edition: Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 2001).

[124] Ricoeur gives a good reading of Heidegger's concept of *Schuld* as heritage and debt but not guilt. See Ricoeur, p. 363. Though clearly I am aware of the complexities and even potential perversity that may ensue from bringing Heidegger and his neutral concept of guilt (one that does not match our normal understanding of the term) into this study, *Sein und Zeit*'s structures are still helpful tools to understanding how phenomenology helps resolve some of the problems of cultural memory.

[125] See note 83.

[126] For a good analysis of Heidegger's concept of tools see Casey, *Remembering*, pp. 116-117.

stories: the stories come alive when they are told and individuals become the sum and order of their stories. Every tool embodies a long narrative of technological progress, a relationship to other tools, and a *Vorhandenheit*/*Zuhandenheit* quality; every reference and sign are part of a network and point us towards others. The way we use tools and encounter references are fundamental to understanding how Heidegger's phenomenology is relevant for cultural memory predicated on the idea of use, appropriation, and transformation of heritage material.

For Merleau-Ponty, the link between culture and world is even more obvious. Merleau-Ponty's *cogito,* which differs from Descartes' in the way the lived body prioritizes lived experience, is described as sedimentary.[127] It is not just thought that makes up our existence, the lived body has an osmotic relationship with the world: '[t]he world is wholly inside and I am wholly outside myself'.[128] The *cogito* and the world are drawn into a phenomenological field, each becoming expressions of themselves in response to the call of the other.[129]

Being drawn into the world is being drawn into culture. Like Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty describes a cultural world that may exceed us but in which we participate nonetheless: 'language transcends us and yet we speak'.[130] Merleau-Ponty gives us several beautiful images and analogies that capture this relationship. The lived body retains its past life in the sense of obvious scars, but also in a more subtle fashion, through its embodiment of history and through its memories. Merleau-Ponty writes that

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[127] Merleau-Ponty cites Proust and suggests that the *cogito* is 'perched on a pyramid of past life'. See Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. by C. Smith (London: Routledge 2007), pp. 457-459.
[128] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 474.
[129] Sexuality for Merleau-Ponty is neither cognitive nor even specifically bodily. Sexuality is the relationship between an individual and the world. It manifests in an individual's directionality and projection towards others. See Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, pp. 181-198.
[130] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception,* p. 456.

'[e]xistence always carries forward its past, whether it be by accepting or disclaiming it'.[131] He gives the example of a middle-class man turned workman who will always be the middle-class man turned workman.[132] That which has passed will always have a certain form of actuality.[133] In psychological terms, this might appear as repression, sublimation, or some form of repetition. The past of the world is still present through institutions and sedimentary layers.

Casey also turns to the idea of 'embodiment' to indicate the inextricability of the individual from the world: we are in a situation, in a place and not merely occupying a position.[134] On the one hand, we have a very basic claim that we must always be somewhere, on the other hand, we have a more complex claim that because of the on-going and dynamic nature of 'situation' and the narrative dimensions of 'place' the world is of us and we are of the world. 'Remembering' is one of the fundamental processes through which the world becomes a situation or a place. For Casey, 'remembering' is not a mental process, it is rather an interaction between body and world. He defines three types of memory: body and place memory (where experience is embodied) as well as commemoration (where experience is activated and ultimately turned into meaningful narratives). He writes: 'if body memory anchors human experience and if place memory locates it, commemoration connects it'.[135] Both body and place memory evoke the image

[131] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 457.
[132] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, pp. 457-458.
[133] The examples of the phantom limb is perhaps the most relevant in the discussion of the actuality ofwhat is absent: 'The man with one leg feels the missing limb in the same way as I feel keenly the existence of a friend who is, nevertheless, not before my eyes; he has not lost it because he continues to allow for it, just as Proust can recognise the death of his grandmother, yet without losing her, as long as he can keep her on the horizon of his life. The phantom arm is not a representation of the arm, but the ambivalent presence of an arm'. Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, pp. 93-94.
[134] Casey, *Remembering*, p. 182. He also gives a reading of Merleau-Ponty's idea that to be in the world means to 'inhabit' a body, intentions, and motility. See Casey, *Remembering*, p. 191.
[135] Casey, *Remembering*, p. 254.

of the sedimentary layers of culture and experience that the individual encounters and helps make.

For all three of the phenomenologists touched on here, 'remembering' means engaging with or uncovering the past via the situation or world into which we are thrown; but this engagement is just something that we do as opposed to something we are obliged to do. Rather than through emphasising traumatic history, it is through everyday encounters and uses that we come into history. Of course phenomenology has room for traumatic encounters, consider for a moment that both Merleau-Ponty and Heidegger's work was written in the aftermath of World War I. Merleau-Ponty's work is particularly touched by this historical tragedy, but rather than reducing war and violence to a void that cannot be articulated or fetishizing it, he simply includes it as part of the situation or phenomenological world that the sometimes exceedingly damaged lived body must navigate. Historical trauma is not a privileged experience for these phenomenologists.[136] Instead, what is important is that which is proximate, the tools within our grasp, the flash across the room that draws our attention and illuminates what previously seemed to be an unremarkable corner.

ii) Jemeinigkeit *and* Entschlossenheit

Now that we have a deeper understanding of how an individual comes into culture, we can look a bit closer at how an individual takes up or appropriates this culture: 'how do I make it my own?'. This question should bring to mind the Passover dictum: 'as if it were

[136] Though it must be noted that Heidegger does privilege existential trauma as *Angst* and death are fundamental structures for *Dasein*'s being in the world.

me'. Phenomenology offers one main response to this question – though being cannot but be mine I still need to choose or own my choice.

The first lines of the first chapter of *Sein und Zeit* read: 'Das Seiende, dessen Analyse zur Aufgabe steht, sind wir je selbst. Das Sein dieses Seienden ist *je meines*'.[137] *Je meines*, or, as Heidegger later writes, *Jemeinigkeit* (¶9), is how an individual relates to culture, to the world, and to being. Though *Dasein* is always with others (*Mitsein*),[138] embedded in shared structures, it must negotiate this world on its own. Not only is each *Dasein* brought into a world by its own involvements and commitments, that being gives *Dasein* the necessary impetus to establish a thoughtful stance. Structurally, for Heidegger my being, or rather what I do with my being always remains in issue for me[139] (e.g. I am always in debt, I always have projects, I must contend with my own mortality). The problem for Heidegger is that *Dasein* is often lost in what he describes as an inauthentic *das Man/Man-selbst* (¶27). For *das Man*, while my being is a problem for me, I have not managed to be aware of being myself.

Heidegger gives us conceptual tools to account for how *Dasein* is able to negotiate this world and come into self awareness, including *Rufcharakter des Gewissens* (¶56) – a voice that calls us from our own situation of *Schuld* into a stance of *Entschlossenheit* (¶62) in which I choose to own what is mine. While the idea of a call of the conscience, guilt, and resolute acceptance of, or engagement with, one's own situation in the world, in the cultural memory context, or in one's own inheritance may

[137] Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, p. 41. For an interesting discussion of Heidegger's use of 'wir' that challenges the prevailing interpretive prominence of 'mineness' see Ben Morgan, 'Walter Benjamin and the Anthropology of Everyday Life', in *Walter Benjamins anthropologisches Denken*, ed. by Carolin Duttlinger, Ben Morgan, and Anthony Phelan (Freiburg: Rombach Verlag, 2012), pp. 95-124.
[138] See Heidegger's discussion in ¶ 26.
[139] Heidegger introduces this idea in ¶ 9 but develops it throughout *Sein und Zeit*.

seem like a moral imperative, for Heidegger the response to the call is simply structural: we cannot but do something with the circumstances before us. The shared world of tools, references, and equipment becomes mine through resolute use and appropriation. Again to return to the Seder, I am both a member of a community or a generation and an individual within that cohort. It is here where *Dasein*, the idea of being-there, becomes more of a being-here (*hineni*).

Merleau-Ponty's language might not be as direct but his philosophy expresses a similar idea. One way in which he elucidates his point comes through in another one of his evocative images. He describes time as a river,[140] but unlike the traditional idea of the past flowing into the present which in turn flows towards the future, an image that depends upon both an observer who is able to note the changes and the idea of a predetermined future, Merleau-Ponty instead puts the *cogito* in a boat: 'the future lies in new landscapes […] Time is, therefore, not a real process […] it arises from my relation to things'.[141] He gives another example: 'In the home into which a child is born, all objects change their significance; they begin to await some yet indeterminate treatment at his hands […] a new personal history […] has just been initiated, another account has been opened'.[142] There is no world and no culture for me outside 'my' own perception of it and interaction with it.

The consequence of this notion of time is that it is impossible to remember experiences that are not mine. For Merleau-Ponty and for Casey both, however, it is impossible to have a second-hand experience, it is always my own. When we 'remember' things that happened outside of our immediate lifespan – in other words, when we

[140] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, pp. 477-479.
[141] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 478.
[142] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 473.

participate in cultural memory – we always legitimately remember encountering the past or becoming aware of something that happened. Casey gives two interesting examples, the first is that we all have a memory of Caesar crossing the Rubicon, even though we were not there to experience it,[143] and the other is that his student remembered the origins of Western thought when he visited ruins in Athens and felt moved enough to send his old professor a postcard.[144] In both examples we see how phenomenology legitimates the authenticity of individual experience. Authenticity is less of a problem for Merleau-Ponty and Casey than it is for Heidegger because there does not appear to be a *das Man* equivalent for Merleau-Ponty's idea of the lived body or for Casey's description of the structures of remembering. Nevertheless, whether the act of becoming aware or uncovering our relationship with the past or our current cultural context is triggered during a trip to Athens or the arrival of a new child, phenomenology does furnish us with conceptual structures that allow us to appropriate our ongoing experiences.

While the idea that we cannot but have our experiences of history, and that includes what we learn through other media and sources, the way phenomenology includes *Jemeinigkeit* and *Entschlossenheit* as fundamental structures of being acts as a calming agent against the anxiety inherent in secondary witnessing. It is always a memory of a memory. Even a first-hand witness account is still mediated by the teller and by various mnemonic practices.

[143] Casey, *Remembering*, pp. 54-55.
[144] Casey, *Remembering*, p. 91.

iii) Direction, Stance

After seeing how phenomenology gives an account of the way an individual comes into culture (*Dasein*) as well as of the impetus behind an individual needing to cultivate their own relationship with culture (*Jemeinigkeit* and *Entschlossenheit*), we can finally look at the third tool phenomenology offers to cultural memory. For the three phenomenologists cited here, one can never be in a neutral relationship with the world. Transposed into cultural memory, one must always do something with one's inheritance: even the simple child, or the one who does not know how to ask, still has some kind of response to the Passover ritual.

Heidegger's *Dasein* always has a state of mind or a mood, a *Befindlichkeit* (¶29-31). Every use of a tool, every interaction with another person is performed in a particular state of mind – even indifference is a mood. *Befindlichkeit* is not exactly like apperception or superego, as in the I that accompanies and unifies all of my various choices and actions, it is *Dasein*'s directionality and is drawn towards others and tools because of *Sorge* (care). Merleau-Ponty describes this same process as a kind of intentionality or motility.[145] For Merleau-Ponty, meaning emerges during our interaction with, and perception of, the world. We are structurally prepared for acts of appropriation and transformation. Put in cultural memory terms, rather than finding historical truth or inheriting the burden of the past, we are constantly creating memory through our encounters with the presence of the past as it is embodied in the world. For example, Casey writes about the importance of finding one's language and style in which to do this.

[145] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 158. See also Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, ed. by Claude Lefort, trans. by Alphonso Lingis (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1968), p. 32.

In a manner that is perhaps analogous to my main argument, Casey writes about how artists might go to a gallery, absorb what they see and then make it their own.[146]

All three phenomenologists start with the idea that we are thrown into a world, then we naturally grasp it, and through this process we make it our own. Making something one's own involves acknowledging one's situation and cultivating an awareness of what this means for us. In other words, it is a way of 'being historically' or, in the context of my argument, of fulfilling one's Passover duties. Meaning is the medium of our purposive practices, it is the medium of human life.

B) Phenomenological Museum

Museums, as both repositories (archive) and dynamic spaces of narrative (canon), are institutions where people go to encounter the past and cultivate their historical consciousness *par excellence*. But they are also places to go to contemplate contemporary culture. In his essay from *The Art of Art History*, an anthology he edited that was originally published in 1998 with the second edition released in 2009, Preziosi writes that museums are works of modern cultural fiction:

> Th[e] museological "past" is […] an *instrument* for the imaginative production and sustenance of the present; of modernity as such. This ritual performance of commemoration is realised through disciplined individual and collective use of the museum, which, at the most basic generic level, constitutes a choreographic or spatiokinetic complement or analogue to the labour of reading a novel or newspaper, or attending a theatre show.[147]

Reading museums is a learned and shared cultural practice as much as reading novels: by going through the space with others, we develop the ability to use it, we learn how to look and how to wander. Preziosi's observation reminds us that museums are just as

[146] Casey, *Remembering*, p. 302.
[147] Preziosi, p. 491.

much about the time in which they were built, renovated, and curated as they are about the time that is depicted in and by the collection. Because museums are places where objects from the past are arranged in narratives, they are ideal places to take the pulse of a particular generation's historical framing narratives – how it uses and makes sense of its cultural inheritance. This last section combines the three phenomenological processes outlined in the previous sections (best summarized as: *Dasein*/the lived body as being of and in the world, *Jemeinigkeit/Entschlossenheit*, and *Befindlichkeit*) with Preziosi's characterization of the museum as a work of modern cultural fiction. The aim is to give an account of how a museum can be phenomenological.

Of course all museums tell the stories of time in which they were built or renovated, and all museums consequently are cultural phenomena and may perhaps be considered phenomenological, but what I hope to introduce here and what I will develop throughout this dissertation is that there are museums whose dominant architectural and curatorial strategies mostly 'tell' and those that mostly 'show'. The phenomenological museum mostly shows. By this I mean that rather than simply following architectural and curatorial trends that express the times, the phenomenological museum manages to expose something about the times. It makes the 'visible legible,' to quote Preziosi again,[148] and thus invites reading that does not necessarily have to be against the grain. This will be explored thoroughly throughout the chapters of this dissertation when I explore the curatorial and architectural strategies of the Jewish Museum (a museum that tells) and the *Neues Museum* (a museum that shows).

Because the phenomenological museum shows rather than tells, it invites and necessitates a reading; there must be visitor interaction in order for the museum to have

[148] See note 34.

meaning. This reading is also a creative process because the narrative is not laid out, like Merleau-Ponty's river image it is ever unfolding. Rather than giving the visitor a meaning to swallow whole (and thus either accept or reject), the phenomenological museum invites visitors out of themselves and into the space. It allows the visitor to ask: what does this mean for me? The visit is in each case 'mine', what draws my attention and calls to me is particular to my sensibilities, critical faculties, and emotional baggage. The aesthetic and cultural memory experience happens between the visitor and the space. The visitors find their own way through the museum, collect their own images, and constellate their own meaningful narratives. While this is similar to the idea that every reader has his or her own reaction to a text and that, to some extent, every museum (regardless of how authoritarian) permits an individual to have their own experience, interpretive openness is a fundamental principle of the phenomenological museum.

Finally, while all effective museums incite both affective and intellectual responses from the visitor, the multiplicity of responses to a phenomenological museum is endless and all responses are valid because the narratives are not aimed at eliciting a dominant emotional (or intellectual) response: the museum does not aim to lead the visitors to one specific conclusion. This kind of museum does not transfer a historical consciousness to the visitor, it offers material to visitors so that they may create their own. We may be initiated into culture by our museum visits, but it would be troubling if we relied on museums to do the thinking, the mourning, and the storytelling on our behalf.

Conclusion:

A new song.
We are engaged in what is probably the
oldest ceremony of its kind, a ceremony with
a virtually unbroken tradition of observance
for well over three millennia. Yet there is nothing
routine about this ritual, nothing perfunctory
about our performance. Those who dwell
fervently on the minutiae of the Exodus will be
found worthy of dwelling in the presence of the
Sh'khinah in the world to come […]

- *Passover Haggadah*

In the *Haggadah, Maggid* ends with a series of complementary readings, including the text quoted above. שְׁכִינָה (Sh'khinah) is the word used to denote the seat of the divine. It is its dwelling. The passage above plays with the idea of 'dwell' – on the one hand it means to pay attention to and contemplate the 'minutiae' and on the other hand it means to reside in a spiritual resting place. This strikes me as quite important because it seems to suggest that the way into a peaceful spiritual relationship with the divine is through an individual both becoming part of a tradition and establishing their own particular response to it. The same could be said about establishing one's own relationship with one's cultural heritage.

According to the Rabbinical Assembly's *Haggadah*, 'there is nothing routine […] nothing perfunctory […]'[149] about what we do together: it is in each case ours, in each case mine. And while the ritual doesn't itself guarantee its own authenticity, it certainly facilitates it. *Maggid*, the storytelling part of the Seder, is perhaps the most individualized part of all. The rest of the rituals (washing hands, eating particular foods, drinking four cups of wine appropriately spaced throughout the evening – the first cup is drunk right at

[149] *Passover Haggadah*, p. 71.

the beginning of *Maggid*, the second right at the end, perhaps bookending a good storytelling session) are more standard. But there is nothing entirely standardized about *Maggid* except the particular notes that one has to hit. How each Seder gets there, the extra readings, the discussions, the questions, is up to the mood of the room, on-going intergenerational dialogue, conversations begun long ago, and current events. More than any other part of the Seder, *Maggid*, when the story is told, is when an individual comes not only into a culture, but into a mature and thoughtful relationship with it. We ought not be like the wicked child and say 'for you but not for me', we must be like the wise child and really contemplate what it means for the story to be 'for me'. We also cannot rely on the sparse answers in the Seder to really answer our questions; it is not a catechism. Every individual is invited to really think about what matters for them, both as part of a group and on their own, and in telling the story in their own voices and on their own terms, they participate in the kind of cultural memory where the past is appropriated, used, and transformed.

After having looked at various ways in which Cultural Memory Studies theorists have accounted both for the way an individual comes into culture and how they make it their own, it is now time to turn our attention to the case studies at hand. In any kind of phenomenological study, Husserl's call to go 'zu den Sachen selbst'[150] looms large. As such we will shortly be moving in from these analytical frames towards the objects of analysis. We thus need to turn to the year 1999 in Berlin to focus on a key moment in

[150] Carr discusses this in an essay on Husserl and history: '"Zu den Sachen selbst!" was the motto of the early phenomenological school gathered about Husserl. What is meant primarily was best expressed by Husserl in *Philosophy as Rigorous Science*: "The impulse of research must proceed not from philosophies but from the issues and problems [*von den Sachen und Problemen*]"'. David Carr 'Husserl's *Crisis* and the Problem of History', in *Edmund Husserl: Critical Assessments of Leading Philosophers*, ed. by Rudolf Bernet, Donn Welton, and Gina Zavota (New York, NY: Routledge, 2005), pp. 184-203 (p. 187).

Berlin's cultural memory landscape. This moment will let us explore a shift in the synchronic horizon as well as dig downwards along the vertical palimpsest on which the contemporary *Neues Museum* is perched.

PART II: Turn-of-the-Century Cultural Memory in Berlin

1999 proved a decisive year for cultural memory in Berlin. In late January/early February, the Jewish Museum opened as an 'empty shell',[151] and in December the *Museumsinsel* was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The turn-of-the-century timing of these two events is symbolically valuable given that these events straddle a conceptual divide in Berlin's cultural memory landscape, as will be argued in this Part of the dissertation. For this brief moment, two narratives of cultural memory hung together in Berlin's museum firmament: one about to make a blazing descent and the other about to begin its unobtrusive rise. On the one hand, the Jewish Museum, which presented a postmodern and deconstructivist twentieth-century narrative. On the other hand, the re-inauguration of the *Museumsinsel*, which as the dynamic hub of Berlin's memory culture appears to have signalled a (re)turn to various tropes of previous modernities at the beginning of the twenty-first. The shift from one kind of memory to another is mirrored in the scholarly discourse on cultural memory in Berlin both in terms of its central narratives and of its expressive practices.

Part II of this dissertation investigates the synchronic dimensions of the cultural memory horizon into which the *Neues Museum*, whose renovations had just begun in 1999, emerged. Chapter 2, Voids and Rupture: The LIbeskind Moment, examines the cultural memory theory and praxis right before the shift by looking closely at Berlin's Jewish Museum, while Chapter 3, The *Museumsinsel* & Master-planning, examines the

[151] The expression 'empty shell' is used on the Jewish Museum website. See Jewish Museum Berlin, 'The History and Founding of the Jewish Museum (January 1999)', <www.jmberlin.de. /main/EN/04-About-The-Museum/02-History-Museum/00-founding-museum.php?d=1999> [accessed 10 June 2013].

cultural memory theory and praxis directly after by looking closely at the *Masterplan Museumsinsel*. Thus these two chapters will allow us to consider the shift from a variety of perspectives including: the (re)adjustment of the framing/guiding historical consciousness, the restructuring of the dominant images/narratives, and the changing critical contexts.

Chapter 2: Voids and Rupture: The Libeskind Moment

In 1999, the 'empty shell' of the Jewish Museum was a heavily charged blank slate onto which all the attention of the critics, media, and visitors could be projected. More than most museums in Berlin, including the official *Deutsches Historisches Museum*,[152] the Jewish Museum profoundly engages with questions and processes of representing history and facilitating engagement and encounters with the past. Not only is the museum highly visited,[153] more important for this chapter is the prominent role the Jewish Museum occupies in the major post-1989 cultural studies of Berlin undertaken largely by Anglo-American scholars in the 1990s and early 2000s including: Andreas Huyssen's *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsest and the Politics of Memory* (2003); James E. Young's *At Memory's Edge: After-Images of the Holocaust in contemporary Art and Architecture* (2000); Karen Till's *The New Berlin: Memory, Politics, Place* (2005); and Andrew Webber's *Berlin in the Twentieth Century: A Cultural Topography* (2008). Each of these texts focus on various architectural and city branding processes. Interestingly enough, none of these texts even mention the *Museumsinsel* and the *Neues Museum* unless it is brief and in passing. Why did these brilliant and sensitive texts choose to use the Jewish

[152] It is interesting to note that besides some work done by former museum director Christoph Stölz, there is an obvious lack of critical work on the *Deutsches Historisches Museum*. That the official German history museum in Germany's capital city figures peripherally in discussions of cultural memory practices in Berlin is both telling and puzzling. It is also important to mention that basically all of my critical sources are English/American. One interesting thing I noticed is that while there is a decided lack of easily available German cultural study of the Jewish Museum, there is ample material on *Museumsinsel*. This great dichotomy of available material seems somehow to fit my overall claim that the *Museumsinsel* seems to allow German commentators the material and space necessary to engage with larger questions of history.

[153] The most up-to-date visitor statistics for the Jewish Museum put the 2010 count at 760,000. See Jewish Museum Berlin, 'Looking Ahead: Where does the Jewish Museum Berlin stand on its Tenth Anniversary?', <http://www.jmberlin.de/main/EN/04-About-The-Museum/02-History-Museum/04-since-opened.php> [accessed June 10 2013]

Museum as the emblem of Berlin cultural memory at the total exclusion of the *Museumsinsel*?

Even though the *Museumsinsel*'s architectural competitions and its actual (re)construction were carried out under the watchful gaze of the press and the public, it was essentially left out of the aforementioned critical texts presumably because its effect and soon-to-be dominant place in Berlin's cultural memory landscape could not yet be determined; at that time the *Museumsinsel* was merely the place where one visited the Pergamon or picnicked among the urban ruins. Conversely, it would have been impossible for commentators writing in the 1990s and early 2000s to think about Berlin and cultural memory without considering the Jewish Museum as the primary embodiment of post-1989 thinking about the past. This thinking parallels certain currents in Trauma Studies (Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience; Trauma, Narrative, and History*, 1996; La Capra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma*, 2001 and *History and Memory After Auschwitz*, 1998) where the traumatic past is often sacralized to the point where it becomes both the privileged experience and the un-representable. Likewise it is impossible to think that those who are writing about Berlin today could write a study contemplating cultural memory, Berlin's city brand, Germany's national identity, and world cultural heritage without seriously considering the role played by the *Museumsinsel*.

Set within the larger project of formulating the critical context for the *Neues Museum*'s cultural memory practice as both marking a shift in the city's memory horizon and connecting with narratives of memory that pre-date post-1989 thinking about the past, the aim of this chapter is to read the Jewish Museum as a counterpoint to the *Neues*

Museum because it embodies a previous 'contemporary' framing of the past. What is the nature of this previous contemporary? How have things changed between then and now?

In seeking to address this problem and find out what it meant to be contemporary for Berlin's cultural memory in the 1990s and early 2000s, this chapter attempts to understand the vantage point of cultural commentators such as Huyssen, Young, Webber, and Till. The specific questions to which this chapter responds are: What is the history embodied in Berlin's Jewish Museum? What are the museum's framing narratives of history? How does the museum facilitate encounters with the past and help foster the development of the historical consciousness of individual visitors within the context of national and international cultural memory narratives?

This chapter argues that Berlin's Jewish Museum was emblematic of 1990s and early 2000s memory culture because the post-Holocaust rallying cry 'never forget' functions as its foundational premise. As was explored in Chapter 1, the phrase 'never forget' served as a categorical imperative for a generation's historical consciousness as well as for how history ought to be embodied in museum and memorial space.[154] The categorical imperative favours the negative, a lingering not-doing something, and its embodiment is rife with images of voids and rupture. This chapter also demonstrates that both changing responses to the museum and the general changing Berlin museum landscape has rendered the Jewish Museum somewhat geographically and philosophically peripheral to the dominant cultural memory narratives of today.

In order to get the Jewish Museum's late twentieth-century framing narratives in view, this chapter first looks at the history it embodies. It then gives a close reading of the

[154] See notes 68, 69, and 70 as well as Theodor W. Adorno, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 20 vols (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Taschenbuch, 2003), X.2: *Kulturkritik und Gesellschaft II*, p. 674.

building itself. Finally, it turns its attention to the discourse in which the museum is embedded. The chapter moves from history to culture via the study of a museum whose aim is to facilitate encounters with history and take part in cultural discourse. The structure of this chapter is thus a metonymy for the larger structure of this dissertation.

I) What History?: Embodiment and Stance

While in some ways it was perhaps an inexpressibly difficult task, it would be wrong to say that building a Jewish Museum in Berlin was impossible. That being the case, the turbulent tales of the history of Berlin's Jewish Museum are well known. They are even told in the official museum history: 'The path from the idea to found a Jewish museum […] was a long and winding one with many controversies along the way. The controversies also reflected the perception of Jewish history against the backdrop of the Holocaust'.[155] These controversies and tensions are both part of the history embedded in the project, and they thus form markers to which we may return in order to gain insight into the cultural mind-set at that time. This section examines two questions: firstly, what history does the Jewish Museum embody? And secondly, what are its framing narratives of history in general, and German-Jewish history in particular?

I will argue two things. First that the years immediately preceding and following the *Wende* (late 1980s to early 2000s) as well as the lingering tensions such as the East/West division and the continuing international attempts to shape German cultural

[155] See official publication: *Jüdisches Museum Berlin*: *Zwei Jahrtausende deutsch-jüdische Geschichte.* It was published by the *Stiftung Jüdisches Museum* Berlin and is available as a PDF download from the museum's website. Stiftung Jüdisches Museum Berlin, *Museumsgeschichte* (PDF download), <http://www.jmberlin. de /main/EN/04 -About- The-Museum/02-History-Museum/00-founding-museum.php> [downloaded 10 June 2013], p. 1. All future references to this PDF will be given as follows: Stiftung Jüdisches Museum Berlin, *Museumsgeschichte PDF* and the page number.

memory are expressed in the architecture and exhibition design, even if this is largely unacknowledged;[156] second, though the museum claims that its aim is to show 2000 years of Jewish history,[157] its actual approach to history embodies the late-twentieth-century tendency to use the Holocaust as the lens through which all history is read. Till writes:

> The Holocaust is an unquestioned global symbol of the failure of the project of modernity. It stands for the 'break in civilization' (*Zivilisationsbruch*), a universal moral symbol used both to justify international geopolitical acts and national imaginaries within distinct cultural signifying systems.[158]

We can see how the centrality of the Holocaust signified not only that there was a need to create space for this kind of memory in the official public sphere, but also, debates on 'how to remember it' seemed to proceed along various (nearly invisible) ideological and aesthetic cultural/political fault lines. Thus while the history embodied in the Jewish Museum is one of competing visions or 'national imaginaries', as well as ideas pertaining to what to remember and how to remember, the museum's approach to history is defined by the idea of never not remembering, a post-Holocaust categorical imperative. This imperative underpins both the debate about the museum and its final structure.

While the roots of a Jewish Museum in Berlin predate World War II, the museum as we know it is clearly a post-war phenomenon. The relevant history of the Jewish Museum project may be divided into several phases: pre-1989 (the debate rages in West

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[156] Interestingly enough, the only obvious reference I have thus far encountered indicating that Libeskind's design consciously responded to the post-1989 changes in Berlin comes by way of an anecdote. Young tells the story of how in the original plans Libeskind intended the walls to be set at various angles. While Libeskind ended up straightening the walls due to budgetary concerns, he gives the philosophical explanation that he straightened the walls because the reunified city did not 'need them to be so disorienting'. Young quotes Libeskind: '"As soon as Berlin was unified, I straightened all the walls," Libeskind has written. "My enemies told me I was no longer a deconstructivist, that I had chickened out, because I had straightened the walls but I did it because I felt the project was no longer protected by the kind of schizophrenia developed out of the bilateral nature of the city"'. Young, *At Memory's Edge*, p. 173.
[157] See the subtitle of official Jewish Museum history, 'Zwei Jahrtausende deutsch-jüdische Geschichte', in Stiftung Jüdisches Museum Berlin, *Museumsgeschichte PDF*, p. 1.
[158] Karen E. Till, *The New Berlin: Memory, Politics, Place* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), p. 161.

Berlin), 1989-1995/1996 (the integrative approach), 1995/1996-1999 (autonomy), 1999-2000/2001 (the building opens empty), and from 2001, when the building opens with the exhibitions installed. The real afterlife of the debates and choices made during the arduous design and building process begins to play out once the museum is open. This section will loosely follow these phases and will argue that the history of the Jewish Museum with the Berlin city museum (*Stadtmuseum Berlin*) is one that is in inverse relation to the general forces of unity that were to dominate Berlin after 1989.

A) Early History: The Cold War Effect

The history of the museum to which I will refer comes from the official *Museumsgeschichte* on the Jewish Museum's website.[159] The early phase of the Jewish Museum's history is inextricable from the effects of the Cold War as it related to two major aspects of Berlin's cultural memory: the difference between the Eastern and Western responses to the Holocaust, and the fate of the *Stadtmuseum Berlin*, *Märkisches Museum*, historically located in Berlin's *Mitte.* The memory of Jewish Berlin was caught between these various poles. *Mitte* and all of its museums (including those on the *Museumsinsel*) fell within the boundaries of the Soviet Sector and thus formed an integral part of East Berlin's cultural life during the time of the divided city. These same museums were cut off from West Berlin, though their collections, having been hidden during the war, were split between East and West. To compensate West Berlin for the

[159] Though accounts of the museum's founding and history exist in various critical sources on Berlin memory/memorial culture, I have yet to find a more detailed and extensive account of the history of the building/concept than in the official *Museumsgeschichte PDF*. Though there are many books about Libeskind, various exhibition catalogues/highlights, as well as photo essays about the empty building sold in the museum shop, there is practically no critical material. The amount of material available on the *Neues Museum* is markedly different as will be explored in Part III of this dissertation.

loss of its museum space and to allow for the display of its part of the collection, the *Kollegienhaus* on Lindenstraße was set up as a city museum. It was decided that representing Jewish life should be part of the city's stories as they were told in its museum. During the time of the two Berlins, there were two city museums and two strategies for coping with the Holocaust that would need to be reconciled in order for there to be a central Berlin Jewish Museum.

The Jewish Museum's website and official history make it very clear that the origins of the current museum are to be found in what was West Berlin. According to the canonical account, discussion of establishing a Jewish Museum post-World War II began in the early 1970s in West Berlin, but really only started gaining momentum with the founding of the *Gesellschaft für ein Jüdisches Museum in Berlin* in February 1976. At that time, the basic plan was to 'rebuild the baroque palace of the court Jew Veitel Heine Ephraim [called the Ephraim Palace] that had been dismantled in 1936 and whose façade was in storage in the western part of the city […]'[160] across from the *Kollegienhaus*. But in 1981, the Berlin Senate voted to give the pieces of the palace's façade to East Berlin and thus the palace was rebuilt in what is the *Nikolaiviertel* area of East Berlin's *Mitte* and the nascent Berlin Jewish Museum could not use it. From the beginnings of the museum project, it is thus possible to note the tension between the Eastern and Western parts of the city when it related to stewardship of its Jewish heritage material and cultural memory.

Besides embodying the political tensions of the Cold War, also fundamental to the early part of the museum's history is the debate surrounding another division: whether to include the Jewish Museum as part of the Berlin Museum or whether it ought to be its

[160] Stiftung Jüdisches Museum Berlin, *Museumsgeschichte PDF*, pp. 1-2.

own autonomous and separate institution. At a time when stark divisions conditioned life in Berlin, the reverse seemed to prevail in West Berlin's city museum scene. In the 1980s, it was decided that an 'integrative approach', where the Jewish Museum would have an 'independent status […] within the Berlin Museum',[161] in other words, integrated but still separate, was the way to move forward. An architectural competition for an 'Extension of the Berlin Museum with a Jewish Museum Department' was launched in November 1988. In June 1989, Libeskind's design 'Between the Lines' beat the 164 other entries. Given that it is only the privilege of hindsight that allows us to contextualise this museum debate within the years surrounding the end of the divided city and the beginning of the united one, we must in good faith assume that the 'integrative approach' might have actually been applied had the Wall not come down in November of 1989, mere months after the Libeskind design was approved but long before the project broke ground (not until 1992). At this time, the Libeskind building was still conceived as an extension of the Berlin Museum.

This brief account of the early years of the museum's history offers two examples of how the Jewish Museum was caught up and somewhat defined by the controversies and tensions that were the hallmark of the German socio-political and cultural landscape in the late 1980s and early part of the 1990s. While the official museum sources use expressions like the 'backdrop of the profound historical upheaval since 1989'[162] and 'fertile ground for conflict'[163] on the first page of its official historical account, it does not delve into the profound effects of the museum being built against this backdrop and upon this ground. Nowhere do official sources acknowledge the possibility that the Jewish

[161] Stiftung Jüdisches Museum Berlin, *Museumsgeschichte PDF*, p. 3.
[162] Stiftung Jüdisches Museum Berlin, *Museumsgeschichte PDF*, p. 1.
[163] Stiftung Jüdisches Museum Berlin, *Museumsgeschichte PDF*, p. 1.

Museum was in some ways an expression of the territorialisation of the cultural memory terrain that took place between East and West Berlin during the 1980s, and that this terrain was actually Holocaust memory itself.

Unlike the official museum source, commentators did notice this divide and used it in formulating their characterizations of Berlin at that time. For example, Till writes: 'During the Cold War, the Holocaust represented what was at stake for the future: the 'civilized' world (the West) must protect the good and innocent and fight against 'evil' (regimes that perpetrate crimes against humanity)'.[164] However, neither the official museum sources nor the commentators leave much that indicates that this territorialisation may have dated the museum and made it difficult for the museum to gracefully enter a historical phase within a united Germany where questions of 'evil' and 'civilization' do not fall along the lines of bilateral political ideology.

B) Post-1989: Reunification? Entrenchment of Divisions? A Turning Point.

After 1989, the city may have been integrated but its cultural memory terrain was still divided. Several months after Libeskind's successful bid, Berlin's socio-political and cultural scenes were to shift completely due to the fall of the Berlin Wall. The role and space of the Jewish Museum had to be re-thought within the new local and national contexts. While the project received the official 'go ahead' in 1991, politics, personnel conflicts, and theoretical challenges ultimately led to the 'autonomy' (separation) of the Jewish Museum under the new leadership of the former US Treasury Secretary W. Michael Blumenthal (who remains director of the museum to this day), in 1997. The Libeskind building was opened to the public as an 'empty shell' in 1999 and was then

[164] Till, p. 161.

'handed over to the German government in January 2001'.[165] However, it is the years between these milestones –1991 and 1999 – that are of particular interest to this chapter.

In 1995, the project stood at what in hindsight appears to be a critical turning point, although perhaps at that time it seemed like a series of separate choices and coincidences. The spring of 1995 brought with it two interesting developments in this continuing story: the first was the integration of the two Berlin city collections and re-location of the entire collection to the *Märkisches Museum* building, the second was the formal re-opening of Berlin's *Neue Synagoge*,[166] the blue-domed late nineteenth-century building on the Oranienburgerstraße in Berlin's *Mitte* district. It is perhaps worth noting that the *Stiftung Neue Synagoge Centrum Judaicum*, the foundation whose self-stated mission was to '[…] rebuild the *Neue Synagoge* in the Oranienburgerstr. in Berlin for the present and future generations and create a centre for the care and upholding of Jewish culture',[167] was founded in the former East Berlin. Also of note is that the cornerstone of the rebuilt synagogue was laid on 10 November, 1988, fifty years after (the pogrom known as) *Kristallnacht*, and one year before the wall was to come down.[168]

Looking at these events we can note two consequences. The first is that the current location of the Jewish Museum causes it to be physically separate and administratively disconnected from the *Stadtmuseum Berlin*, now back in its original building in the city centre; an interesting asymmetry in the unification/separation relationship emerges. In a time of great re-unification (from the city itself to the

[165] Stiftung Jüdisches Museum Berlin, *Museumsgeschichte PDF*, p. 7.
[166] See Stiftung Neue Synagoge Berlin – Centrum Judaicum, 'History', http://www.centrumjudaicum.de /en/geschichte/> [accessed 10 June 2013]
[167] See Stiftung Neue Synagoge Berlin – Centrum Judaicum, 'The Foundation,' <http://www.centrum judaicum.de/en/die-stiftung/> [accessed 10 June 2013].
[168] It is worth noting that the *Neue Synagoge* actually survived *Kristallnacht*.

Stadtmuseum collections), Berlin's Jewish Museum pursued the path of separation; the Jewish Museum became the sole user of the *Kollegienhaus* site. As will be discussed later in this section, this geographical isolation and administrative autonomy paved the way for its ultimately peripheral role in the central narratives of the contemporary Berlin museum landscape. In the years since its opening, the changing nature of the surrounding city has also changed the meaning of the Jewish Museum: Instead of being the central point of thoughtful centralised cultural memory, as was the original intention of the architect and the planners, its immediate neighbourhood (Kreuzberg) is filled with narratives often considered marginal in contemporary German society, given that Kreuzberg's dominant demographic is Turkish and Muslim, currently the most 'other(ed)' element of German society.[169] Though the physical setting, apart from the city's central institutions, is perhaps due more to historical circumstances than any specific contemporary political stance, narratives of both Muslim life and Jewish memory stand peripheral to the city's current main branding efforts. What this ultimately means for cultural memory remains to be seen.

The second consequence is the loss or rendering dormant of a major strand of cultural memory discourse. It is easily forgotten that before reunification there were two attempts to tell the story of Jewish Berlin and memorialise it: the narrative in the West, aimed at building a 'modern' extension to what was the *Stadtmuseum*, and the narrative in the East, which looked towards re-constructing the *Neue Synagoge*, a space of former Jewish life. While the authentic space of Berlin's *Mitte*, which had been one of the centres of pre-World War II Jewish life, was unavailable for the official Jewish Museum

[169] For a good account of this see Peter Chametzky, 'Not What We Expected: The Jewish Museum Berlin in Practice', *Museum and Society*, 3.6 (2008), pp. 216-245 (p. 19).

at the time of its inception, it did become available in the 1990s. The museum's supporters, however, chose to continue with the Libeskind design as well as the original location, thus solidifying the roots of the Jewish Museum in West Berlin. The 'Western' influence may be felt not only in the museum's location and its autonomous status, but also by the committee's choice of design (deconstructivist), designer (Libeskind is Polish/American and spent much of his formative life in Israel and the United States), director (Blumenthal), and pedagogical stance of the exhibition concept (New Zealander Ken Gorbey, famous for creating a 'Disney-ish' atmosphere in the Te Papa Tongarewa museum in Wellington).[170] No trace of 'Eastern' memory practices or thought is to be found.

The choice to follow West-German cultural memory strategies ultimately led to the entrenchment of the Jewish Museum in what was conceived in the 1990s as the 'memory district', comprising the Jewish Museum, the *Topographie des Terrors*, and the *Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas*.[171] In opting for the symbolic 'memory district' strategy over the community renewal model as expressed by East Berlin's rehabilitation of the *Neue Synagoge*, Berlin's memory practice and the discourse it engendered firmly fell within the parameters of the 'never forget' paradigm so central to the immediate post-1989 city. It was this museum and these Western cultural memory strategies that informed most of the cultural commentary of the 1990s and early 2000s.

We must look more closely at some of the possible reasons why these strategies prevailed and why they were the commentators' favourites. The 1990s saw a boom in German memory culture, and Till links it to the emergence of the 'memory district':

[170] Chametzky, p. 228.
[171] Till, p. 201.

> Far from a tightly conceived plan, the memory district emerged as an effect of local and national discussions about German identity in the 1990s. Public awareness about representing National Socialist and Holocaust histories was at a peak after unification due to commemorative anniversary events for the end of WWII in 1995 and a number of heated controversies.[172]

The controversies mentioned by Till include: a travelling exhibition called 'War of Extermination: Crimes of the Wehrmacht', the book *Hitler's Willing Executioners* (Daniel Goldhagen), and the public debate between the writer Martin Walser and Ignatz Buber, then head of the Council of German Jews.[173] All of these controversies examined the limits of German liability and responsibility (both corporate and former military) for the Holocaust, as well as its place in post-reunification German political culture. As these questions of liability and responsibility loomed behind the push for the Libeskind building, it is noteworthy that liability and responsibility were, at that time, perceived as West German ways of dealing with the past. The discourse in the East was perceived differently, as the dominant narrative was that of being victims of fascism and eventually triumphing over it.[174]

The question that occupied commentators such as Young as early as 1993 was how to reconcile these two memory cultures. He writes:

> One wonders whether the whole new Germany will become more like its former Western part, forever trying to overcome memory. Or whether the new Germany will become a little more like the former Eastern sector, absorbed in the future, having already officially mastered the past.[175]

In hindsight, we can clearly see that in the 1990s and early 2000s, Germany's cultural memory was dominated by the discourses and practices of the former West. This

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[172] Till, p. 201.
[173] Till, p. 201.
[174] For excellent accounts of this see Jeffrey Herf, *Divided Memory: The Nazi Past in the Two Germanys* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999); and Konrad, H. Jarausch and Michael Geyer, *Shattered Past: Reconstructing German Histories* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003).
[175] James E. Young, *The Texture of Memory* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993), pp. 25-26.

dominance became firmly entrenched and as late as 2005 Till could still describe the city's cultural memory as the

> […] embodi[ment] [of] aspects of Western German public culture of social memory, most notably the traditional *Mahnen* (admonishment) approach to national guilt that requires public ritual performances and aesthetic and emotive approaches of mourning for, and dismay toward, Jewish suffering in particular.[176]

In between Young's comments in 1993 and Till's in 2005, we have an in between time when theory and praxis could have gone either way or off in a different direction entirely. In 1995, the year when both the *Neue Synagoge* was re-opened and the Berlin collection was reunited, a particular path was chosen. 'Overcoming memory' was picked over 'absorption in the future' at that time. However, times change and as we shall see in the next section of this chapter, the intervening years have perhaps awoken a longing for alternative cultural memory strategies, including those of the former East.

C) Afterlife: War of Attrition and Consequences

The two narratives, the *Neue Synagoge* and the Libeskind building, or rather Eastern and Western memory, have persisted to this day. Interestingly enough, the original Eastern strategy, the idea of re-constructing and re-interpreting authentic space, is much closer to some of the contemporary museum strategies in Berlin (such as the strategies practiced at the *Neues Museum*) than to those of the Jewish Museum. While the main sanctuary of the synagogue has not been fully restored, it functions as a centre of current Jewish life. For example, its website states that the building: '[…] houses a museum, an archive, class rooms, administrative offices of the *Gemeinde* and [a] small shul'.[177] The *Neue Synagoge*

[176] Till, p. 21.
[177] See Oranienburger Strasse Synagogue, 'History of the New Synagogue', < http://www.or-synagoge.de/html/en_history.htm > [accessed 10 June 2013].

building thus preserves the past of the community and provides the space and tools needed to ensure its continuity. Its central location and appropriation/re-interpretation of old architecture and authentic cultural space accord it entry into the discussions of the overall vision of the city centre. In a sense, I cannot but imagine that if the Jewish Museum project were to begin now, the *Neue Synagoge* site and space would be a definite candidate for the housing of the collection. That it was so easily discarded (and probably not even really discussed) in the mid-1990s shows how much aesthetic and philosophical tastes have changed between then and now.

When the Jewish museum chose not to return to the former centre to engage with authentic space and material, the museum authorities opted for what I will describe in the next section as an architectural and symbolic ersatz phenomenon. Furthermore, its new and symbolic purpose-based structure that blurred the lines between museum and memorial tied the Jewish Museum to the 'memory district'. The 'memory district' firmly plants Jewish Berlin purely in the traumatic past, the past one must never forget and from which new life cannot ever really grow.[178] This is the essence of the museum's framing of history: It is a memorial landscape, one of symbolic graveyards.[179] And while this approach was or is perhaps somewhat necessary in certain contexts, it forestalls any community that is not of and with the dead.

[178] Conceiving of German-Jewish history in this manner might express some of the concerns I investigated when looking at Adorno's idea of the reified subject and what I described as Trauma Studies' problematic relationship with healing. See note 80.
[179] I wonder whether the idea of a separate 'memory district' and 'museum district' implies that there is a institutionalized difference between what is considered 'memory' and what is considered 'heritage'. This is a nuanced affirmation of my claim in note 13.

II) Ersatz Engagement: Concept, Methods, Images

After having looked at the history that is embedded in the Jewish Museum as well as starting to grasp its approach to history, this section will look closer at how this stance is achieved in the museum through what I describe as ersatz engagement.[180] By ersatz engagement I mean two things, first that historical experience is reduced to a substitute, in this case, a consumable and simplistic aesthetic experience, and second that any encounter with the past is conditioned by an excessively mediated layer that is put between the traces of the past and the contemporary visitor. The way in which Libeskind describes a project which he undertook shortly after the work on the Jewish Museum in Berlin, the IWM of the North in Manchester, serves as the clearest example of his general method and so can help us to understand the architectural strategies employed in the Berlin museum. Rather than do what most architects do and give either the pragmatic or theoretical reasons for certain design choices, Libeskind decides to create an alternative and personal narrative which he stages in the architecture of the museum. In the case of the Manchester museum he describes the process as follows: 'What I did was that I took the concept of the globe the earth […] and I shattered it, broke it into pieces, fragments, and re-assembled them in Manchester […]'.[181] The process is depicted in the following sketch:

[180] Ersatz is indeed a German word that has found its way into English. It always comes with the connotation of not being quite as good as the original, though obviously it might become beloved in its own right, for example the 'ostalgic' value of products like *Ersatzkaffee* (for example, see the use of *Mocha Fix Gold* in the 2003 film *Goodbye Lenin!* DVD, dir. by Wolfgang Becker, 2003 (Los Angeles, CA: 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment, 2007).

[181] See the film *Daniel Libeskind: Welcome to the 21st Century*, DVD, dir. by Mary Downes, 1999 (Halle: Arthaus Musik, 2012).

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Image: © Studio Daniel Libeskind

Libeskind's method creates an ersatz world or a substitute phenomenon. Ersatz engagement here works in two stages: first, the architect creates, shatters, and restores a symbolic world, thus ignoring the actual context of the building; second, any understanding of the museum must be directed towards engagement with the architect's vision and not the phenomenon it is depicting. Instead of being able to think openly about the effects of war on the physical space and metaphysical concept of the world, the visitor must focus their response on an artificial world that has been both forged and destroyed by the architect's hand. The repeated use and stress of the word 'I' is what distinguishes Libeskind from other architects, whose focus is more often on the context of the task/world than on the context of his or her own mind/conceptions.

Because of their complete dependence on the mind of the architect, Libeskind's museum buildings and architectural philosophy could be said to over-condition the museum experience, thus challenging the possibility for these buildings to function as museums. Given that these buildings endeavour to function as museums, one cannot but question how this over-conditioning affects the way in which the past is represented and with it any encounters visitors may have with it. This section will develop the idea of ersatz engagement by looking at how the Jewish Museum reduces history to an aesthetic

form, analyse some of the narratives being embodied, and finally question the nature and role of ersatz engagement and its narratives in the Berlin museum landscape.

A) Deconstructivism becomes Ersatz

In the years immediately following the opening of the museum, the architect was lauded by the commentators for giving physical form to 'the absence that can never be overcome'[182] (Huyssen), 'housing memory that is neither at home with itself nor necessarily houseable at all'[183] (Young), and 'aestheticizing the rupture'[184] (Till). 'Rupture,' un-'houseable,' and 'absence' are all already ersatz ways of referring to the Holocaust without mentioning its name. They are also words that resonate profoundly in the field of Trauma Studies.[185] It would seem as though these commentators who have defined the terms of the Anglo-American debates on these matters[186] gravitated towards a space that would solve the difficult riddle of physically representing the Holocaust in Berlin.

Young describes the near impossibility of this task when writing about his experience on the *Findungskommission* for the Holocaust memorial (what was to eventually be called the *Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas* – we might perhaps conceive of this name as an anesthetizing ersatz even as the terms deployed by the commentators such as 'rupture' will be later described as an ersatz that aestheticizes). Deciding on a design and a name proved so difficult that at some point Young suggested putting a sign on the space designated for the memorial with the following words:

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[182] Andreas Huyssen, *Present Pasts*, p. 68.
[183] Young, *At Memory's Edge*, p. 154.
[184] Till, p. 161.
[185] See note 55.
[186] Huyssen is German though he has been based in New York since 1986.

'Germany's Holocaust Memorial. We debated it for twelve years and couldn't find a solution'.[187] But a solution of sorts had already been found as Libeskind's extension to the Jewish Museum pre-dated these debates. This solution was to represent the difficult past via the creation of a museum that would express what was felt as inexpressible, but also tell a story of culture that pre-dated and outlived this great rupture: Libeskind's response is essentially to create a highly symbolic interface emphasising representation of what is essentially un-representable (the ersatz phenomenon) over embodiment (exposing history so that it may be encountered).

Neither Libeskind nor the commentators think of the Jewish Museum as an ersatz space, rather they think of it as a powerful space of symbols and emotional solicitation. Instead of a word like ersatz that implies a falseness or substitution, both architect and commentators employ the term 'deconstruction' or 'deconstructivism'. The clearest articulation of how Libeskind's work conforms (or thinks it conforms) to this complex Derridean philosophy comes from a book series called *Architekten und Baumeister in Berlin/Architects and Master Builders in Berlin*. The featured architects include Schinkel, Stüler, Foster, van der Rohe, Kleihues, Pei, and Libeskind. Arnt Cobbers, the author of the text, succinctly writes that deconstructivist architects borrow certain methods from philosophers and literary analysts of 'looking below the surface of philosophical texts'[188]:

> What foundations do authors use to build their theories on, what simplifications and delusions do they use to 'construct' their view of the world, their 'truth'? Derrida's aim was to use the 'cracks in the foundations' [of] the sub-conscious, as a way to track down the fundamental truths. The 'deconstructivist' architects are similar in their approach […] they, too, try to break up the foundations of a Modernism that has become static, a rational geometry that has become a dogma. Their work is no longer centred just on the finished building – in their complex building plans and

[187] An account of this is given in Till, p. 70.
[188] Arnt Cobbers, *Architekten und Baumeister in Berlin/Architects and Master Builders in Berlin: Daniel Libeskind* (Berlin: Jaron Verlag GmbH, 2006), p. 6.

> sketches the process of designing itself becomes the central theme. Their buildings deliberately show the disparate character of their parts.[189]

But can an architect who is tasked with building physical structures work like a literary critic and philosopher who takes symbolic and theoretical structures apart? Are construction and deconstruction reconcilable in a building as opposed to a text? Does it not make more sense for the architectural critic to employ deconstructivist methods and paradigms to 'look below the surface' of works of architecture than for the architect to deconstruct their own work before it is even built via 'the process of designing itself becom[ing] the central theme'?

Libeskind might respond to these questions by stating that it is socio-cultural structures that he is deconstructing in his museum, that his museums are critical or theoretical works, and that visitors and critics are obviously free to deconstruct his deconstruction however they choose. However, these deconstructivist strategies affect the freedom of the visit negatively because the 'world' they are supposedly free to deconstruct has already been delineated for them by the mind and choices of the architect (and curators). Because, as was Libeskind's strategy, an understanding of the influences and design process underscoring the building is fundamental to the understanding of the building itself. Guides and wall text explain these influences while simultaneously asserting that the interpretation of the building ought to be personal.[190]

The first such text appears at the very beginning of the exhibition. It is a personal note from Libeskind himself and it advises the visitor on how to respond to and use the building: 'What is important is the experience you get from it. The interpretation is

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[189] Cobbers, p 6.

[190] Chametzky gives a very interesting account of the role of the museum guides and how the way in which they have been directed to facilitate visitors' experiences has changed. See Chametzky, pp. 227-228.

open'.[191] There is a tension between the building's constant need to be understood in a certain way and its supposed wish to remain open to interpretation. This tension signifies one of the conundrums that occurs when a building facilitates an ersatz engagement. At its core, the Jewish Museum is not about Jewish life in Berlin and Germany. Instead, it is about Daniel Libeskind's constructed then deconstructed concept of this life. Libeskind's museums tell stories by staging Libeskind's framing narratives of particular phenomena and presenting them as though they were the definitive narratives.

Libeskind's name and intended vision is literally inscribed in the building at least half a dozen times and his biography and philosophy are detailed in the museum space itself as well as on its website.[192] No other building in Berlin is so obviously linked with its architect's intentions, mind, and character. The Schinkel buildings, for example, do not need guides and tools to illuminate Schinkel's neoclassicism for them to fulfil their intended use: Schinkel's columns and rotunda do the job of setting the contents of the *Altes Museum* within a narrative framework without needing to provide an explanation.[193] Just as with the IWM in Manchester, Libeskind's deconstruction becomes a form of ersatz because it tries to break down socio-cultural phenomena, reassemble them, and do the interpretive work and meaning-making for the visitor; all the visitor has to do is respond to and obey the museum's dictates. These dictates call the visitor out of the

[191] The Libeskind quotation is on the wall following a brief biographical of the architect and an explanation of the 'Between the Lines' concept. There is a similar note in the IWM in Manchester.
[192] See Jewish Museum Berlin, 'The Libeskind Building', < http://www.jmberlin.de/main/ EN/04-About-The-Museum/01-Architecture/01-libeskind-Building.php> [accessed 10 June 2013]. It is also worth noting that there is a link to Libeskind's personal website from the Jewish Museum's website.
[193] In Chapter 4, I will draw parallels between the interpretive aids (wall texts, guides, quotations from the architect) and the Kaulbach frescoes that lined the *Treppenhaus* of Stüler's original *Neues Museum* building. In both instances it is the building, its organizing principles and decorative features that tell the story of history rather than the objects in the collection. The Stüler/Kaulbach *tableaux* will be contrasted with the current *Neues Museum* curatorial strategy.

world and into Libeskind's world, that is a deconstructed/re-constructed attempt to be the definitive response to the phenomena it represents.

As already indicated, to understand this world, or Libeskind's building, the visitor is obliged to understand both the inspirations and processes that are embedded in the zinc/concrete structure. To give a reading of the museum's narratives, we must now look closer at Libeskind's influences. Libeskind has been very clear as to the main sources of inspiration behind his museum. In his own words:

> The official name of the project is the 'Jewish Museum,' but I have called it 'Between the Lines'. It is a project about two lines of thinking, organization and relationship. One is a straight line, but broken into many fragments; the other is a tortuous line, but continuing indefinitely […] To summarize this fourfold structure: the first is the invisible and irrationally connected star that shines with absent light of individual address; the second is the cut-off of Act 2 of *Moses and Aaron*, which culminates with the not musical fulfilment of the word; the third is the ever-present dimension of the deported and missing Berliners; the fourth is Walter Benjamin's urban apocalypse along the One-Way Street.[194]

These four influences may be said to account for the museum's main design features: the voids and the axes (Holocaust/Tower, Exile/Garden, Continuity/Permanent Exhibition). The 'invisible and irrationally connected star' is an explanation for the way in which the lightning bolt of a deconstructed Star of David points towards the former residences of some of Berlin's more prominent Jews or examples of stalwart Berliners (E.T.A Hoffmann, Heinrich von Kleist, Rahel Varnhagen, Paul Celan); the Schönberg reference underscores the voids ('inexpressible and unimaginable' history related to the 'inexpressible, incomprehensible, and inaudible' relationship to God);[195] the deported and missing from the *Gedenkbuch: Opfer der Verfolgung der Juden unter der*

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[194] Daniel Libeskind quoted in *Daniel Libeskind: Jewish Museum Berlin*, ed. by Inés Garcia Fernandez (Barcelona: Ediciones Poligrafa, 2011), pp. 71-72.
[195] Cilly Kugelmann, 'Foreword', in *Daniel Libeskind: Jewish Museum Berlin*, ed. by Fernandez, pp. 12-13 (p. 12).

nationalsozialistischen Gewaltherrschaft in Deutschland, 1933-1945 are articulated by the way in which the windows (that are shaped like slashes) point (also towards addresses); finally and most enigmatically, Benjamin's influence seems to be about collecting fragments from a disappeared metropolis.

The early commentary on the building does not mention (or seem to notice) the way in which Libeskind oversimplifies the nuanced work of his influences, and more importantly, the lack of a convincing rationale for his choice of influences and the arbitrariness of their application. For example, the 'invisible and irrationally connected star' of the museum's main form could point in other directions: Celan, Hoffmann, Kleist, and Varnhagen were not Berlin's only famous Jews and excellent Berliners. Libeskind must have chosen them to fit his intended matrix. The same would apply for the names he plucked seemingly at random from the *Gedenkbuch* to whose addresses the windows point. It is unlikely that people will automatically think of Schönberg's *Moses und Aron* when looking into Libeskind's voids or immediately know the addresses to which the building points. But how much does this matter? What does matter is the story behind the structure, which we can read in the wall texts even if we do not come to it by simply engaging with the space. In any case, we do not have to feel Schönberg's opera to feel what the voids are intended to make us feel. The visitor still has an 'experience' in accordance with the wishes of the architect and the interpretive devices give the representational language a critical context for these feelings.[196] However, whether the

[196] The following anecdote illustrates the way in which the museum contrives to elicit particular emotions: In the summer of 2013 I attended a workshop in Berlin on Museums and Travel. The participants were young scholars from all around the world. We had a guided tour of the Jewish Museum. After spending about 5 heavily charged minutes in the Holocaust Tower (to be discussed in the next section), our guide, very much a Libeskind devotee, managed to stumble upon the one German in our group and asked her how the tower made her feel. She responded: 'I felt as though I was supposed to feel something'. He was flustered by her response. And we quickly moved on.

influences are explained or elusive seems to matter more for those trying to deconstruct Libeskind's deconstruction than those who wander its pseudo-labyrinthine corridors. The hidden references and obvious symbolism simply fulfil the main purpose of the building which is to tell the story of the Holocaust.

B) Ersatz Engagement and Aestheticizing the Holocaust

Yet, the Jewish Museum claims to be about more than the Holocaust, as is explained in the official *Museumsgeschichte*: 'The exhibition concept countered the voices that had declared the Libeskind Building a Holocaust memorial […] The permanent historical exhibition leads you on a journey of discovery through two millennia of German Jewish history'.[197] Nevertheless, it is impossible to think of Libeskind's building as anything but a Holocaust memorial. Structurally, German-Jewish history is telescoped through the Holocaust. One enters the building by going down into Libeskind's subterranean axes where the Holocaust is symbolically reduced to a dark tower. We can see this by looking at the museum map and the arrows guiding the visitor:

The image(s) originally presented here cannot be made freely available via ORA because of copyright restrictions.

Images: © Jewish Museum Berlin, photos Florian Duijsens

[197] Stiftung Jüdisches Museum Berlin, *Museumsgeschichte PDF*, pp. 8-9.

While the arrows were not the intention of the architect,[198] the oddly juxtaposed disorientation and the unidirectional path through the exhibition fit Libeskind's clear intentions. Forcing the disoriented visitor along a one-way path appears to me as an expression of Benjamin's *Einbahnstraße*, or at least an interpretation of its perceived directionality and dead-end quality. Early commentators such as Huyssen suggest that the architecture simultaneously '[…] forecloses the possibility of re-harmonizing German-Jewish history along the discredited models of symbiosis or assimilation. But it also forecloses the opposite view that sees the Holocaust as the inevitable *telos* of German history'.[199] However, it is difficult to read the Holocaust as anything but an 'inevitable *telos*' given the unidirectional nature of the permanent exhibition, the structure of the pathway (starting from and ending with the Holocaust), and the path of black (originally red) arrows that guide the visitor through the space. These arrows act as a symbolic (bloody) trail through history. The trail is teleological not simply because it is already laid out[200] but because by both starting and ending the museum visit with the Holocaust, the museum's narrative implies that the Holocaust is both a *telos* pulling the visitor through the historical story, as well as an initial force propelling the narrative. We are clearly far away from Merleau-Ponty's boat charting both course and river by its movement.[201]

Aestheticizing the Holocaust has resulted in several installation pieces in the museum, such as Menashe Kadishman's *Shalechet/Fallen Leaves*, various sound

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[198] Chametzky, p. 228.
[199] Huyssen, *Present Pasts*, p. 69.
[200] We might note the difference between this ersatz approach to history (where a fully-fashioned narrative/interpretation is handed to the visitor) and the phenomenological one (where, like with Merleau-Ponty's depiction of the lived body as in a boat charting a river rather than on a shore observing or even in a pre-determined river, as discussed in Chapter 1.III, the narrative is constantly unfolding).
[201] See notes 140 and 141.

pieces, and of course the impenetrable yet ever present voids running through the heart of the building, all the time ensuring that Libeskind's response to the Holocaust is what is being represented in the museum. However, none of these examples are more effective than the most conspicuous example of Libeskind's ersatz engagement, which is the Holocaust Tower.

The image(s) originally presented here cannot be made freely available via ORA because of copyright restrictions.

Image: © Studio Daniel Libeskind, photo Bitter Bredt

In his own words, the visitor is meant to enter the unheated dark tower with reflected light and experience the following: 'You are at a dead end here. It's the end of the museum. It's the end of all museums. The Holocaust was the absolute extermination of all values'.[202] This is the very point of the building whose aim '[…] is to communicate through other means in a very concrete way the Holocaust and what it meant and what life after these events might signify'.[203] The film from which the previous two quotations are taken features a scene in which Libeskind brings his father, a Holocaust survivor, into the Holocaust Tower. The tower gives him a 'sad impression'.[204] This kind of emotional evocation is a result of an ersatz engagement: Libeskind creates a simulated Holocaust-like situation that besides intending to provoke a 'sad impression,' aims to offer the

[202] See the film *Daniel Libeskind: Welcome to the 21st Century*.
[203] See the film *Daniel Libeskind: Welcome to the 21st Century*.
[204] See the film *Daniel Libeskind: Welcome to the 21st Century*.

visitor a chance to feel as though they were symbolically trapped sometime between 1933 and 1945, thus playing upon feelings of guilt for having not been there.

Even if there is nothing like an ersatz passport to bind us to the life of another, the Holocaust Tower is perhaps an example of Landsberg's prosthetic memory concept, most specifically the 'experiential museum'[205] or experiential sites where '[…] an experience occurs through which the person sutures himself or herself into a larger history […]'.[206] However, unlike the experiential museums she mentions, where the present day individual is drawn into experiencing history by binding themselves to a historical person or image,[207] Libeskind's museum works on a purely metaphorical level. Libeskind strands the visitors in a world of symbols masquerading as historical fact. Walking along the corridors, following the arrows, standing in the simulacrum-like dark tower allows the visitor to artificially graft an experience of history (or staged interpretation of the feeling of history) onto their own empathetic subjectivity. Though unlike other Holocaust memorial practices, for instance the annual March of the Living where Jewish teenagers trace the path of the death march from Auschwitz to Birkenau to commemorate and appropriate the past, the pathways through the Jewish Museum are entirely artificial.

Libeskind's intention was to give visitors a mild 'as if it were me' feeling. However, the 'as if it were me' here is not the one of the Passover Seder because the visitor is not invited to consider what the Holocaust means for them, but rather what it means for Libeskind, or rather, what Libeskind's interpretation and expression means for them. Moreover, the symbolic time-travel experience clearly attempts to take us

[205] See Landsberg, pp. 1-48.
[206] Landsberg, p. 2.
[207] See the discussion of Landsberg and experiential museums in Chapter 1.

back to a twentieth-century *Mitztrayim* rather than ask us to imagine what *Mitzrayim* might mean today.

The reduction to Libeskind's interpretation notwithstanding, the 'as if' operation and experience here is philosophically troubling: 'as if' the Holocaust could be reduced to a consumable experience which can be visited. The Holocaust Tower shows how Libeskind takes a complex phenomenon that resonates in a personal manner, reduces it to his own experience of it, and then constructs a large-scale symbolic expression of it in which the visitors are to encounter the phenomenon: for Libeskind the Holocaust felt like a dead end and thus it must be that for all his visitors.

Libeskind applied the two main images for aestheticizing the Holocaust that were prevalent in the late-twentieth century: voids and rupture. These images are conveyed by the architecture both by the lightning bolt-like zinc building, symbolising a gash through history, and by the voids running through the building itself. They also express the museum's fundamental framing narratives of history. Voids and rupture (or brokenness) seem to go together in the minds of the commentators. For example, Young writes:

> Through a twisting and jagged lightning bolt of a building, Libeskind has run a straight-cut void, slicing through it and even extending outside of it: an empty, unused space bisecting the entire building […] It was not the bombing of Berlin that created the void, but the vacuum and inner collapse of moral will that allowed Berlin to void itself of Jews […] According to Libeskind, this void will also represent a space empty of Jews. At the same time […] his zigzag line can suggest the broken backbone of Berlin society.[208]

Huyssen is also impressed with Libeskind's use of the void and describes it as a '[…] spine to the building. It is both conceptual and literal'.[209]

[208] Young, *At Memory's Edge*, p. 165.
[209] Huyssen, *Present Pasts*, p. 68.

While a void might be an apt symbol or shorthand used to represent the Holocaust, throwing all of German-Jewish history and current cultural life into a void is something that has concerned commentators such as Chametzky. He writes:

> Given that nausea was one intended and actual effect that the empty museum had on visitors, and especially in traversing the tilted field of pillars in the E.T.A. Hoffmann Garden of Exile, I fretted that visitors would consciously or unconsciously associate a 'Jewish' experience with infirmity and sickness – a traditional anti-Semitic trope inscribed into the JMB design and somatically into the visitor experience, which I contrasted to the metaphor of 'health' inscribed into Norman Foster's renovation of the Reichstag building.[210]

The objects and installations are subverted by the dominant images, metaphors, and framing narratives of the building. On deeper examination, excessive recourse to voids and rupture is problematic. Chametzky's comments ring particularly true when thinking about the changing Berlin museum landscape; while the Berlin *Stadtmuseum* consolidated its collection in the *Märkisches Museum* and the historical centre started to be restored to a condition of vitality and health, Jewish history was left to be experienced through the voids and rupture of Libeskind's building.

Philosophically, conceiving of the Holocaust as a rupture and memory as a void poses other problems. It suggests that the Nazis were a historical aberration, a one-time exceptional event that defied normal logic. Such thinking casts the Nazi period as one of collective madness, Till refers to it as a *Zivilisationsbruch*.[211] While terrifying, thinking about the Holocaust in those terms does seem to exonerate civilization. Even more terrifying are Adorno and the Frankfurt School's earlier claims that the Holocaust came from within civilization itself, and that rather than expressing an aberration of logic, these events were the result of the instrumentality of capitalist logic executed to its most

[210] Chametzky, p. 225.
[211] See note 158.

extreme degree.[212] The political, sociological, historical, and economic causes of the Holocaust can be studied and obviously have been and continue to be analysed again and again. It is not that we cannot or should not try to understand what happened or banish it to the voids in Libeskind's building; what we cannot do is understand how it might have felt to have lived or died during that time, and that is exactly what aestheticizing the Holocaust is trying to both simulate and stimulate.

Fitting the Holocaust and the twentieth century into larger discourses of historical and cultural continuity seem to be what is happening on the *Museumsinsel*. This idea will be introduced towards the end of this chapter and developed throughout the rest of this dissertation. But before moving onto the changing times and responses to aestheticizing the Holocaust in general and Libeskind's building in particular, the amount of critical material and mass of annual visitors necessitates an examination of how Libeskind's ersatz engagement functions within the Berlin museum landscape.

C) A Museum? A Memorial? A Sculpture?

Libeskind's reduction of history to an ersatz phenomenon and the way in which the building forces the visitors to engage with this ersatz are not necessarily problematic in and of themselves but do raise interesting questions at the core of the relationship between the artist and the architect, or rather the large-scale art installation and the museum building. Facilitating an ersatz, or rather a world within the larger world, is a normal part of creating installation artworks. However, what must be determined is whether a museum has a specific function that makes it different from a work of art.

[212] See Adorno, *Kulturkritik und Gesellschaft II*, pp. 555-572.

From the outset, the Jewish Museum has always ridden the line between museum and memorial. Libeskind was acutely aware of this. See for example, his reasoning behind entering the competition for Berlin's Holocaust Monument:

> The main reason I took part in the competition for the Memorial is the very fact that people said: 'We do not need the Memorial – we already have Libeskind's building'. However, the Museum is not a memorial, despite the fact that there are dimensions of memory built into it. The Museum is a museum – it is a space for the encounter of history: a building and not a memorial.[213]

Libeskind's claims that the 'Museum is a museum' and that it is 'a building and not a memorial' are somewhat suspicious particularly when thought within the context of some of his other comments such as: 'I have never believed in the "form follows function" theory; on the contrary, I believe a building's form follows an idea'.[214] Can the idea of the museum be separated from its function? Has Libeskind's building challenged the very fundamental notion of the museum as a house for a collection? That the building itself was empty for over a year and that the number of people who saw it empty (over 350,000 came to see it as an 'empty shell')[215] is still touted in all of the promotional material indicate that the building was conceived separately from the collection and has an intentionality of its own, independent of being a functional museum. Is it a sculpture? A memorial? Libeskind's reducing of history to an aesthetic or the language of symbolic representation suggests that it could be both.

The multiple levels of distancing and abstraction from real world phenomena make it seem as though the Jewish Museum is more art installation and less museum.

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[213] Daniel Libeskind quoted in Studio Daniel Libeskind, *Jewish Museum Berlin* (Berlin: Ruksaldruck, 1999), p. 32. These comments are echoed in the official *Museumsgeschichte PDF*: 'Contrary to the frequently raised demand to leave the striking rooms empty, W. Michael Blumenthal and his staff saw the Jewish Museum not only as a place of remembrance, but rather placed the main focus on the lively teaching of Jewish History […]'. Stiftung Jüdisches Museum Berlin, *Museumsgeschichte PDF*, p. 8.
[214] Libeskind quoted in Fernandez, p. 21.
[215] See note 151.

In fact, the Jewish Museum was the first Libeskind building to actually be built;[216] prior to winning the competition, Libeskind was considered to be a theoretician rather than a builder, he '[…] became famous without building a single project'.[217] It is unsurprising then that Libeskind stresses the 'idea' over the 'function' of buildings given that much of his early career was spent designing 'impossible unbuildable architecture' and not following the parameters set down in competition briefs. [218] Stressing form over function is not overtly troubling but it does start to become problematic when one thinks of a museum as a place to house memory by virtue of its collection rather than simply by representation of it.

While critics initially praised the building's ability to 'house the unhouseable', what has emerged over time, and will be discussed in greater detail in the next section of this chapter, is that while the museum building might technically house the collection, it does not provide a home for it. A theoretical architect may devise plans for a new kind of house, one that would challenge the very idea of the house, but that does not mean that anybody will actually want or be able to live there. Crucial in the discussion of the Jewish Museum is that it is the building itself and not the things inside the building that call for the visitors' attention. The objects and exhibition design do not immediately figure in the discussion of the nature of the museum.

It is thus unsurprising that when the museum first opened, particularly when it was empty, the building was read and experienced as a memorial. An important historical detail that was not mentioned in the 'history' section of this paper, is that the

[216] To be more precise, the first design to win a competition and be built. The Felix-Nussbaum-Haus was completed and opened in 1998.
[217] Cobbers, p. 3.
[218] Cobbers, p. 8.

Jewish Museum predates the official Holocaust Memorial (*Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas* by Peter Eisenman, one of Libeskind's former mentors) by several years, as the monument was only completed in 2005. Thus the building, for a time, particularly when empty, did serve as a memorial. Thinking of the memorial aspects of the building responding to the need for a commemorative space seems rather straightforward. Regardless of whether or not this was the museum's official approach, this was how it was viewed and used. There is nothing necessarily problematic about thinking of a museum as a memorial. There is also nothing particularly problematic about thinking, as Libeskind does, of 'architecture as public art […] and part of the art of architecture is also language'.[219] What does becomes troubling is when this ersatz phenomenon becomes the Jewish Museum in Berlin, and when Libeskind's story becomes the official story, everyone's story.

The context and climate at that time favoured this kind of storytelling but not universally. The Jewish Museum does well when juxtaposed with other Libeskind projects. For example, the un-realised Spiral addition to London's V&A drew significant criticism from neighbourhood organizations and historians such as Brian Sewell:

> I oppose [the Spiral] because I don't believe it functions as a museum, which is its sole purpose […] Well, think of it, you are building a museum with areas within it which you already recognise […] will not be capable of use as display areas, what is the point of that […] If Libeskind is producing something beautiful something effective as a work of art, as he does in Berlin with the Jewish Museum, fine, but if he is allowing his status as artist to overwhelm his function of architect, as he does here, then I think he is failing in his duty.[220]

[219] Libeskind quoted in Cobbers, pp. 13-14.
[220] Brian Sewell quoted in the film *Daniel Libeskind: Welcome to the 21st Century*.

It must be noted that Sewell is certainly known for some conservative views of conceptual and contemporary art. It must also be noted that the quotation I've included comes from a film purchased at the Jewish Museum, made in 1999 when the Jewish Museum was empty, and the Spiral project had recently received the official green light only to be shut down several years later.[221] Salient here is the idea that in the late 1990s and early 2000s producing a Jewish Museum with unusable display areas and monologic symbolism was considered 'beautiful' and acceptable. We must then wonder why ersatz engagement was deemed an appropriate and necessary way of dealing with the Holocaust (and Jewish History) at that time.

Would such a museum be built now? Would an ersatz engagement relegating Jewish life in Europe to a series of voids and ruptures be an appropriate way of dealing with history? Would it be possible to allow territorialisation of Holocaust memory to serve as a screen for lingering East/West tensions twenty five years after reunification? What narratives would frame a museum built and curated by the generation after Hirsch's generation of postmemory?

In the previous section of this chapter, I speculated that had Berlin's Jewish Museum been built today, the *Neue Synagoge* would have been a likely contender for the space and site. I also suggested that it might have focused more on the community and continuity of culture rather than the voids and ruptures of the Holocaust. An example of a

[221] The Spiral isn't the only Libeskind building that was never built. Cobber's book cites other examples such as: City Edge/development of the Tiergarten, 1987 (supposedly dropped due to financing); Mo(u)rning: Redesign of the former SS compound, Oranienburg-Sachsenhausen (note that the 'u' should not be in parentheses, but rather should be crossed out). The official line in the book is that 'The zoning plan was never implemented for various reasons. The project will probably not be realised'. Cobbers, p. 25; Landsberger Allee/Rhinstrasse whose '[…] design will not be implemented, the investor prefers to develop large-scale retail outlets'. Cobbers, p. 26. Also, while there is a photo of the Freedom Tower/Ground Zero Project, it is not discussed, as the book is focused primarily on Berlin. Since the book was published Libeskind's role in the Freedom Tower/Ground Zero project changed. Though involved he is no longer the principal architect.

recently constructed Jewish museum, such as the Museum of the History of Polish Jews in Warsaw (opened in April 2013) might support my claim. According to its website:

> The Museum of the History of Polish Jews [opened…] on the site of the former Warsaw Ghetto. This multimedia narrative museum and cultural center will present the history of Polish Jews and the rich civilization they created over the course of almost 1000 years. Initiated by the Association of the Jewish Historical Institute of Poland in Warsaw in 1996, the Museum of the History of Polish Jews will be a unique institution. Not only is it the first and only museum to focus on the history of Polish Jews, but also it is a truly 21st-century institution in every regard.[222]

But what makes it 'a truly 21st-century institution in every regard'? The use of auratic (to borrow a term from Benjamin)[223] space (the site of the former ghetto)? The focus on the community? These changing design strategies and philosophies suggest that times have changed since the Libeskind building was commissioned and realised. The last section of this chapter will look into just how much they have changed and what these changes might imply.

III) The Jewish Museum and the Test of Time

While in the previous section I tried to show how problematic the idea of a museum facilitating a form of ersatz engagement may be, what I want to do here is examine how the Jewish Museum is struggling to withstand the changing times. All of the sources I mentioned in the introduction of this chapter cite Libeskind's Jewish Museum as the most significant structure dealing with Berlin's identity and questions of cultural memory at the time they were writing. Examples of this include: Till: 'Libeskind powerfully represented the futility of trying to represent the unknown in space and time from the

[222] See Museum of the History of Polish Jews, <http://www.jewishmuseum.org.pl/en/about-museum> [accessed 10 June 2013].
[223] See Walter Benjamin, *Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit* (Berlin: Surhkamp Verlag, 2010). Specific references to aura can be found throughout but most useful is the discussion on pp. 16-22.

position of post-Holocaust generations'[224]; Webber: 'This is Libeskind's exemplary, anamnesic response to the painful and divided state of Berlin, as what Derrida, responding in turn to that response, calls the 'exemplar city' of a schismatic, non-identical century'[225]; Huyssen:

> A discussion of Libeskind's museum project, arguably the single most interesting new building in Berlin […] gives a different inflection to the notion of Berlin as void in relation to memory and to history [and] however, indirectly it raises the issue of German national identity and the identity of Berlin[226];

And Young: 'The Jewish wing of the Berlin Museum will now be the prism through which the rest of the world will come to know Berlin's past'.[227] However, what was once warm universal acclaim has faded to a series of tepid and mixed responses. The irreconcilability of the museum's form and content, the weakness of this content, and the way its ersatz nature dominates the visitor has started to draw some criticism from scholarly and cultural sources. I will first look at how responses have changed and then see how these responses may reflect changing attitudes. I argue that while both Libeskind's choices in the museum design and the choice of Libeskind's design in the first place made the Jewish Museum emblematic of cultural memory discourse at the end of the twentieth century, these same choices put the museum in a state of tension with cultural memory discourse at the start of the twenty-first.

[224] Till, pp. 222-223.
[225] Andrew J. Webber, *Berlin in the Twentieth Century: A Cultural Topography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 59-60.
[226] Huyssen, *Present Pasts*, p. 66.
[227] Young, *At Memory's Edge*, p. 183.

A) Changing Responses

The first evidence that contributes to the impression that the Jewish Museum is out-dated comes from a shift in the critical response to it. Most of the positive reviews and photo essays on the museum come from the time when it was empty. Thus in a sense, most of the positive response is in relation to the building as either a memorial or as an art project. However, by the mid-/late- 2000s, the responses move from preferring the 'empty shell' over the installed museum to questioning the very integrity of the space. This section will look at three such more recent responses to the Jewish Museum.

One specific commentator I mentioned earlier actually changed her opinion of the building after the exhibition was in place. Till, once a great proponent of the Jewish Museum, records a subsequent visit in her field notes. She writes:

> 2002 - I was disappointed when I revisited the museum after it opened […] I wanted the unfinished building to be there for me when I returned to Berlin so that I could speculate about the city's future and watch others do the same. I was disappointed because the new material form of the museum covered the powerful social hauntings evoked through my bodily experiences of being in this building and navigating these unmarked spaces.[228]

For Till the empty building represented possibility, its voids were a screen onto which meaning could be projected, as I mentioned earlier in this chapter. However, once the possibilities became actualities and various museum choices were made, the museum lost its power. In the Jewish Museum, architectural form and curated content are either at war or have nothing to say to each other. The visitor is meant to experience a clash between the Holocaust and exile-inspired axes in the basement and the axis of continuity along which the permanent collection is installed. However, the museum

[228] Till, pp. 222-223.

has never successfully been able to deal with this clash, as is evidenced in the following two reviews.

The first is from an architectural guidebook, and the second is from the New York Times. First, in 2003's *Berlin: A Guide to Recent Architecture*, Duane Phillips and Alexandra Geyer write:

> Alas, the interior has nothing to do with the exterior […] First viewed as an empty shell, it was difficult to imagine how an actual exhibition would be installed […] The sequence of rooms is a given; no adjustments are possible. Unfortunately, Libeskind was not given the opportunity to design the exhibition. He probably would have been the best person to combine the space with the content, to make it one, mutual. Instead the exhibition organisers seem to have thrown anything and everything into the upper two floors, disregarding the building. The exhibition in no way relates to its space: […] Whether it is the fault of the building or of the exhibition cannot be known until Libeskind designs the exhibition himself. In the meantime, it just doesn't work.[229]

Both Till's and Phillips/Geyer's responses question the space's ability to function as a museum. Although Till is disappointed with how the museum has been realised, she does not turn against the basic premises and practices of the building even though its function and purpose diminished much of the space's power. For Till the exhibition took away the space for individual contemplation and response. The same is true for Phillips and Geyer. While the museum does not work as is, there is still the possibility for it to get better (provided Libeskind designs the exhibition). Though both these comments are negative, neither finds fault with the philosophical underpinnings of the museum itself.

More damning, however, is Edward Rothstein's 2009 review published in the *New York Times* entitled 'In Berlin: Teaching Germany's Jewish History', because it not only questions the museum's functionality, it condemns its take on history:

[229] Duane Phillips and Alexandra Geyer, *Berlin: A Guide to recent Architecture* (London: Batsford, 2003), pp. 129-132.

> There may be worse Jewish museums in the world than the Jüdisches Museum Berlin, which opened in 2001. But it is difficult to imagine that any could be as uninspiring and banal, particularly given its pedigree and promise […] So many museums now deal with recollections of trauma that Berlin's fraught examples are illuminating. Ruin and relics are part of renovation here [e.g. restoration of Neue Synagoge] […] The Jüdisches Museum inverts the formula. Here it is the new – the building created by Mr. Libeskind – that invokes scars and wreckage. The old is suggested by its contents, consisting largely of text, images, reproductions and interactive displays that are meant to conjure a past worthy of celebration […] The resulting strain is almost bipolar, with the building aggressively screaming about apocalypse as its exhibition affirms harmonious universalism, with neither making its case […] The space trivializes history rather than revealing it. […] Imagine what the museum might have been had it decided to eliminate exaggerated effects and dull homogeneity. It might have been subtle, touching, unsettling.[230]

Rothstein's review came a decade after the museum opened as an 'empty shell'. While he criticises the exhibition and targets the 'bipolar' nature of the museum's form/content, more important here is how Rothstein's response indicates that there has been a shift both in museum strategy and in cultural memory discourse. For Rothstein, the space 'trivializes history rather than reveal[s] it'. Furthermore, it does this by what he calls 'invert[ing] the formula' where something 'new' 'invokes scars and wreckage'. This inversion is essentially another way to get at what I described as ersatz engagement: was it necessary to construct a pseudo-void in a city that had no man's land running through its centre and still has buildings decorated in hieroglyphic bullet holes? Rothstein's review is the first major critique of the museum I have encountered that makes this claim.

Rothstein instead praises the restoration of the *Neue Synagoge*, a space that has largely been left out of cultural criticism since at the aforementioned 1995 turning point the choice was made to follow the pathway of the autonomous, void/rupture

[230] Edward Rothstein, 'In Berlin: Teaching Germany's Jewish History', *New York Times*, 1 May 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/05/02/arts/design /02conn.html?r=0> [accessed 10 June 2013]. Rothstein is a culture critic for the *New York Times* as well as a composer. He often writes about museums.

focus of the Kreuzberg-located Libeskind museum rather than the central community-centre-focused *Neue Synagoge*. The Western strategy of 'overcoming memory' beat 'absorption in the future', the Eastern strategy at that time. 'At that time' is the operative notion because as foreshadowed, it seems as though the Eastern strategy might appeal more to the contemporary critic. Perhaps it is time to inscribe the decades' worth of struggling to overcome the past in our visions of the future. Have we entered a phase of cultural memory theory and practice where the either/or choice between past and future has softened? I will explore this in detail in the next couple of chapters.

Rothstein's review, and to some extent Phillips and Geyer's comments, suggest that contemporary commentary is looking for a different approach to framing narratives of history. While Phillips and Geyer note the 'oblique symbolism', 'fun-house effect', and 'poor quality of workmanship and materials', Rothstein's description of the museum as 'uninspiring and banal', and his charge that it is a space of 'exaggerated effects' and 'dull homogeneity' suggest a deep failing on the part of the museum.

Nevertheless, even if the museum comes across as dated, one must ask whether this is actually irredeemable. Will not all museums at some point be dated? Obviously, yes. But the trouble with the Jewish Museum is that it is virtually impossible to update. As the 2003 review notes: 'no adjustments are possible'. Though in this instance Philips and Geyer are referring to the room sequence, this principle can be applied to the entire museum conception and design.

B) Changing Times

The fatal flaw of the Jewish Museum is that times will change but the museum will struggle to change with them. Besides making it difficult to physically install exhibitions in the space, Libeskind and his building will never relinquish philosophical and pedagogical control. The space will always tell a story of voids, rupture, and the Holocaust. Commentators in the 1990s and early 2000s did not find this problematic. See for example Huyssen's description of the void:

> The void thus becomes a space nurturing memory and reflection for Jews and for Germans. Its very presence points to an absence that can never be overcome, a rupture that cannot be healed, and that can certainly not be filled with museal stuff. Its fundamental epistemological negativity cannot be absorbed into the narratives that will be told by the objects and installations in the showrooms of the museum. The void will always be there in the minds of the spectators crossing the bridges that traverse it as they move through the exhibition space.[231]

Young gives a similar account of how Libeskind's architecture sets up the void, 'a negative centre of gravity'[232] and inscribes this as the 'focal point' of post-Holocaust Jewish history of his museum. Furthermore, Young states that anyone wanting to work with this museum must work with or against these voids: 'The curators of both permanent and temporary exhibitions […] are to design exhibitions that integrate these voids into any story being told […]'.[233] Through these voids, the Holocaust and the 1990s' approach to the Holocaust appear in this museum and will always appear as the ground zero of the twentieth century, with 'never forget' as its categorical imperative and ultimate point of reference. Because the museum architecture forces curators to work with, against, or around this imperative, it can never change. What if future generations of curators, commentators, and visitors want to tell different kinds of stories? What if the 'as if it

[231] Huyssen, *Present Pasts*, p. 68.
[232] Young, *At Memory's Edge*, p. 165.
[233] Young, *At Memory's Edge*, p. 178.

were me' procedure will one day imply more than imagining oneself as a victim of the Holocaust, or rather as a particular representation of a Holocaust victim?

Voids in Berlin do not remain voids forever. What I mean by this is that while the Jewish Museum architecture suggests that voids are part of history and can never be filled or even properly narrated, there are other ways of thinking about voids, ways where the void is characterized as an empty space of potential. Returning to 1995, the year the discourse shifted towards the Jewish Museum and away from the *Neue Synagoge*, we see the introduction of yet another kind of narrative regarding the voids in the city. Not only were voids absences that expressed what was lost and inexpressible, places onto which cultural memory concepts could be projected, voids started becoming part of the city brand even as construction works started filling them in. '*Schaustelle Berlin*', an annual set of open days on various cultural construction projects started running in 1995 and finished in 2005.[234] These voids could literally be visited.

Another way of looking at the void has to do with the city's image. Huyssen notes the space of the void in Berlin's marketing 1996 slogan, *Berlin wird*. He writes:

> Berlin *Wird* – Berlin Becomes. But becomes what? Instead of a proper object, we get a verbal void. This phrasing may reflect wise precaution, for in the current chaos of public planning, backdoor scheming, and contradictory politicking, with many architectural developments (Spreeinsel and Alexanderplatz among them) still hanging in the air and their feasibility and financing insecure, nobody seems to know exactly what Berlin will become.[235]

[234] Till gives a good description of the *Schaustelle Berlin* project (visits, open days, infoboxes). See Till, pp. 33, 193-197, 219-223. Her book includes a photo of a visit to the *Neues Museum* in 1997. The caption reads: 'Tour of the Neues Museum, Museum Island, Historic District'. It was absolute rubble inside. Till, p. 33. I mention her use of the terms 'Historic District' because it shows that at the time that *Museumsinsel* was part of the historical image of the city rather than its contemporary vision as it is today and as will be examined in Chapter 3. This is more evidence for signalling 'heritage' or 'history' as somewhat different from 'memory'.

[235] Huyssen, *Present Pasts*, p. 54.

Voids can thus be thought of as the past (the Holocaust into which Jewish life disappeared), the present (the empty spaces in the city), and the future (an unknown identity yet to be determined).

Changes in culture can happen quickly.[236] During the ten years of this *Schaustelle Berlin*, much had literally and figuratively changed in Berlin's cultural landscape. Just over a decade later, *Berlin wird* was replaced by 'be Berlin' or '*sei Berlin*' in 2008.[237] It does seem that moving from becoming a void to being something is a rather significant ontological shift for the city. While still open, the dynamics of being suggests more of a positive than a negative centre of gravity – at least there is something there. Many of the city's actual voids have been filled. Though there is still a plethora of cranes, it seems as though many of them have flown away (or at least are now represented on hip pieces of clothing and decoration found at the *Mauerpark Flohmarkt*). While there is still digging (and while I am not writing about it here, it will figure in Chapter 5), the idea of digging for truth may no longer have the same status and impetus as it once had.[238] Gone are the *Trümmerberge* much discussed in the critical material even as late as the 1990s. Nevertheless, the archaeology metaphor is still relevant: after the dig comes the examination of the finds, and ultimately their placement in a museum. We seem to be

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[236] One of the best descriptions of this I have read is in Till when she discusses how vibrant the (by our standard muted) colours of the restored Martin Gropius Bau seemed against the greyness of the adjacent East Berlin buildings in the early 90s and how the colours are nowhere near as noticeable now in the more integrated city. See Till, p. 108.

[237] Apparent sub-slogans include: 'Berlin the place to be' and '*ich bin ein Berliner*'. Both of these somewhat subvert the idea of a city that 'is' by reminding us that people live in and make up a city as well as its culture and history. Studies of Berlin's urban marketing and city branding are growing. See: Agata Lisiak, *Urban Cultures in (post)colonial Central Europe*, (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University, 2010), pp. 69-164; and Claire Colomb, *Staging the New Berlin: Place Marketing and the Politics of Urban Reinvention Post-1989* (New York: Routledge, 2012), p. 8. This will be examined in greater depth in Chapter 3.II.

[238] Till refers to the work of Erik Smith and his test digs/excavations done in the old *Skulpturenpark*. Till references an activist project called 'Operation Let's Dig' whose motto was 'Let no grass grow over the site!', pp. 95-97.

headed towards the time of the museum, and by the museum, I mean that the city has adopted the *Museumsinsel* as one of the literal and metaphorical central pieces of its identity.

It is not without significance that Berlin's *Mitte* does not figure on this list of physical voids that filled the pages of cultural studies of Berlin in the 1990s and 2000s, as it was in East Berlin and has thus only relatively recently become easily accessible to Western commentators. As aforementioned, at that time the *Museumsinsel* was thought of as the place to visit the Pergamon Altar rather than the place where German cultural identity is self-actualised and communicated. Even after reunification, part of the *Museumsinsel* still languished as a ruin. It is only in the last several years, largely after the 2009 re-opening of the *Neues Museum*, that the *Museumsinsel* has started to find its way into cultural criticism. Berlin's *Museumsinsel* was less a void than it was a ruin.

The ruin is a symbol that was once thought to be on a par with that of voids and rupture in the search for the hallmark image of the late twentieth century. This will be examined in great detail in Chapter 5, II. However, my study of the *Neues Museum* will argue that ruins belong more to early-twenty-first century cultural memory than the late-twentieth, a memory that reprises and transforms themes of earlier modernities and a particular romantic conception of ruins. Though ruins were ever present in Berlin as a city and in the commentary about the city, ruins do not play an active and obvious role in the Jewish Museum except, as Rothstein suggests, in an 'inverted' manner: the ruins of Jewish life have been completely subsumed by the symbolic voids of the building. It was not the ruin that dominated criticism, it was the void. On a symbolic level, the ruin may be an antidote to the void: something is left behind, traces can be read. The persistence of

ruins signifies several architectural possibilities including: preservation, re-building, and building something new. In the twenty-first century, models such as the *Neues Museum* and the other museums on the *Museumsinsel* literally incorporate ruins as part of the design strategy. Thus not only are ruins a symbol or cipher of the past, but they may also be the material for the future.

To summarise the chapter's argument, the Jewish Museum can be read as a instantiation of late-twentieth-century memory culture. It belongs to another contemporaneity even if it still has a place in the landscape today and is thus still important to consider. It is mostly important because of the way it has become peripheral and out-dated: the physical, museum, memorial, and theoretical landscape no longer accords this museum the central position. The concluding section of this chapter will thus take us towards the *Neues Museum*, or rather the *Staatliche Museen zu Berlin* (SMB) and *Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz* (SPK) *Masterplan Museumsinsel*.

Conclusion: Towards the *Neues Museum* and the Twenty-first Century

To conclude, we return to where this chapter began by evoking the moment in 1999 when two narratives of cultural memory hung in the ether: one was the story told by the Jewish Museum, embodying the phrase 'never forget' that would be used by cultural commentators in their attempts to grasp late-twentieth-century Berlin cultural memory, the other, an as yet unnamed story to be told by the *Museumsinsel Masterplan*, went largely unnoticed. It was not until the opening of the *Neues Museum* ten years later in 2009, that the *Museumsinsel* started to present itself to international commentators as a unitary phenomenon rather than just the gradual renovation of individual museums. It

took the first decade of the twenty-first century for the *Museumsinsel* to become one of Berlin's premier brands. It also took until the opening of the *Neues Museum* for the dramatic shift to happen in Berlin's cultural memory, from what at the end of the twentieth century featured the Jewish Museum's ersatz engagement to what I will describe in Chapter 4 as the phenomenological museum at the beginning of the twenty-first. What exactly this approach will signify and exactly how widespread it will be remains to be seen, but clearly it is the task of contemporary commentators to find the language to tell the story of this shift and these changing attitudes.

The latter chapters of this dissertation will examine this new way of thinking, but in concluding this chapter, I want to preview the idea by trying to understand how the mind-set that precipitated the Libeskind building and drew all of the international critics and commentators to Berlin might still resonate today. Till captures this sense when discussing urban nostalgia and *The New Berlin*. She writes:

> The contemporary search for the 'essence' of Berlin and the hostility articulated toward the Cold War period, when understood as reactionary nostalgic impulses to control time through place, also indicate a desire to find a mythic, untarnished Germany. Nostalgia need not necessarily be reactionary […] it may be used to promote *awareness* and even ultimately acceptance that cities are always in a process of change […] Urban nostalgia, as a process, as a reaction, as a kind of mapping of time onto place, for example, can be used constructively to help residents, urban experts, and scholars understand how normative (and sometimes negative) meanings of the 'new' and 'historic' city are created to pursue socially exclusionary nationalist agendas in the present based on utopian visions for the future.[239]

Till's description of a 'desire to find a mythic, untarnished Germany' strikes me as more true now than it was when she was writing (2005), or at least it is easier to see how this desire may be fulfilled. It seems as though Berlin has found this mythic fount in the form of the *Museumsinsel*, even if, as we shall see in the next chapter, it is

[239] Till, pp. 56-57.

clearly not totally untarnished and is obviously rather blemished. Till's second point, that urban nostalgia need not necessarily be nefarious is important to bear in mind as one tries to sort out and articulate the cultural memory of the *new* new Berlin, the one that was born in 1999 but has not yet come to maturity.

Is it correct to say that the German planning authorities are looking for something 'untarnished' and that commentators and visitors are looking for something 'mythic'? The mythic and the untarnished do not necessarily coincide. The longing for something mythic is an interesting instinct, one that is quite ambivalent. Chapter 3 will look into some of the potential consequences including a potentially nefarious revival of mythic Prussia. However, as Part III of this dissertation will argue, the impulse towards mythology is not necessarily sinister. While the contemporary mythic sensibility may look for possible meanings, these meanings are always ephemeral and historical, and hence in a way, 'tarnished'. Perhaps, then, these twenty-first century museum projects are looking for new ways of constellating the relationship of contemporary spaces of national identity with the past. This positive nostalgia[240] might be a forward-looking nostalgia, one that wants to make a home where one can arrive, or a historical consciousness to which one can return.

Being firmly entrenched in the twenty-first century gives the *Museumsinsel* (and the *Neues Museum* as part of it) the distance it needs (for which it longs? for which the city planners long?) to conceive of the twentieth century and everything contained therein as part of a longer history rather than as an end in itself.

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[240] For a good definition, see Svetlana Boym: 'Nostalgia (from *nostos* - return home, and *algia* – longing) is a longing for a home that no longer exists or has never existed. Nostalgia is a sentiment of loss and displacement, but it is also a romance with one's own fantasy'. Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), p. xiii.

As will become apparent in the next chapter, one of the major shifts from the 1990s and 2000s to the contemporary is the shift from thinking of the role of the Holocaust in Berlin cultural memory (and perhaps in culture as a whole) as an ultimate category or end in itself to treating it as an analytic tool. What I mean by thinking of the Holocaust in this way is that it does not seem to be about digging for truth, or about voids and ruptures; instead, it is about ways of seeing and experiencing. Like with Dekel's reading of the *Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas*'s pedagogical strategies, we can use the Holocaust to help us think about other things. It has become part of our thinking apparatus rather than merely the material of our thoughts. We might be allowed to put it in discourse with other historical events without running the risk of crushing the singularity of both events. I am not thinking about comparative genocide studies either, I am thinking about extracting logical structures and images, using them as ways of shaping the way we relate to the larger world, to history, and to current affairs, in other words, to the ancient past and potential futures. In short, we may be able to include the Holocaust as part of our framing narratives without becoming stuck in the endless cycles of traumatic acting out.[241]

Thus instead of toiling under the banner of 'never forget,' which has proved to be an ineffective categorical imperative for the founding of just and humane societies, the imperative, or invitation, is to make meaning out of what we have inherited: to constellate narratives that are relevant for us. The contemporary instinct must surely be to construct rather than deconstruct, to build models of plurality rather than totality. The material is already there, we just need to do something with it.

[241] See the discussion of Trauma Theory in Chapter 1.

Chapter 3: The *Museumsinsel* & Master-planning

While much critical attention was focused on the opening of Libeskind's Jewish Museum, Berlin's *Museumsinsel* was entered onto the list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites in 1999. As recent studies of urban marketing and Berlin's city brand (Colomb 2011 and Ward 2011) show, this approximately coincided with a shift in Berlin's urban identity from the city's re-birth as 'The New Berlin' – a city that struggled to regain its place as a unified and stable national capital (1994-2001)[242] and that is characterized by Huyssen's reading of the slogan Berlin becoming (*wird*)[243] – to one that that (at least provisionally) knows what it 'is' (the 'creative city' 2001-2011, and *sei Berlin* 2008-2011).[244]

As this study is concerned with what it means to 'be historically', the shift will be examined within the cultural memory landscape. The shift in the landscape (both cultural memory and urban identity) literally meant a return to the historical *Mitte* and its main cultural institutions, but it also meant a more figurative (albeit slow) expansion of the terrain that traditionally centred on the Holocaust, particularly among Anglo-American thinkers within the field. The past available to thinkers and practitioners and theoreticians of cultural memory has long been about more than simply the twentieth century,[245] and the shift in Berlin's memory landscape (both the praxis and the theory) makes this more evident than ever. The difference is that it has now become possible to conceive of the twentieth century alongside other historical periods as well as within a historical

[242] See Colomb, pp. 1-10, and 144-187. See also Till, pp. 31-57.
[243] See note 235.
[244] See Colomb's analysis in Chapter 8 '"Poor but Sexy": Urban Marketing the Creative City, 2001-2011', pp. 222-269.
[245] Jan and Aleida Assmann's work on Egypt and English literature is perhaps the best example of this.

continuum, and that such ways of thinking may be represented and expressed in major cultural institutions, notably the houses on the *Museumsinsel*.[246]

In 1999, the *Museumsinsel*, Berlin's historical cultural heart, was rethought and renewed. Spearheaded by British architect David Chipperfield, who re-conceptualized the *Neues Museum* (re-opened in 2009), the architects responsible for the island's five institutions put together the *Masterplan Museumsinsel*. This *Masterplan* highlights the differences in the architectural, curatorial, and material content of the island's five major structures, while simultaneously fitting them in a coherent and continuous narrative. Central to the *Masterplan* is its claim to actualise the island's original nineteenth-century vision. However, as I will be demonstrating, my research in the SMB *Zentralarchiv* shows that what contemporary critics consider to be this 'original' master plan merely consists of mid-nineteenth-century sketches of unrealised buildings and Friedrich Wilhelm IV's declaration proclaiming the *Spreeinsel* to be a 'Freistätte für Kunst und Wissenschaft'.

It seems that the notion of an original master plan is a contemporary phenomenon expressing the ways in which we in the present read or use the past, and thus a clear example of my main hypothesis emphasizing the use, appropriation, and transformation of cultural heritage. Why do we choose to read the past in this manner? Why do some pasts resonate more loudly than others at certain times? As the 'why' questions are elusive, it is perhaps better to ask 'how' questions about the actuality of certain pasts: how do we use these pasts? As such, under the fundamental 'how' question I will address in this chapter is the following deeper problem: what does the desire to connect with and

[246] While it is obviously a very important part of history and a glaring omission in the dominant narratives of the *Museumsinsel*, the time of East/West Germany is outside the main auspices of this study and will only be referred to tangentially.

update this potentially illusory master plan tell us about our contemporary historical consciousness and the development of identity (both self and national)?

Both the founding and current framing narratives of Berlin's *Museumsinsel* read as somewhat mythical in the sense that they seek to establish a historical grounding and some form of orientation or directionality.[247] By examining the contemporary and historical contexts of the *Masterplan Museumsinsel*, as well as the narratives contained therein, this chapter offers a reading that seeks to understand our current (re)turn towards the idea of the master plan. While an initial and plausible response is that the *Museumsinsel* offers city marketers an opportunity to present a positive image of Berlin, one that is relatively untainted by the Nazi past and that has the irreproachable Schinkel as its spiritual *Urvater*,[248] I argue that this (re)turn also expresses deep socio-cultural undercurrents that long for a return to certain themes and images that fell out of favour during and after World War II, namely harmony and wholeness (even if the particular kinds of harmony and wholeness I will discuss are transformed and re-interpreted versions of these traditional themes). This (re)turn is fundamental to the shift in Berlin's cultural memory landscape – from one where harmony and wholeness were unthinkable and thus inexpressible in museum space (as is the case in the Jewish Museum and with German-Jewish history in general) to one where they are actively pursued.

I will thus first give a brief historical account of the development of the *Museumsinsel*, particularly highlighting the narratives at work there. I will then proceed to give a reading of the current *Masterplan* and will conclude by examining the *Masterplan*'s various critical contexts. It is a project that has garnered significant

[247] See note 3.
[248] This argument was suggested to me by Kevin Hilliard.

controversy, controversy that continues to rage now. My material is a combination of images and texts from the nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first centuries.

I) 'Tell Museumsinsel*': The Histories*

Like an archaeological tell, hills where civilizations lies buried one on top of the other, the *Masterplan Museumsinsel* is made up of layer upon layer of incomplete, abandoned, or failed attempts (or partial attempts) at creating a lasting unified vision for Berlin's *Spreeinsel*. Since the Prussian King Friedrich Wilhelm III's 1841 consecration of Berlin's *Museumsinsel* as a 'Freistätte für Kunst und Wissenschaft', its story has always been about a clash between what was planned and what was actualised. It has also always been about the relationship between the universal and the particular, or rather the whole and the parts, the desire for totality and the reality of historical contingency. There are several key moments and periods in the development of the *Museumsinsel* concept we will look at in the following sections: the 1830s-1840s, 1880s, 1900-10, 1930s, 1949–90 (GDR), and the 2000s (the contemporary *Masterplan*).

The history of the *Museumsinsel* is recounted in many sources.[249] Peter-Klaus Schuster, former director of the SMB, has given two particularly evocative tellings in his

[249] For a good example see Renate Petras, *Die Bauten der Berliner Museumsinsel* (Berlin: VEB Verlag für Bauwesen, 1987). Another source is the second and up to date (2012) edition of the official SMB publication on the *Museumsinsel* was published in both German and English: *Museum Island Berlin*, ed. by Michael Eissenhauer, Astrid Bähr, and Elisabeth Rochau-Shalem (Berlin and Munich: SMB - Preußischer Kulturbesitz und Hirmer Verlag GmbH, 2012). Please note that I will be citing several essays from this collection and will use an abridged version of the publication information to avoid cluttering the footnotes. Complete references for each essay cited may be found in the bibliography. The book offers a comprehensive account of the history of the buildings, the collection, and the current cultural context. Two essays offer particularly good accounts of the history of the *Museumsinsel*: Adrian von Buttlar's 'The Museum Island: an Architectural-Historical Overview', pp. 94-118; and Peter-Klaus Schuster, 'Berlin's Museum Island: A German Educational Landscape', pp. 118-144.

essays 'Berliner Museumspläne'[250] and 'Berlin's Museum Island: A German Educational Landscape'.[251] For Schuster, the *Museumsinsel* both was and will be integral to Germany's 'Educational Landscape' or national narrative. According to Schuster, it may be described as 'meaning in built form […]'.[252] What the *Museumsinsel* has meant and could mean for Berlin and German cultural identity has been amply debated and discussed in Berlin; for example, there was a colloquium held in honour of the 175th anniversary of the SMB (the papers were published in 2007)[253] that looked into the importance of the *Museuminsel*'s past and how it could shape the future of Berlin's museum and cultural memory landscape.

My aim here is not then to repeat or retell the story. It is instead to look at the 'how' question – how have the various histories of the *Masterplan Museumsinsel* been used and interpreted in its current iteration? What are the stories we tell ourselves? To do this, I will first look at Schinkel, the island's patron saint; his museum was the only one to be constructed before the original master plan and serves as a continuing reference point for all subsequent attempts. I will then give a brief typology of the various historical plans and will conclude by looking at the current plan and examining how it uses and interprets the various pasts.

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[250] Peter-Klaus Schuster, 'Berliner Museumspläne' in *Masterplan Museumsinsel Berlin: Ein europäisches Projekt*, ed. by Andres Lepik (Berlin: Staatliche Museen zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz, 2000), pp. 11-24. Please note that I will be citing several essays from this collection and will use an abridged version of the publication information to avoid cluttering the footnotes. Complete references for each essay cited may be found in the bibliography.

[251] Schuster, 'The Museum Island: A German Educational Landscape', in *Museum Island Berlin*, ed. by Eissenhauer, Bähr, and Rochau-Shalem, pp. 118-143.

[252] Schuster, 'The Museum Island: A German Educational Landscape', in *Museum Island Berlin*, ed. by Eissenhauer, Bähr, and Rochau-Shalem, p. 118.

[253] See *Freistätte für Kunst und Wissenschaft. Die Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin als Forschungseinrichtung*, ed. by Andrea Bärnreuther, and Peter-Klaus Schuster (Berlin: Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, 2007).

A) Schinkel and the Altes Museum[254]

There are two main reasons why Schinkel is the *Urvater* of the *Museumsinsel* and why we can count him among the sources for a contemporary concept of cultural memory. The first is the way in which his museum facilitates the creation of historical consciousness, or *Bildung*. The second is the way in which his museum (and his works in general) appropriate and interpret ancient or past forms. This section will look at both of these reasons.

It has always been clear that one of the overall principles of the Berlin museums was to edify the public by facilitating encounters with objects of world heritage. Schuster writes about this in his article announcing and outlining the *Masterplan Museumsinsel Berlin: Ein europäisches Projekt* in 2000. This is evident in his comment on Schinkel's museum:

> Analog zu Goethes Begriff der Weltliteratur sollten mitten im damals mächtigsten Staat Deutschlands die Künste und die Kulturen der ganzen Welt versammelt werden. 'Studio antiquitatis omnigenae et artium liberalium'. Das Studium der Künste und Altertümer aus der ganzen Welt,' mithin das enzyklopädische Studium des Weltkulturerbes, das ist die ästhetische und gelehrte Mission der Berliner Museen, wie sie bereits in der großen Inschrift auf dem Gebälk zur Vorhalle von Schinkels Museum zu lesen ist.[255]

Of course, the Latin dedication of the building was not without its trouble and politics,[256]

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[254] Please note that in order to reduce confusion I will be using the contemporary names for the five museums on the *Museumsinsel*. The *Altes Museum* was originally called the *Königliches Museum*, the *Neues Museum* has always been called the *Neues Museum*, the *Alte Nationalgalerie* used to be called the *Nationalgalerie*, the Bode Museum was first named the *Kaiser Friedrich Museum*, and the Pergamon has never had another name.

[255] Schuster, 'Berliner Museumspläne', in *Masterplan Museumsinsel Berlin: Ein europäisches Projekt*, ed. by Lepik, p. 11. Stüler outlines something very similar in his 1841 work: Friedrich August Stüler, *Das Neue Museum in Berlin* (Berlin: Verlag von Ernst & Korn, 1862). It will be discussed in Chapter 3.

[256] Schuster describes the conflict between Aloys Hirt, the original director of the antiquitues collection, and Schinkel over the philosophy of this *new* museum (what is now the *Altes Museum*), where Hirt essentially wanted an extension of the art faculty and Schinkel wanted an independent and public gallery. Schuster also claims that it was Hirt who ended up dedicating the building in a manner that was not entirely coherent with Schinkel's intentions. See Schuster, 'The Museum Island: A German Educational Landscape', in *Museum Island Berlin*, ed. by Eissenhauer, Bähr, and Rochau-Shalem, p. 123.

but in general the original plan was to set up the museum as a temple and as a *Bildungsutopie*.[257]

This ideal of *Bildung* as well as establishing and nurturing the individual and collective historical consciousness are part of Schinkel's legacy. Below are two examples taken from the Schinkel tribute essays from the 1989 edition of *Sammlung Architektonischer Entwürfe* that corroborate this point. Philip Johnson notes:

> The architecture of Hellenic Greece and Imperial Rome is an objective fact. It existed in time. But during the Quattrocento and continuing throughout the late Renaissance, a mind-set was developed, both by the dissemination of the ancient sources and by direct access to the monuments of antiquity, of the past as it *should have been*. It was knowledge incomplete […] The new Periclean age of Fragonard and Poussin ushered in a yearning for a fictive past, not in corporeal actuality but for its harmonious relation of man to man, man to nature, and, most importantly, man to God. It was the ultimate metaphysical longing and, as a signature, it stands at the core of Romantic sensibility. This was the milieu into which the *Sammlung Architektonischer Entwürfe* was interjected – the quantum between Goethe and Marx, Pushkin and Dostoyevsky – between the outer edge of our palpable recollection of the past and the larger vicissitudes of history. […] Fragments of history, taken as points of departure for a synthetic manipulation and then reassembled into a new greater whole, are, here, forcefully and lovingly juxtaposed.[258]

Rand Carter offers a similar perspective in the same volume:

> At the same time a greatly increasing knowledge of other times and places, as well as a new conception of history, complicated the architect's relations to earlier periods […] Since the fragmentary nature of the evidence demanded that archaeologists draw inferences based on the assumption that the fragments were inevitably related to an organic whole, the contemporary architect might well ask what future archaeologists would be led to believe by the ruins of his own buildings.[259]

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[257] Schuster, 'Berliner Museumspläne', in *Masterplan Museumsinsel Berlin: Ein europäisches Projekt*, ed. by Lepik, p. 11. See also Buttlar, 'The Museum Island: An Architectural-Historical Overview', in *Museum Island Berlin*, ed. by Eissenhauer, Bähr, and Rochau-Shalem, pp. 96-97.

[258] Philip Johnson, 'Foreword', in Karl Friedrich Schinkel, *Sammlung Architektonischer Entwürfe: Collection of Architectural Designs Including Designs Which Have Been Executed and Objects Whose Execution Was Intended* (Guildford, Surrey: Butterworth Architecture, 1989), no page number.

[259] Rand Carter, 'Karl Friedrich Schinkel: The Last Great Architect', in Karl Friedrich Schinkel, *Sammlung Architektonischer Entwürfe*: *Collection of Architectural Designs Including Designs Which Have Been Executed and Objects Whose Execution Was Intended* (Guildford, Surrey: Butterworth Architecture, 1989), pp. 27-34 (p. 27).

Three things are particularly relevant and interesting about these two quotations, as they pertain to the ways in which the past is part of Schinkel's project of *Bildung.* The first is the notion that the past is something that has been invented, that there even could be a past 'as it should have been', thus highlighting the importance of the interpretation and creation of historical narratives. The second is the idea of the past as something fragmentary that might be relatable to 'an organic whole'. The third is that, by encounters with the past through objects and spaces, the archaeologist/architect/museum visitor might be able to start to conceive of how the future will reflect on them and their structures, objects, and institutions. Essentially, all these three points relate to the development of a responsible historical consciousness and ultimately support my working hypothesis that memory is the way in which the past is used; a way of being historical that includes both remembering and being remembered.

While it is unclear whether Schinkel intended the museum's visitors to develop a specific kind of historical consciousness, it is clear that he was very interested in cultivating the visitor's aesthetic experience and through this stimulate some kind of *Bildung.*[260] For Schinkel, it seems as though this development takes place through aesthetic means and via classical and mythological symbols. In the *Altes Museum*, unlike in the *Neues Museum* (as will be discussed in Chapter 5), classical mythology is very present. The use of myth corresponds to the transcendence the visitor was meant to

[260] For an illustration of this, see Schinkel's journals: 'Die Welt der Kunstformen läuft parallel mit den Formen der Natur; sie hat aber nicht diese selbst um ihrer selbst willen, sondern sie dienen ihr zuweilen um eines menschlichen Ausdrucks willen; viele aber kommen im Zusammenhang gar nicht in der Natur vor oder sind wenigstens nur angedeutet, diejenigen, welche durch die Vernunft und Verstand für menschliche Verhältnisse entstanden sind'. Karl Friedrich Schinkel, *Aus Tagebüchern und Briefen*, ed. by Günter Meier (Berlin: Henschel Verlag, 1969): pp. 145-146.

experience before the great artworks. For example, Schinkel was very lucid in describing his choice of the Dioscuri, Castor and Pollux, as the guardians of the building:

> Dioscuren mit ihren Pferden, goldene Sterne über den Häuptern, schienen, an der Vorderseite aufgestellt, als Schutz und Heil bringende Wesen uns aus der Mythe bekannt, von erfreulichem Eindruck und in Übereinstimmung mit dem Style des Ganzen, und so konnte dann im Gegensatz eine andere Seite des menschlichen Geschickes: Kampf und Vernichtung [...] dargestellt werden.[261]

While Schinkel claims that these twins express 'Kampf' and 'Vernichtung', they might suggest more than war and conflict; the mythical twins challenged mortality, the very separateness of the linearity of the human condition from natural/mythological cycles. In every version of the myth the twins were part human and part divine, ultimately ending up as a guiding constellation and symbolic protectors of travellers. Analogously, museum contexts challenge mortality by offering afterlives to objects and civilizations whose original contexts no longer exist; it is the destruction of civilizations that ultimately facilitates the afterlife/immortality of the destroyed civilization in the museum context. This will be discussed in detail in Chapter 5 in my reading of the *Griechischer Hof*.

A similar effect is created in the Rotunda, or, as Wolf-Dieter Heilmeyer calls it, Schinkel's Pantheon: '[...] dass er bei deren Einrichtung schon frühe eigene Vorstellungen durchsetze, wirft ein bezeichnendes Licht auf die damit verbundenen romantischklassizistischen Ideen [...]'.[262] The Rotunda displayed sculptures from the collection of classical antiquities that depict ancient images and archetypes to make the visitor feel as though in the Roman Pantheon or in a divine sculpture garden. The statues and decorations, essentially a language of stone, bring myth into history. The line between myth (the Dioscuri) and history (artefacts and visitors) is blurred as they are put

[261] Schinkel, *Sammlung Architektonischer Entwürfe*, p. 5.
[262] Wolf-Dieter Heilmeyer, *Schinkels Pantheon* (Mainz am Rhein: Verlag Philipp von Zabern, 2004), pp. 6-7.

into a symbolic relation: the twins thus protect and guide the objects within as well as the travellers who come to the museum to be edified. The historical consciousness engendered by Schinkel's museum thus relies upon mythology as its symbolic base.

There is another representational language that also facilitates *Bildung* and the development of the historical consciousness. It could be called the language of paint and linearity, and it comes across in the linear sequencing of the paintings on the top floor of the museum but also through its frescoes/wall paintings. Though these paintings have not survived, a good account of them can be found in the British engraver Henry Vizetelly's vivid, albeit snide description of Cornelius' works:

> […] the general effect of these pretentious productions is singularly crude and inharmonious […] Cornelius sought to turn painting into a philosophical and humanitarian manifestation, and used his pencil as a writer would his pen to develop systems, interpret mysteries, dissect doctrines, and expound dogmas. The general object of these particular works appears to be to illustrate the history of the formation of the universe, and the intellectual development of humanity […] The ideas seem to have bubbled up haphazard from a beer-bemused brain, like jack-o-lanterns from a stagnant marsh, and are just as difficult to seize. Nor is there much assistance to be derived from the written interpretations volunteered by the catalogue […][263]

'Beer-bemused brain' and 'jack-o-lanterns' notwithstanding, two important points emerge from Vizetelly's comments: the first is the idea of using museum framing strategies to facilitate *Bildung* and the second is that this *Bildung* involved telling a story beginning with the formation of the universe. Though both of these points will be discussed in greater detail with regards to the *Neues Museum* in Chapter 4 (also in reference to Vizetelly's amusing descriptions), of note here is that in Schinkel's museum, this *Bildung* begins with the formation of the universe, in this case, with a mythological formation and not with the beginning of human history, as will be the

[263] Henry Vizetelly, *Berlin Under the New Empire: Its Institutions, Inhabitants, Industry, Monuments, Museums, Social Life, Manners, and Amusements*, 2 vols (London: Tinsely Brothers, 1879), II, p. 139.

case with the *Neues Museum*; in Schinkel's museum, art appears as transcendent while history is immanent (or rather we are immanent in history).

These paintings were inspired by mythological narratives with titles/descriptions such as, 'The Forces of Nature, called into existence out of the chaos into the reigning of Daylight', 'Uranus and the dance of the constellation', 'a child watering the Earth with fruitful rain' and so on.[264] In Schinkel's museum, the visitor starts to develop their historical consciousness by interacting with these highly allegorical paintings that try to make sense of human existence by recourse to traditional mythology.

The paintings also suggest linearity in human history from the 'formation of the universe' through to the 'intellectual development of humanity'. What emerges from considering these paintings is another blurring between myth and history, and the question then becomes: are we to put myths in a direct linear relation with history, or are we supposed to extrapolate their bearing on (our) history? It is probably safe to assume the latter, but the plodding linearity does seem rather troubling. The linear narrative in the paintings is echoed by the linear narrative in the history of art as was originally depicted on the top floor of the museum. Thus we see the development of a kind of representational bilingualism in Schinkel's museum: on the one hand we have the pale indoor sculpture garden where the visitor must find their own narrative and on the other hand we have the didactic yet elusive wall paintings.[265] One could say that while the narrative of the stones longs to compress or collapse time and space, the narrative of the

[264] All of these were taken from Vizetelly, *Berlin Under the New Empire*, II, pp. 139-140. He has taken the names from the original catalogue/descriptions.
[265] Vizetelly describes Cornelius as an 'excellent draughtsman [and] an abominable colourist'. Vizetelly, *Berlin Under the New Empire*, II, p. 139.

paintings seems to want to tell a story of linear progression and causal relations. This is perhaps similar to the idea of a synchronic context that relies upon a historical narrative and a diachronic narrative that evokes certain kinds appropriations and transformations or mythology – the two contexts being important for my main hypothesis of cultural memory. These two narratives will also be discussed in relation to the *Neues Museum* in Chapter 5.

Literal enlightenment and obfuscation thus merge in a museum experience that also tends to blur the line between myth and history. Nevertheless, as any historical consciousness that may be culled from Schinkel's museum would come from a variety of sources within the museum, it seems clear at this point that making sense of this consciousness is only possible post-facto; while Schinkel intended the visitor to encounter mythological and historical narratives, he did not specify a particular interpretation for the languages in the museum.

The second way in which Schinkel is relevant to the current *Masterplan Museumsinsel* and relates to my own cultural memory hypothesis can be found in how he uses ancient forms in his work. Schinkel's *Blick in Griechenlands Blüte*, a painting that depicts an army departing while cultural institutions are being erected, is often cited as the original inspiration behind Berlin's *Museumsinsel*.[266] Schuster writes: 'By transforming an ancient educational landscape into a richly facetted site for the arts and sciences, Schinkel was offering the utopian image for Prussia's programme after 1815'.[267] The idea of 'transformation' here is most relevant to this study, as the way in

[266] See image that corresponds with note 427.
[267] Schuster, 'The Museum Island: A German Educational Landscape', in *Museum Island Berlin*, ed. by Eissenhauer, Bähr, and Rochau-Shalem, p. 118.

which past forms have been inherited and adapted is fundamental to the question of how the past resonates in the present.

Though the Ancient World achieved new actuality in Schinkel's Berlin, his Neoclassical/Romantic interpretations and transformations of past forms never strayed to copying or reproduction. James Sheehan writes quite convincingly on the subject, juxtaposing him with Stüler: 'Unlike Schinkel who brought classical forms to bear on contemporary design problems, Stüler simply transported the temple across time; his building is a direct quotation from, rather than a modern translation of, classical architecture […]'.[268] Though there was a medieval Berlin and the city bears traces of old stones and human history, the links with the spiritual and metaphysical forefathers of European cultural identity largely came to Berlin via Schinkel's architectural transformations and interpretations of the Ancient World. For Schinkel's Berlin projects, it is not that literal Roman and Greek ruins are incorporated in progressive architecture. Instead, his work echoes Ancient and Gothic structures.[269]

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Images: Karl Friedrich Schinkel, `Drawings´, *Sammlung Architektonischer Entwürfe*

The image on the right is a sketch made by Schinkel called: *Landscape Drawing with the Temple of Concord, Sicily, June 1804.* The image on the left is a sketch from about 1825 of what is now the *Altes Museum*. The structures being depicted are quite similar:

[268] James J. Sheehan, 'Aesthetic Theory and Architectural Practice: Schinkel's Museum in Berlin', in *From the Berlin Museum to the Berlin Wall: Essays on the Cultural and Political History of Modern Germany*, ed. by David Wetzel (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1996), pp.11-29 (p. 26).
[269] Schinkel's intention to portray these themes is well documented. See for example: 'Das Gotische in der Architektur ist unbestimmt anregend, daher weiblich, das Griechische männlich [...]' Schinkel, *Aus Tagebüchern und Briefen*, p. 148.

columns, classical elements for the roof. In one instance the temple is in a pastoral setting in the other the museum temple is in an urban centre though trees have been added to make it look more pastoral. The interior sketches make similar use of classical elements, as can particularly be noted in the image on the left below, where we can see that nineteenth-century interpretation and 'decoration' was installed.

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Images: Karl Friedrich Schinkel, *Sammlung Architektonischer Entwürfre* (1820s)

Schinkel's architecture thus gives classical forms an actuality.[270] For Sheehan, the ability to give these forms an actuality is due in part to the *Altes Museum*'s dual ability to celebrate the achievements of the past while simultaneously recognising the ephemeral nature of human creation. He writes that the museum was:

> […] a monument to the greatness of the past and a reminder that, in the wake of history's destructive tides, only spiritual achievements will remain […] The museum was both a shrine to art's autonomy and an expression of art's claim to social and even political significance […] The museum affirmed art's historical nature while it preserved the classical ideal. It claimed monumental status for itself and for its contents, but it also reminded its visitors that all human creations were doomed. Above all, the museum proclaimed its own significance: By its location, its design, and its contents, Schinkel sought to fix his building in the center of contemporary culture and civil life.[271]

[270] Sheehan, 'Aesthetic Theory and Architectural Practice: Schinkel's Museum in Berlin', i, *From the Berlin Museum to the Berlin Wall: Essays on the Cultural and Political History of Modern Germany*, ed. by David Wetzel, p. 26.
[271] Sheehan, 'Aesthetic Theory and Architectural Practice: Schinkel's Museum in Berlin', in *From the Berlin Museum to the Berlin Wall: Essays on the Cultural and Political History of Modern Germany*, ed. by David Wetzel, pp. 24-25. I make a similar claim about the *Neues Museum* in Chapter 5.

The effect here is to make the visitor both feel as though they are in a place in time and history, and invite them to take a stance relative to this history. Appropriation and transformation are thus inseparable from the overall *Bildung* project. Schinkel's museum ultimately lets us contemplate ancient forms and thus 'be historical' because we are simultaneously always questioning what they mean for us. It thus becomes impossible for these images to be anything but 'contemporary'. In his essay from the 1989 publication of Schinkel's *Sammlung*, Johnson clearly states that Schinkel's interpretation and transformation of the ancient forms is one of the reasons why the effect of Schinkel's work has been so enduring (only somewhat timeless, but always utterly timely): 'Schinkel the classicist – Schinkel the romantic, both appeal to us. We today are, or would like to be, as rational, as logical as Schinkel. We would, at the same time, like to be as emotionally allusive, as associational, in a word, as modern as Schinkel'.[272]

From Johnson and Carter's comments above[273] and by looking at images of his work, we see that Schinkel's architecture constructs an image of the past using fragments, thus making the past resonate in a contemporary manner. Schinkel's work does not replicate the past, he uses its fragments as 'points of departure' and 'reassembles' a 'greater whole'. The emphasis on fragments/wholeness, as well as construction, transformation, and interpretation of the past will prove very relevant to my analysis of the architecture and curation of the current *Neues Museum*. Schinkel thus appears as the proper *Urvater* of this *Museumsinsel* endeavour.

This brief foray into Schinkel's story has shown how his museum (and with it the founding of the *Museumsinsel*) expresses not only a particular moment in time but also a

[272] Johnson, 'Foreword', in Schinkel, *Sammlung Architektonischer Entwürfe*, no page number.
[273] See notes 258, 259, and 272.

moment that longs to connect with the past and the future – a moment whose time, I will soon claim, has come again. By installing newly interpreted classical forms in the middle of the modern city, Schinkel delivers these forms to a dynamic afterlife, as these structures are still being used and re-interpreted today. In a very crucial way, museums can thus compress time. As Andrew McClelland writes: 'Transparency in the museum encouraged (and still encourages) the illusory sensation of direct contact with the act of creation, the fiction of a canvas as fresh and as *present* as the day it was painted'.[274]

B) A Brief Typology of Master Planning

This section will do two things: it will offer a brief excursus into the genealogy of the *Museumsinsel Masterplan*,[275] and it will also look at the schism that throughout the history of the island has grown between the idealised plans and what actually happened.

Shortly after the 1830 opening of Schinkel's public museum/art gallery (what is now the *Altes Museum*) on the *Spreeinsel* across from Berlin's *Hohenzollern Stadtschloss*, the collection outgrew the space. In order to meet the growing needs of the collection, but also to act on prevailing pedagogical impulses, Friedrich Wilhelm IV in 1841 declared the *Spreeinsel* to be a 'Freistätte für Kunst und Wissenschaft', a (nineteenth-century) 'Athen an der Spree'. As he was somewhat of an artist/architect in his own right, he even drew a sketch.

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[274] Andrew McClellan, *Inventing the Louvre: Art, Politics, and the Origins of the Modern Museum in Eighteenth-century Paris* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 6.

[275] Material for this section has been adapted from several sources including: Schuster's essays ('Berliner Museumspläne' in *Masterplan Museumsinsel Berlin: Ein europäisches Projekt*, ed. by Lepik; and 'Berlin's Museum Island: A German Educational Landscape', in *Museum Island Berlin*, ed. by Eissenhauer, Bähr, and Rochau-Shalem); Petras' *Die Bauten der Berliner Museumsinsel;* Polyform Berlin, *Museumsinsel Berlin: Keeping the Past Facing the Future, an Exhibition* (Berlin: Druckerei Conrad, 2012); many images and fragments in the *SMB Zentralarchiv*.

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freely available via ORA because of copyright restrictions.

Image: © SMB, Friedrich Wilhelm IV, 'Skizze zur Museumsinsel' (around 1841)

The king's plan for a monolithic museum building was never realised, however, as, also in 1841, Schinkel's student, Stüler, was asked to move forward with his plans for the island. He came up with the below image of a museum temple city.

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Image: © SMB, Friedrich August Stüler, 'Ansicht der ganzen Bauanlage' (1841)

Stüler would go on to design and realise the *Neues Museum*, and would also prepare the plans for what is now the *Alte Nationalgalerie*, though he died before its completion in 1876.

Here we can see the first indication of a gap between what was imagined and what happened, as the buildings that Stüler designed (the *Neues Museum* and the *Alte Nationalgalerie*), while they somewhat resemble the buildings in his *Masterplan* drawing, are certainly a departure from the idealised image depicted in Stüler's sketch. Additionally, the gap between Friedrich Wilhelm's and Stüler's drawing is also significant: we've moved from one monolithic somewhat 'universal museum', to a multiple, albeit uniform set of museum buildings. Even taking into account the fact that

Stüler built two museums, his temple city was never realised – though his idea of multiple buildings is the first indication that the story of Berlin's *Museumsinsel* differs from that of many of the world's other great museums collections, such as the British Museum or the Louvre.

To continue the story, in 1875, the chief architect of Berlin, August Orth, put together a master plan for the island that was quite monumental in appearance.

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Image: © SMB, August Orth, 'View of the Tip of the Island' (1875)

This plan was not adopted in any meaningful way. Then, in 1882, there was the first of several *Museumsinsel* design competitions, this one called the Schinkel Competition. Ludwig Hoffmann, the future *Stadtbaurat* of Berlin who with Messel would eventually help design and realise the Pergamon Museum, won. His winning entry was similar to Stüler's vision but employed an updated style.

Nothing came of this competition. A second competition took place in 1883-1884, but this time it encompassed new museum buildings as well as a more general urban plan. At this point there were three buildings on the island (the *Altes Museum*, the *Neues Museum*, and the *Alte Nationalgalerie*). There was a need for a home for the Renaissance collection, more space to display material from the Antiquities collection, as well as a place to display the new monumental material from Pergamon. Wilhelm von Bode, then director of the Berlin *staatlichen Kunstsammlungen*, rejected all the plans and nothing

came of this competition either, though certain design and theoretical concepts by now had been brought into public discourse. In 1907 another competition was held, but this time it was for a museum rather than a master plan.

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Image: © SMB, Alfred Messel, 'Entwurf für den Ausbau der Museumsinsel' (1912)

By this point what is now the Bode Museum (then the Kaiser Friedrich Museum) housing the Renaissance collection had already opened. However, there was still a need for more space. Messel/Hoffman's Pergamon Museum was built and opened in 1930.

The ensemble of five museums was only open for about nine years before the start of World War II prompted their closure. The *Museumsinsel* did fit into Speer's 'Germania' plan, except that it was his intention to erect a monumental new building – though I have not found a lot of material and have not been able to locate an image of how it would have looked. It is important to note that while parts of the *Museumsinsel* were used during the Nazi time, no major construction was attempted under National Socialist leadership. The fingerprints of National Socialism remain in photos and footprints,[276] as Tracy Graves writes in her essay on the *Museumsinsel*: 'The Nazi government transformed [the *Museumsinsel*] into a center for the performance of

[276] By way of an exception Harrap told me that there was one room where part of one wall had one coat of paint that was put on during the time of National Socialism. It didn't have any discernable reference to the Nazis, nor would any visitor, regardless of how carefully they might be looking, be able to recognise it as from that time. Harrap knew because he knows material. He decided that this paint really had no business in the museum, and, violating one of his main restoration principles – work with what is there - he had some of his restoration specialists flake if off. [Julian Harrap, (May 18 2013) informal conversation].

fascism's aesthetics and the dictation of German political consciousness'.[277] We can see this in the photo below.

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Image: © Zentralarchiv, '*Altes Museum* and the Lustgarten, Parade Rally on 1 May' (1937)

During World War II, the *Museumsinsel* (right in the centre of the Battle of Berlin) was badly hit by the bombing and the fighting in the streets. All of the buildings were damaged, but none quite as badly as the *Neues Museum*, which was too damaged to restore, and too integral to the water table of the island to remove.

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Image: © SMB, 'Ruins of the *Neues Museum*'(1946)

The history of the *Museumsinsel* during the divided Germany was one of slow restoration. From what I have gleaned no major master plan was attempted, though significant work was done on all of the buildings.[278]

[277] Tracy Graves, 'Berlin's Museum Island: Marketing the German National Past in the Age of Globalization', in *Transnationalism and the German City*, ed. by Janet Ward and Jeffrey M. Diefendorf, (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), pp. 223-238 (p. 224).
[278] For a good account of this see Gisela Holan's essay 'The Neues Museum: From Destruction to Reconstruction 1945-89', in *The Neues Museum Berlin: Conserving, Restoring, Rebuilding within the World Heritage,* ed. by John Ziesemer and others (Leipzig: E.A. Seemann Verlag of Seemann Henschel GmbH & Co, 2009), pp. 31-37. Please note that I will be citing several essays from this collection and will

What can we extract from this somewhat convoluted story? Essentially it would seem as though all the plans have two points in common: the first is that they are all variations on a unified/total vision, the second is that none of the visions were ever properly realised – nothing ever really worked out according to plan. Instead of a colossal museum structure or a series of uniform museum buildings akin to temples (of varying denominations), what happened on Berlin's *Museumsinsel* is that five separate and different museum houses sprung up over the course of a century (the first, Schinkel's, opened in 1830 while the last, the Pergamon, opened in 1930) to house the growing and dynamic Berlin collection.

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Images: Top row: *Altes Museum*, *Neues Museum*, *Alte Nationalgalerie;* Bottom row: Bode Museum, Pergamon Museum. All images from *Wikipedia.org*

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use an abridged version of the publication information to avoid cluttering the footnotes. Complete references for each essay cited may be found in the bibliography.

C) The 1999 Masterplan

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Image: © David Chipperfield Architects, 'Archäologische Promenade'

Thinking about the houses on the *Museumsinsel* as part of a continuous story is obviously not new. The roots certainly go back to the nineteenth century. The contemporary framing narrative goes back to 1990, one year after German reunification. Part of reunification involved reuniting the Berlin museum collections, as they had been divided since 1945 and had been greatly damaged during the war. There were many conflicting viewpoints on how this should be achieved.[279] It quickly became clear that re-thinking the *Museumsinsel* was impossible without also re-thinking the *Neues Museum*; still a ruin, it was the only house on the island to have not re-opened after World War II. In this way the fates of the *Museumsinsel* and the *Neues Museum* became inextricable: in both the nineteenth century and the 1990s, it was the need to (re)think the *Neues Museum* that catalysed the need for a master plan.

There was a *Museumsinsel* architecture competition in 1993/1994 that involved both a restoration/re-think of the *Neues Museum* and a way to tell the story of the island as a whole.[280] The competition was won by Italian architect Giorgio Grassi. Chipperfield

[279] The SPK wrote a position paper that came out in its *Jarhbuch* in 1990. For a full account of this and the whole 1990s' re-think see Jürgen Tietz's essay 'The Great and the Whole: The Master Plan', in *Museum Island Berlin*, ed. by Eissenhauer, Bähr, and Rochau-Shalem, pp. 32- 48.
[280] Tietz's essay 'The Great and the Whole: The Master Plan' gives a good account of this, as does Barbara Große-Rhode, 'From Invited Competition via Consultation Procedure to "Master Plan Museum Island"' in

won second prize, and the SMB-favoured Frank Gehry won fourth. In the end, after much 'acrimonious debate'[281] in the press, amidst lobby groups, the SMB/SPK, and 'experts', it was decided that the way forward was to have a second competition round – inviting the top-five entrants from the previous competition to take part. In the end, it came down to Gehry and Chipperfield. Whereas Gehry's design featured dramatic and dreamy curving staircases, round buildings, and glass roofs, Chipperfield's design was based on re-establishing the form and figure of the *Neues Museum*. Thus certain thematic and conceptual similarities exist between the *Neues Museum* and the *Museumsinsel* as a whole. This will become more apparent in the close reading section of this chapter, as well as in Chapter 5 where I look closely at the narratives embodied in the *Neues Museum*.

A *Planungsgruppe* involving four major architectural firms – each responsible for one of the museums, including: David Chipperfield Architects (*Neues Museum*), Heinz Tesar (Bode Museum), Hilmer & Sattler (*Altes Museum*), and Oswald Mathias Ungers (Pergamon) – was convoked. Chipperfield helmed the group. The main challenge of the *Masterplan* project was to maintain the individual characters of the historical buildings and their historical collections while simultaneously linking them, respecting the *Museumsinsel*'s urban context, and contending with the demands of being a highly popular tourist destination.[282] The result was the restoration of all of the houses, the

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The Neues Museum Berlin: Conserving, Restoring, Rebuilding within the World Heritage', ed. by Ziesemer and others, pp. 50-55.

[281] Tietz, The Great and the Whole: The Master Plan', in *Museum Island Berlin*, ed. by Eissenhauer, Bähr, and Rochau-Shalem, p. 41.

[282] Tietz gives a good summary of this in his essay 'The Great and the Whole: The Master Plan'. But there is also a noteworthy publication put together by the *Masterplan*'s *Planungsgruppe Museumsinsel* called *Wege zum Masterplan*, which consists of architectural sketches/drawings of the houses and the various connecting features: Planungsgruppe Museumsinsel, *Wege Zum Masterplan*, (Berlin: Planungsgruppe Museumsinsel Berlin und G+H Verlag, 2000).

introduction of an underground *Archäologische Promenade* linking the houses, the restoration of the outside spaces like the gardens and external courtyards, the construction of the *James-Simon-Galerie* (an entry/reception building for the whole of the island), and an *Archäologisches Zentrum* to house the museum archives and some restoration studios. The loose start date for this massive project was 1998/1999. It is currently slated to be completed sometime around 2023.[283] The next section will examine some of the ways in which the current plan uses the history of the *Museumsinsel* to create a grounding narrative.

II) The Stories: Close Reading

This section will look closely at the part of the *Museumsinsel Masterplan* that is most relevant to my overall project: its fascination with the relationship between the whole and its parts. The story of this relationship is actually one of the more interesting ways in which the current plan uses the previous plans to ground a particular narrative about the museums, or how it mythologizes its own history. Schuster, director of the SMB during its bid to have the *Museumsinsel* included in the UNESCO list of World Heritage Sites, seems to tell two different stories. In the first, the *Masterplan* for the island figures as the fulfilment of an original vision:

> Die Berliner Museumspläne waren immer Masterpläne und immer hatten sie internationalen Zuschnitt in ihren entscheidenden Impulsen. Daraus rührt ihre Faszination und ihre Langzeitwirkung. Im Grunde gilt es heute nur zu vollenden, was schon von Anfang an als Masterplan eines Ganzen gedacht war.[284]

[283] This is the approximate date I was given by Chipperfield's office. Though I have yet to be able to confirm this date in any official SMB/SPK material.
[284] Schuster, 'Berliner Museumspläne', in *Masterplan Museumsinsel Berlin: Ein europäisches Projekt*, ed. by Lepik, p. 11.

In the second, the vision is described as a *concordia discors* (discordant harmony/harmony of discord), or an 'Einheit des Verschiedenen: Damit war die Berliner Museumsinsel als ganz singuläre Versammlung von Museumstempeln und Museumsschlössern auf der Spreeinsel vollendet'.[285] These two stories are not easily reconcilable. On the one hand we have these original 'Museumspläne' as seen in the sketches (in the previous section): an 'Einheit'. On the other hand, we have the series of structures that took a century to build and ultimately embody a century of changing museum philosophies (also seen in the previous section): 'Verschiedenes'.

While it is perhaps possible to argue that it has long been the intention of those responsible to view the museums on the *Spreeinsel* as parts of an overarching vision, the contemporary incarnation of this vision differs (at least on the surface) from all previous visions. The key point of contention is whether or not the museums could have always been characterized as a *concordia discors* or not, and what this could mean in terms of our understanding of the changing nature of the overarching project.[286]

Because this point is so important for the current *Museumsinsel*, because it is at the core of what makes the *Museumsinsel*'s narratives of cultural memory so different from those of the Jewish Museum, and because the idea of *concordia discors* resonates with the overall argument of this dissertation, this entire close reading will be devoted to examining it. I will first look at the history of the term, then the history of the term on the *Museumsinsel*, and I will finally see how the current plan uses this history.

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[285] Schuster, 'Berliner Museumspläne', in *Masterplan Museumsinsel Berlin: Ein europäisches Projekt*, ed. by Lepik, p. 16.

[286] Graves has also noted the way in which the current plan uses the past particularly in relation to the Pergamon. She writes: 'The rhetoric and presentations discussed […] feed into a narrative advocated by Berlin's museums that says, "This is how it was supposed to be after all," which conceives the history of Berlin's museums and art world anew […]'. Graves, p. 230.

A) **Concordia Discors** ***in History***

Though its use as a literary term reached a pinnacle with Samuel Johnson and Alexander Pope, after the apparent Renaissance fascination with hermaphrodites,[287] it would seem that these poets and writers inherited the terms and fascination with the harmonious and discordant dynamic from Horace: 'Quid velit et possit rerum concordia discors. Empedocles deliret acumen?'.[288] Horace, in turn, sends us to the Greeks, specifically to Empedocles' conception of the accord of the four natural elements, as well as Heraclitus' bow metaphor and his claim that all is in perpetual motion or strife. Though Horace does not immediately direct us to them, it is easy to conjure up images of the Pythagoreans and their claim that all humans have the celestial harmony or the harmony of the spheres in their inner ear, only becoming aware of it or hearing it when the harmony was disrupted. It might also be relevant to consider the Hippocratic conception of the body as being composed of four humours/temperaments (melancholic, choleric, phlegmatic, and sanguine) that must remain in balance for good health to be maintained. The concept is reprised throughout literature and philosophy.[289]

All these examples of *concordia discors* seem to embody the principle of dynamism. Heraclitus and Empedocles are perhaps the most obvious examples of this. More interesting is the idea that harmony is not necessarily something that, once achieved or ordained, remains static and stable. The examples of the Pythagoreans and the four

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[287] For a concise definition, see *A New Handbook of Literary Terms* ed. by David Mikics (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007), pp. 89-90.
[288] Horace, *The Poems of Horace Consisting of Odes, Satyres, and Epistles, rendered in English and Paraphrased by Several Persons*, ed. by Alexander Brome and others (London: Printed by A.C. for H. Brome, 1671) [downloaded on 3 March 2014]. Translation: 'What means the jarring sympathy of things;/And whether good or evil from it springs;/Whether Empedocles deserves our faith […]', p. 336.
[289] For references to Spinoza, Nietzsche, and Schopenhauer, see article by Jacob Stegenga, 'Rerum Concordia Discors: Robustness and Discordant Multimodal Evidence', < http://www.academia.edu/2806812/Rerum_Concordia_Discors_Robustness_and_Discordant_Multimodal_Evidence> [accessed 3 March 2014].

temperaments particularly allow for the possibility that this harmony may be both disrupted and corrected.

Concordia discors is not something that was meant to be felt or experienced as an identifiable phenomenon. Instead, it was thought to be the underpinning logic that sustained a working concept of the universe and humanity's existence within it; we live and are because of tensions that we do not feel. We only start to feel the constituent elements when they fall out of harmony. From this very brief survey, it becomes clear that the idea and image of *concordia discors* in nature is inscribed right at the core of the Occidental tradition. But what happens if we take this principle that was inscribed in nature and try to assimilate it to culture?

B) Concordia Discors *and the History of the* Museumsinsel

Applying the *concordia discors* principle to the *Museumsinsel* results in the idea of five different museums telling one harmonious, discordant, and yet coherent narrative. This section will examine two main ways in which this occurs: by undercutting the universal museum and through continuity via difference.

The first expression of *concordia discors* is the historical and contemporary insistence that the *Museumsinsel* ought not be considered as a universal museum – at least in the way this term is usually applied. The Berlin collection is really a series of collections. There are directors of collections (and they are responsible for the curatorial decisions) rather than directors of particular museums, and multiple collections share museum buildings. Analogously, what is now the SMB is a network of many constituent museums and galleries. Each of these museums has the double identity of being a

somewhat independent institution while being under the umbrella of the SMB.

Historically, the mutual independence and interdependence of the collections distinguishes the SMB museums from their counterparts. Schuster argues that the collection developed along different lines than other major European collections:

> Im Unterschied zum Louvre sind die Berliner Museen gerade kein Museumsmonument der nationalen Größe eines Zentralstaates, sondern sie verstehen sich – höchst pathetisch – dezidiert als Ort der Menschheitsbildung durch die ästhetische und gelehrte Verehrung aller Künste und Kulturen der Welt [...][290]

Wildung makes a similar claim:

> Häufig, zu häufig wird die Museumsinsel als 'Berliner Louvre' bezeichnet. Historisch betrachtet ist der Vergleich falsch, in seinen kulturpolitischen Implikationen birgt er Gefahren in sich und kann unter funktionalen Gesichtspunkten nur als Kontrastdiagnose von Nutzen sein.[291]

The result was essentially one growing collection, one driving philosophy and pedagogical stance, but multiple expressions and instantiations.

The collection of buildings and the collections they house has also been described as a *Gesamtkunstwerk*, a total and immersive work of art made up of many components.[292] Each of the five museums was built in a different style and curated in a different manner.[293] In fact it was largely this expression of difference and diversity that led to the whole island being declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1999. The justification for inscription on the UNESCO website reads:

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[290] Schuster, 'Berliner Museumspläne', in *Masterplan Museumsinsel Berlin: Ein europäisches Projekt*, ed. by Lepik, p. 11.
[291] Dietrich Wildung,'Neue Wege durch alte Kulturen', in *Masterplan Museumsinsel Berlin: Ein europäisches Projekt*, ed. by Lepik pp. 63-69 (p. 63). The claim is echoed by the museum's current directors, see Andreas Scholl, Friederike Seyfried, and Matthias Wemhoff, 'The Archäologische Promenade', in *Museum Island Berlin*, ed. by Eissenhauer, Bähr, and Rochau-Shalem, pp. 376-284.
[292] Schuster, 'Berliner Museumspläne', in *Masterplan Museumsinsel Berlin: Ein europäisches Projekt*, ed. by Lepik, p. 14.
[293] On the first three museums see Schuster's comments: 'Die drei Gebäude in fortschreitend klassizistischen Formen veranschaulichen zugleich den Bedeutungwandel des Museumsgedanken und mithin auch der Berliner Museumsinsel', Schuster, 'Berliner Museumspläne', in *Masterplan Museumsinsel Berlin: Ein europäisches Projekt*, ed. by Lepik p. 15.

> The Berlin Museumsinsel is a unique ensemble of museum buildings which illustrates the evolution of modern museum design over more than a century […] The Museumsinsel is the most outstanding example of this concept [the art museum as a social phenomenon] given material form and a symbolic central urban setting […][294]

As will be examined later in this chapter, the current *Masterplan* capitalises on and emphasises the relationship between the whole and the parts. However, even if it was not the intention of the original architects to subscribe to the *concordia discors* principle, it has clearly been the essence of the *Museumsinsel* since its earliest days.

The second way in which the *concordia discors* principle relates to the *Museumsinsel* is the idea of continuity through difference. Stüler dedicated the *Neues Museum* with the following inscription: *A Patre Beatissimo Conditum Ampliavit Filius MDCCCLV*.[295] This dedication is not as clear as it might first appear. On the one hand, Stüler's museum deviates tremendously from Schinkel's in terms of its architecture and pedagogical stance – Horst Bredekamp writes: 'Als Herz des Neuen Museums bildeten sie die Antithese zum Alten Museum'.[296] On the other hand, Stüler's museum was physically connected to Schinkel's by an elevated bridge and ultimately was intended to be part of the same overarching vision. Schuster describes this ambiguity in the following manner:

> Whereas Schinkel's museum served as a place of devotion before the individual work of art, Stüler saw his Neues Museum as a temple of education in the modern science of history. Only someone who understands history can understand art. […] The Neues Museum presented its collections as testimony to world history. Suddenly Berlin had two completely different types of museum: Schinkel's pure art

[294] See United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 'Museumsinsel (Museum Island), Berlin', <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/896> [accessed 10 June 2013].
[295] Schuster, 'A German Educational Landscape', in *Museum Island Berlin*, ed. by Eissenhauer, Bähr, and Rochau-Shalem, p. 129. Translation reads: 'The museum most felicitously founded by the father was extended by the son in 1855'.
[296] Horst Bredekamp, 'Der Lange Atem der Kunstkammer: Das Neue Museum als Avantgarde', in *Museale Spezialisierung und Nationalisierung ab 1839: Das Neue Museum in Berlin im internationalen Kontex*, ed. by Ellinoor Bergvelt and others (Berlin: G+H Verlag, 2011), pp. 25-36 (p. 33).

> museum and Stüler's museum of the knowledge of cultural history. The new museum concept did not denounce the old one as out-dated but rather supplemented it and also connected the two museums spatially.[297]

According to Schuster's interpretation, these two museums found their continuity through their differences; they complemented one another and served different functions in the overall vision of the *Museumsinsel*. This continuity through difference would continue to develop as each subsequent museum simultaneously adhered to and expanded the scope of the vision.

Connected to the idea that continuity can come through difference is the idea that *concordia* and *discors* may take place through one another. Not only has discord always been an important part of the island's main narrative, but this discord has also been one of its sources of strength, as it accounts for the island's ability to re-think and renew itself, as well as remain relevant amidst changing historical contingencies. The principle continues to be applied, as each of the houses on the island has had different restoration architects and different restoration strategies while at the same time falling under the auspices of the current *Masterplan*.

C) Concordia Discors *and the 1999* Masterplan

The current *Masterplan* uses the *concordia discors* principle as its basic means to connect the various buildings on the *Museumsinsel*. In one obvious way (five different structures, one unifying vision), the current *Masterplan* creatively invokes the *concordia discors* principle, but it, more pressingly, also plays with the idea of continuity through difference.

[297] Schuster, 'The Museum Island: A German Educational Landscape', in *Museum Island Berlin*, ed. by Eissenhauer, Bähr, and Rochau-Shalem, p.129.

Schuster, for example, writes that each of the five buildings has its own function, each with its respective theme and 'household god' that are to be brought together in a single narrative (for the whole island) that is both chronological and compressed: The *Altes Museum* is about art (and antique forms) and is presided over by Goethe and Schiller; the *Neues Museum*, as will be amply discussed in Chapters 4 and 5, tells the story of history and is dominated by Hegel; the *Alte Nationalgalerie*'s emphasis on Prussian art results in it being about nation, with Wagner its patron saint; the Bode Museum's lovely form and Byzantine and Renaissance collection has caused it to be the museum of beauty, with Schopenhauer as its vanguard; and the monumental forms in the Pergamon Museum find themselves in a natural alliance with Nietzsche and power.[298] We can thus see five different parts of one long narrative of Prussian/German cultural history.

As seductive as this tidy linear conception might be, we can only read it as an example of using the past in order to create a stabilising narrative framework. The *Masterplan Museumsinsel* contains an element that subverts its overarching dominant narrative of linearity (best portrayed in Schuster's description of the relationship between the houses), while also relating to the *concordia discors* principle. Similar to Schinkel's arrangement of the sculptures according to form or theme rather than chronology, the *Archäologische Promenade* is where thematic exhibitions combining objects from all of the collections will be staged, thus creating potentially disquiet juxtapositions.

[298] Schuster, 'The Museum Island: A German Educational Landscape', in *Museum Island Berlin*, ed. by Eissenhauer, Bähr, and Rochau-Shalem, pp. 130, and 138.

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Image: © *Planungsgruppe Museumsinsel,* 'Archäologische Promenade'

Some of the suggested themes include: 'Kunst des Erinnerns – Erinnerung in der Kunst', 'Ort-Raum-Ton', 'Schrift und Schreiben', 'Die großen deutschen Grabungen – Porträt und Menschbild'.[299] These will display objects from across the various collections. There are thus two experiences of history that may be derived from *concordia discors*: a relatively simple chronology and something more akin to a 'presentness' (or even a diachronic experience of history), where many different moments in history come together to create a textured and layered experience for the visitor.

The ways in which Schuster and the SMB use the history of the various unrealised master plans facilitates the creation of a framing narrative. Whether it is possible to claim that the current plan fulfills an original vision or not is ultimately of secondary importance. Instead, it is noteworthy that *concordia discors* has come to be the signature of the current plan. We need to consider *concordia discors* and what it expresses about contemporary Berlin memory culture, museum practice, and city branding.

III) Context/Perspectives

Like many museum/memorial/cultural projects in Berlin, the *Masterplan Museumsinsel* has seen its fair share of controversy, as the scale and scope of its ambition may be

[299] *Planungsgruppe Museumsinsel*, 'Der Masterplan Museumsinsel', pp. 53-55.

simultaneously inspiring and off-putting. Before offering my own response, the final section of this chapter will briefly look at several different kinds of responses to the *Masterplan Museumsinsel*: those from the public and press, the official approach of the *Museumsinsel* branding service (Polyform Berlin) and the SPK/SMB, and finally the critical response so far.

A) Press/Public

While it is obviously somewhat of an overstatement, there is something particularly fierce about cultural memory debates in Berlin, especially when they have to do with architecture and monuments: theory and praxis are inextricable one from the other. As noted in the previous chapter, Young eloquently describes the decade-long process of coming to a tentative agreement about the Holocaust Memorial and recalls when in a moment of frustration it was suggested that they simply put up a sign saying they debated it for ten years and could not find a solution.[300] Besides invoking the general prevailing sense that Germany is one of the few countries to actually put up monuments and memorials to their misdeeds (not celebrating them but rather inscribing them into their urban space and collective consciousness),[301] it is true that the press is vigilant, the public is engaged, and the stakes always feel quite high. Obviously the *Museumsinsel Masterplan* is part of this general ethos. The press response regarding the *Museumsinsel* and the efforts of the SMB/SPK to create a unified story based on the *concordia discors* principle has been split. This section will look at the two types of responses.

[300] See note 187.
[301] This view is so prevalent that I even came across it in the introduction to Neil MacGregor's book completing his recent podcast series corresponding to the 'Germany: Memories of a Nation' exhibition at the British Museum. MacGregor, p. xxxix.

One thing that nearly every single interview between Chipperfield and the German press has in common is the question about Berlin's architectural scene and the importance of public debate surrounding major cultural projects. For example (the question is in italics):

> *Haubrich: In Berlin wurden Sie kritisiert, in London war es Ihr Kollege Richard Rogers, der im Stadtteil Chelsea eine große Wohnanlage neben ein Barockdenkmal setzen wollte. Bewirken solche öffentlichen Debatten nicht auch etwas Gutes für die Architektur?*
> Chipperfield: Im Londoner Fall kann ich nichts Gutes erkennen, Rogers hatte alle Voraussetzungen erfüllt, und dann tauchte Prinz Charles auf. Es stimmt allerdings, dass die Londoner Stadtplanung nicht besonders kohärent ist, es gibt keinen Masterplan, obwohl so viel investiert wird. Eine Diskussion findet nicht statt. Ganz anders Berlin: Hier wird kaum noch gebaut, aber die Diskussion über die Gestalt der Stadt ist groß, und alle nehmen daran teil. Das Gute ist: Wenn die Investoren da sind, gibt es einen Rahmenplan.[302]

Chipperfield is portrayed as an Englishman who is more appreciated abroad than he is at home, and who prefers German memory culture/architecture processes and debates to the parallel processes going on in his homeland.[303] This exchange best expresses an undercurrent that is present throughout all the interviews and many of the articles. Besides their remarkably amusing attempts at characterizing Chipperfield as an outsider/insider *enfant terrible*, as well as describing the British architectural scene/museum world in both comical and bleak terms, reading between the lines of some of these interviews conjures images of a nation aware of its special fate (to remember its own misdeeds) and its special ability to engage with this process in a superior manner.

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[302] David Chipperfield, 'In Interview with Rainer Haubrich', *Die Welt*, 16 October 2009', in *Pressespiegel Neues Museum Press Overview*, 2 vols, ed. by David Chipperfield Architects, (Berlin: David Chipperfield Architects, 2009), II, pp. 54-59 (p. 55). Please note that I will be citing many articles from this two volume collection and will use an abridged version of the publication information to avoid cluttering the footnotes. Complete references for each article cited may be found in the bibliography. For another example see Christina Tilmann, 'Wir sind alle romantisch: Interview David Chipperfield und Christina Tilmann', *Tagesspiegel*, 16 October 2009, in *Pressespiegel*, ed. by David Chipperfield Architects, II, pp. 72-79.

[303] Poschardt's review provides an illustration: 'Chipperfield wurde 1953 in London geboren, verstanden jedoch wird er vor allem im Ausland'. Ulf Poschardt, 'Narben als Ornament', *Welt am Sonntag*, 1 March 2009, in *Pressespiegel*, ed. by David Chipperfield Architects, II, pp. 58-71 (p. 59).

The architect is portrayed in near Messianic terms – as the one who will be able to redeem those in the present from the difficult past. Chipperfield is described as having 'hellblau leuchtenden Augen',[304] a supportive wife who speaks 'im besten Hochdeutsch',[305] 'angelsächsischen Pragmatismus',[306] as well as with what is an apparently English trait of maintaining privacy.[307] To make him seem even more irresistible, he is also praised for having a *soupçon* of 'Germanness': 'Präzise und analytisch, wie es die Deutschen gern wären, vermeidet er Oberflächlichkeit'.[308] All of this seems intended to evoke the image of an unassuming-almost-German-Anglo-Saxon-superhero. Ulf Poschardt even refers to him as the 'Preuße aus London'.[309]

The Messianism comes across in three ways: first, he is the second coming of the British architectural genius who solves Berlin's memory architecture (his mentor Foster was the first).[310] Second, he has inherited the mantle of museum 'mastermind' from Gehry (Gehry's *Bilbao effect* has been usurped by Chipperfield's *Understatement* and *Classical Modernism*; or as critic Sandra Hofmeister writes in the March 2009 edition of *Baumeister*, the Gehry-Effekt has been replaced by *Chipperfieldismus*, calling this a

[304] Poschardt, 'Narben als Ornament', in *Pressespiegel*, ed. by David Chipperfield Architects, II, p. 59.
[305] Poschardt, 'Narben als Ornament', in *Pressespiegel*, ed. by David Chipperfield Architects, II, p. 59.
[306] Poschardt, 'Narben als Ornament', in *Pressespiegel*, ed. by David Chipperfield Architects, II, p. 59.
[307] Nikolaus Bernau, 'Der geübte Streiter', *Berliner Zeitung,* 27 February 2009, in *Pressespiegel*, ed. by David Chipperfield Architects, I, pp. 28-32.
[308] Poschardt, 'Narben als Ornament,' in *Pressespiegel,* ed. by David Chipperfield Architects, II, p. 59.
[309] Poschardt, 'Narben als Ornament,' in *Pressespiegel*, ed. by David Chipperfield Architects, II, p. 61.
[310] For a comparison with Foster see Barzeko's review: 'Es ist gleich weit entfernt vom Martin Gropius-Bau, der 1983 entgegen ursprünglichen Plänen seine Auferstehung als Kopie wilhelminischer Opulenz erlebte, wie vom Reichstag, wo Norman Foster Hightech gegen rudimentierte Historie setzte'. Dieter Bartetzko, 'Die Schrift an der Wand', *Frankfurter Allgemeine*, 2 March 2009, in *Pressespiegel*, I, ed. by David Chipperfield Architects, pp. 72-77 (p. 75). For similar comments see Stephan Speicher, 'Ein Palast für die schönste Berlinerin', *Basler Zeitung online*, 19 October 2009, in *Pressespiegel*, II, ed. by David Chipperfield Architects, pp. 122-127 (p. 123). It should also be noted that Foster is certainly one of Berlin's *Baumeister*, having built the beloved dome over the *Reichstag Gebäude* and the 'Berlin Brain' library at the Freie Universität.

'Paradigmenwechsel in der Museumsarchitektur'[311]). Though clearly hard to define this change, perhaps one way of characterizing it is from sweeping 'starchitecture', where the signature and stamp of the architect is always visible, to an architecture of context, where the signature of the architect resides in the material and gentle way in which the structure harmonizes with its natural and built contexts. Hofmeister's article,'Gehry-Effekt und Chipperfieldismus', would seem to concur. On the one hand we have an 'effect' and on the other we have a substantiated process.[312] Third, he is also thought to be a museum 'master planner', one who has risen from the impossible abyss of those who have previously failed to effectively unite all those involved on Berlin's *Museumsinsel* under one collective strategy.[313]

In hindsight, it is not so surprising that the city was looking for an architect/Messiah figure; no other major city is so defined by specific architects. The point here is that while the cult of the (st)architect is relatively recent in many places, it has been prevalent in Berlin for quite some time. We can trace this phenomenon to the time of Schinkel, Stüler, and Messel, through Gropius and Speer, ultimately arriving at Foster and Chipperfield (who is currently working on several projects in Berlin, including the *James-Simon-Galerie/ Neue Eingangsgebäude*, and the renovations of Mies van der Rohe's *Neue Nationalgalerie*).

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[311] Sandra Hofmeister, 'Gehry-Effekt und Chipperfieldismus', *Baumeister*, Vol. 3 (2009), in *Pressespiegel*, ed. by David Chipperfield Architects, I, pp. 146-151 (p. 147). See also: Kaye Geipel, 'Die Aura des Authentischen', *Bauwelt*, 13 September 2009, in *Pressespiegel*, ed. by David Chipperfield Architects, I, pp. 96-105 (p. 97); and Ira Mazzoni, 'Sensationelle Expedition ins Museale Zeitalter', *Deutsche Bauzeitung*, April 2009, in *Pressespiegel*, ed. by David Chipperfield Architects, I, pp. 138-145 (p. 139).

[312] Ward provides a useful and fascinating typology of Berlin's 'self-aggrandizing staging […] by means of architectural exhibitions'. Janet Ward, *Post-Wall Berlin: Borders, Space, and Identity* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p. 329. She demonstrates that using architecture to create images of the city as it wishes to be (rather than as it is) has a long tradition, particularly in twentieth-century Berlin.

[313] See for example: Bernau, 'Der geübte Streiter', in *Pressespiegel*, ed. by David Chipperfield Architects, I, p. 27.

So has the Messiah come? Does the current *Masterplan Museumsinsel* redeem the city and its institutions from the sins of the twentieth century? Flippancy aside, the important question here is: what does the instinct that longs for such redemption express?

Adulation for Chipperfield and the *Neues Museum* notwithstanding, the press has been quite mixed on the *Masterplan* itself. Much of this focuses on concern for the *Kulturforum*, the collection of museums and cultural buildings near Potsdamer Platz whose role and function in the newly re-centralised museum scene has yet to be determined. Propositions for how the space is to be used usually include displaying more modern works as the older pieces from the *Gemäldegalerie* are to be re-located to the new Bode Museum annex. Bernhard Schulz comments on this in the *Tagesspiegel*:

> Es gibt keine Ideallösung für die Verteilung und Unterbringung der Staatlichen Museen. Die wechselvolle Geschichte Berlins hat ein organisches Wachstum, wie es Institutionen wie dem Pariser Louvre oder dem British Museum in London vergönnt war, be- oder verhindert. Die Lösung liegt eher nicht in der gewaltsamen Erweiterung der Museumsinsel in den umgebenden Stadtraum hinein. Sie liegt, und das beflügelt die Gerüchte über den Ausgang der Machbarkeitsstudie, eher im kraftvollen Umgang mit dem vorhandenen Potenzial – an der Potsdamer Straße. Seinerzeit, als Berlin geteilt war und es großen Mutes bedurfte, das Kulturforum zu planen, hieß es mit Stolz und Trotz die "zweite Museumsinsel".[314]

The *Masterplan* here is portrayed as monolithic and steamrolling. It deprives other neighbourhoods of their cultural institutions (perhaps this is most evident in the case of the Dahlem museums being closed and their collections ultimately moving to the *Humboldtforum*). Centralising cultural resources is not without its drawbacks –

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[314] Bernhard Schulz, 'Hoffnung für das Berliner Kulturforum: Ein neues Haus für die Kunst der Moderne', *Tagesspiegel*, 8 August 2013, < http://www.tagesspiegel.de/kultur/hoffnung-fuer-das-berliner-kulturforum-ein-neues-haus-fuer-die-kunst-der-moderne/8614332.html> [accessed 8 August 2013]. See also: Rolf Lautenschläger, 'Neues Museum der Moderne, Berlins Anti-Masterplan', *TAZ,* 22 August 2013, <http://www.taz.de/1/archiv/digitaz/artikel/ ?ressort=ku&dig=2013%2F08%2F22%2Fa0107&cHash=815e28a9fe 1290121f16c18a22c8fc90> [accessed 22 August 2013]; and Nikolaus Bernau, 'Kulturforum Zumindest ein Direktor freut sich', *Berliner Zeitung*, 21 August 2013, <http://www.berliner-zeitung.de/kultur/kulturforum-zumindest-ein-direktor-freut-sich,10809150,24078908.html> [accessed 22 August 2013].

namely draining culture from the periphery. The re-ordering of the collections is portrayed here as a violent act, 'gewaltsamen', an effort to sweep away part of the cultural memory of the second half of the twentieth century.

The press has also commented on the overly simplistic linearity of the ambitious project: everything old on the *Museumsinsel* and everything newer elsewhere (in the *Kulturforum* but also in the other many contemporary museums and galleries scattered throughout the city). Nicola Kuhn's article articulates point:

> Der geplante Umzug der Gemäldegalerie vom Kulturforum an die Museumsinsel hat zu scharfen Auseinandersetzungen geführt zwischen den Initiatoren bei der Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz und ihren Kritikern, etwa dem Verband deutscher Kunsthistoriker, der eine geharnischte Petition ins Netz gestellt hatte [...] Denn wenn der Umzug der Gemäldegalerie zur Museumsinsel tatsächlich kommt, muss nicht nur geklärt sein, wie sich die Bestände zwischen Bodemuseum und Neubau verteilen, ob nach Epochen oder Regionen getrennt wie gegenwärtig am Kulturforum, sondern zugleich, ob die Gattungen wieder fusionieren, wie es in den Museen bis zur Aufklärung Praxis war. Kunstgeschichte erzählt sich in Schlaufen. Die immer wiederkehrende Frage lautet: Wie wollen wir sehen? Wozu sollen unsere Museen taugen? Dass die Einladenden in der schönen Halle vermintes Gebiet betraten, war vorauszusehen [...] Genau darum aber geht es: Welche Erzählung soll vorgetragen werden? Die der Menschheitsgeschichte von den Hochkulturen der Antike bis zur Kunst des 19. Jahrhunderts, als Narrativ der Museumsinsel?[315]

The questions posed in the article above expose some of the major troubling undercurrents of the *Masterplan*: is it too linear? Is it too totalizing? What image of contemporary Berlin does it present to locals and visitors alike? While it doesn't seem to be portraying Germany as a pinnacle of world culture (as some of the earlier master plans and certainly, as will become clear in Chapter 4, the *Neues Museum*'s original framing of its collection implied), it does portray the city as a world cultural capital. This image will be examined in greater detail in the next section.

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[315] Nicola Kuhn, 'Berliner Museumsstreit: Die Musen und die Mitmischer', *Tagesspiegel*, 28 February 2013, <http://www.tagesspiegel.de/kultur/berliner-museumsstreit-die-musen-und-die-mitmischer/7858786.html> [accessed 28 February 2013].

The press response – both in its longing for deliverance (as conveyed by the enthusiastic response to Chipperfield) and some of its distaste for what has been delivered (the *Masterplan*) – conveys a sense of betrayal, or rather missed opportunity. It is indeed a special opportunity to work with the world-class collections and the historic buildings themselves. Given the delay in being able to reunite the collection due to the war and prolonged separation, and the administrative, financial, and emotional difficulties inherent in reunification, the *Masterplan Museumsinsel* offered the SMB/SPK and the city authorities a chance to really make a contemporary statement regarding the actuality of the ancient and recent past. The doubts expressed in the press and the public make one question whether this opportunity has in fact been squandered. Regardless of whether it has or has not, the choices that were made give interesting and fleeting glimpses at some of the underpinnings of contemporary Berlin cultural memory.

B) The Stories We Tell Ourselves and Others: Branding

This section will look a bit closer at some of the stories being told about the *Masterplan Museumsinsel*. I will look at three specific perspectives on the stories: academics who study urban marketing and city branding, Polyform Berlin (the *Museumsinsel*'s official branding service), and official essays published by the SMB/SPK. All of these perspectives emphasise the return to prominence of the historical *Mitte*, and though none of them specifically use this word, it is possible to read a return to the monolithic vision found in the early sketches of the *Masterplan* between their lines. We will see that the *discors* seems to have been dropped as all signs point towards forcing *concordia* at all costs.

Colomb and Ward analyse the changing image of the city, most specifically how it has manufactured its image since re-unification as a product to be consumed by locals, visitors, and potential investors. Colomb describes these images as urban 'meta-narratives'.[316] Ward describes Berlin's architectural exhibitions and projects as a 'virtual metropolis [and] a substitute for perceived deficiencies, past and present'.[317] Architectural projects like the *Masterplan Museumsinsel* are part of creating these meta-narratives. In her essay on the *Museumsinsel* in a book called *Transnationalism and the German City* (co-edited by Ward), Graves writes that:

> Berlin's Museum Island (Museumsinsel) may be one of the prime examples of [the manufacturing images] trend. It is and has been a site of negotiations between the actual and imagined past, the political and economic restrictions of the present, and imagined and hoped for futures.[318]

For Graves, the *Masterplan*'s narrative is a prime example of a manufactured image.

Both Colomb and Ward cite the *Museumsinsel* project as among the more important of post-re-unification Berlin, with Colomb writing:

> In the 1990s the focus was primarily on the promotion of cultural consumptions. Public investments were made to upgrade the city's cultural infrastructure, most notably via the long-term project for the gradual redesign of the Museum Island […] [The] cultural strengths of the city were represented through images of traditional symbols of mainstream culture.[319]

Ward writes:

> Berlin's most significant cultural *grand project* is the long-term re-conceptualization of the Museum Island in Mitte […] Not surprisingly, making the Museumsinsel whole again in terms of its structures and art holdings holds tremendous significance for the post-Wall city, […] It was by means of a national art culture that the nineteenth-century Prussian capital wished to both conceptually ground and pragmatically market itself.[320]

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[316] Colomb, p. 1.
[317] Ward, *Post-Wall Berlin*, p. 329.
[318] Graves, p. 223.
[319] Colomb, p. 229.
[320] Ward, *Post-Wall Berlin*, p. 335.

According to these two city branding experts, it would seem as though the re-establishment of the historical cultural centre of the city and the reunification of the collections mirror the country's overall reunification project. Unity and wholeness are also what former SMB director Schuster wrote about when appropriating and transforming the various histories of the *Museumsinsel* into a coherent and relevant narrative based on the principle of *concordia discors*.

Current city branders like Polyform Berlin and the current leadership of the SPK (especially those responsible for the work on the *Humboldtforum*), however, use the past in a way that differs from Schuster's use in the early 2000s. Gone is the idea of *concordia discors* – more specifically, the idea of *discors*. Replacing it is a kind of manifest destiny, where the ancient past is yoked to a grandiose vision of the future.

The *Masterplan* is no longer just about the five museums. It is about 'the heart of Berlin'[321] and it involves gardens, courtyards, a guiding system, infrastructure, and relationships with other institutions in the centre (museums, shops, cultural institutions, and educational institutions), 'making the entire area a vibrant place for the transfer of knowledge and culture'.[322] It is not surprising then that this sentence has the ring of *newspeak* about it, as the 'transfer of knowledge and culture' is one of the main products the city is attempting to sell (mostly to visitors and investors). We can also note the use of the word 'transfer'. We have come a long way from the kind of *Bildung* facilitated by the encountering art and heritage material: to transfer and to facilitate are two utterly different methodological approaches to cultural heritage.

[321] 'In the Heart of Berlin: Interactions and Relations' is the title of the third part of the exhibition publication for the Polyform-organised *Museumsinsel* exhibition. Polyform Berlin, *Museumsinsel Berlin*, p. 27.
[322] Polyform, *Museumsinsel Berlin,* p. 29.

The two images below come from the printed material of an exhibition called '*Museumsinsel:* Keeping the Past Facing the Future' organized by Polyform Berlin and aimed at an international audience (the exhibition toured the world via various German institutions like the Goethe Institute). The first is the cover and the second is a schema for the exhibition itself – a series of concentric circles that emanate from the museums themselves (Polyform designates this the 'core') through to other institutions/installations (designated as 'concrete measures'), to the less tangible (designated as 'interactions').

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Images: © Polyform Berlin

Polyform's printed material reads as follows:

> Die Museumsinsel ist ein geistiges Zentrum für Bildung und Urbanität und verbindet als zentraler Raum einmalig Sammlung und Architektur. In der Mitte Berlins weist das Universalmuseum einen unvergleichlich vollständigen Gang durch die Kulturgeschichte des Mittelmeerraumes. Die Inselstadt empfängt in ihrer Schönheit und Erhabenheit den Besucher an einem Ort des noblen Umgangs mit Kunst, Kultur und Wissenschaft. Der Museumsbesucher unternimmt eine Zeitreise durch die Tempelanlage, in der herausragende Kunstwerke aufgehoben sind. [...] Wer hierher kommt, erlebt einen farbenprächtige und vielschichtige Museumsinszenierung, die nie die Orientierung verliert, alle Sinne anregt und unvergesslich bleibt. Im Angesicht des Gesamtkunstwerkes, beim Lesen in der unerschöpflichen "Enzyklopädie der Weltkultur" findet der humanistische und aufklärende Ansatz der Museumsgründer seine vorläufige Vollendung.[323]

[323] Polyform Berlin, *Erscheinungsbild Museumsinsel Berlin: Leit-und Informationssystem Ergebnisprotokoll Bundesamt für Bauwesen und Raumordnung* (Berlin: Druck Repro Berlin, 2002), no page number.

References to 'Enzyklopädie der Weltkultur', 'Universalmuseum', and 'Bildung' ensure that the meaning of the brand is clear: Berlin's *Museumsinsel* is where one goes to have a total experience of world history and culture. This would have struck those involved in the early years of the *Masterplan* as somewhat troubling. The undercurrents here are very much those of a nineteenth-century conception of the museum, as will be explored in Chapter 4's examination of the *Neues Museum*'s original framing strategies, one with a dominating grand narrative (or perhaps '*grand project*' to borrow Ward's choice of words).

This is not the discordant harmony Schuster and those originally responsible for the *Masterplan Museumsinsel* had in mind.[324] Clearly something has shifted between the original outlining of the plan and its current iteration. Perhaps it is simply that in the beginning it was more a plan to work through historical material (both of the buildings and the original plans for the *Museumsinsel*), and, as Colomb argues, Berlin was at that time not yet established as a stable 'global metropolis', 'European city', and 'German capital'.[325] This would change and the famous phrase, *Berlin ist arm, aber sexy*, uttered in 2004 by Berlin's mayor Klaus Wowereit, would herald an era of Berlin as a bohemian capital. With more stability comes more financial resources, and while still somewhat poor, Berlin has been able to establish itself among the top-tier cities for culture. This change is evident in the new phases of the *Masterplan*, as it is no longer simply a museum story, it is also about the realities of capitalism and the global market.

[324] See Dietrich Wildung, 'Neue Wege durch alte Kulturen', in *Masterplan Museumsinsel Berlin: Ein europäisches Projekt*, ed. by Lepik, p. 63.
[325] See Colomb, pp. 71-88.

A second shift in the tone of the plan pertains to the *Stadtschloss/Humboldtforum* part of the *Museumsinsel* project. We see this in remarks of commentators such as Manfred Rettig, chairman of the *Berliner Schloss-Humboldtforum* foundation:

> A new building composed of forward-looking and historically related concepts – The dialectics of future and past, the inevitably never-ending preoccupation of Germans with their history and with their future role, all this is mirrored in this historic new building with its provocative contrast of partly historically related, partly contemporary architecture for its future-oriented programme […] But in such a new building project, one directed at the future issues of globalisation and dialogue between the world's cultures, we Germans in particular are charged with always incorporating the perspective of the past as well.[326]

Echoed here we find the idea that Germany has a particular responsibility when it comes to thinking about the past and finding ethical practices to deal with it that we found when the interviewers kept baiting Chipperfield to proclaim his allegiance to Berlin and its public discourse. The flagrant irony here is that the very building about which Rettig is speaking will sit on a contested site – the former home of the GDR *Palast der Republik*, which was previously the site of the original *Hohenzollern Stadtschloss*. The *Palast* was demolished between 2006-2008 under the pretext of its harbouring asbestos in order to make way for the *Stadtschloss*' re-constructed façades and contemporary interior. Dissolved might be a better word than demolished, as little by little the significant building faded away (as did that which it symbolised) until it was gone, or at least until it became invisible, thus erasing one of the most important reminders of the GDR from the centre of the city. Ward writes that this newly re-founded *Mitte* concept serves as a '[…] *Mitte* for the whole nation, enacting thereby a succinct elision of the Wall's former role as the literal "middle" of Berlin'.[327]

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[326] Manfred Rettig, 'The Berliner Schloss Turned into the Humboldt Forum: The Perspective of the Client', in *Museum Island Berlin*, ed. by Eissenhauer, Bähr, and Rochau-Shalem, pp. 404-411 (p. 404).
[327] Ward, *Post-wall Berlin*, p. 335.

While the *Masterplan Museumsinsel* claims to tell a universal and total story, 'over 6000 years of human history are presented in a temple city of art and culture',[328] clearly something has been left out; something is always left behind. In Berlin's *Mitte* this is the time of the East-West division, an elision that should call to mind the unofficial history of the Jewish Museum as it was portrayed in Chapter 2. The object-fetish and largely sanitizing *DDR Museum* of daily life, the monolithic forthcoming *Einheitsdenkmal*, the (oddly neutered due to its charming kitsch-value) *Fernsehturm*, and the ghosts of a building are the main ambassadors of the GDR in the city centre.

Another example of the way the *Stadtschloss/Humboldtforum* project marks a shift from a model of *concordia discors* to one of awkward *concordia* can be found in an essay by Hermann Parzinger, current president of the SPK. He writes:

> And only in Berlin can such an impressive as well as obvious site for the world's cultures be created with the Museum Island and the Humboldt Forum, because here – as a consequence of the dialectics of a fateful history – the space necessary for such a forum is available in the heart of the cosmopolitan city. But even more important is that it enables us to demonstrate our country's psychological readiness not to design the geographic heart of our capital in a self-centred manner but rather to base it on curiosity and open-mindedness. At the same time, this site can also strengthen the city's self-assurance in a globally networked world […] bring[ing] arts and cultures of Asia, Africa, the Americas, Australia, and Oceania to the centre of Berlin and creat[ing] a central location for non-European cultures […][329]

Again we can note the 'special destiny' undercurrent in 'only in Berlin', 'dialectics of fateful history', 'our country's psychological readiness', and 'our capital'. Not only do Parzinger's remarks attempt to cover gaping ellipses, they also appear to espouse a kind of proto-colonial instinct. The impression here is that the SPK prides itself on deigning to

[328] Polyform, *Museumsinsel Berlin*, p. 17. Graves gives a sceptical reading of this grandiose vision and describes 'the notion that visitors might "pocket" or even really "experience" […] canalized history by strolling down the promenade results, at the very least, in a disturbing simplification of history's complexity[…]' p. 227.

[329] Hermann Parzinger, 'Rethinking Berlin's Centre from the Perspective of Culture: The Humboldt Forum in the Berliner Schloss', in *Museum Island Berlin*, ed. by Eissenhauer, Bähr, and Rochau-Shalem, pp. 392-404 (p. 393).

raise non-European culture alongside European culture, thus implying that there was (should/could be?) a hierarchy to begin with.

Master plans not only leave something out and behind, but they also construct something: they manufacture images using buildings, branding, and publications in order to create an identity to sell both to those who are being defined, and market to those who might be interested in investing. In this case, it re-constructs various nineteenth-century images and impulses. Contrary to Parzinger's remarks, the *Humboldtforum/Stadtschloss* project comes across as entirely 'self-centred' – raising façades of old Prussian splendour over a contested site.

Conclusion:

Berlin's *Museumsinsel* has always occupied a space between expectations/envisioning and reality. In her essay on the *Museumsinsel*, Graves writes that 'despite all attempts (whether conscious or otherwise) to rewrite, overwrite, or conceal it, the history of Berlin's Museum Island will have an almost uncanny tendency to return'.[330] Graves' comments signal a deeply felt impulse to curate our own image by appropriating, transforming, interpreting (and sometimes 'rewriting') history. My examination of the *Museumsinsel* has looked at several models of this kind of curation – from Schinkel's transformation of ancient forms to Schuster's telling and re-telling of the history of the island. It has also examined what happens when curating an image becomes less about constructing (or uncovering) and establishing a grounded historical consciousness and more about selling it.

[330] Graves, p. 233.

When the *Masterplan Museumsinsel* focused mostly on working through and with the island's five historical structures, *concordia discors* was possible. However, when the *Masterplan* grew beyond the island, its *arkhē* seemed to dissipate. While it is difficult at this time (and not within the scope of this particular study) to ascertain why this might be the case, suffice to say it is possible that there is a difference between the visions and missions of the SMB and the SPK (though the SMB is one of the institutions held under the overall auspices of the SPK). The museum instinct is to find ways to preserve and present objects from the past in a way that is relevant and contemporary. Though this is just a hypothesis at this point in time, the Prussian Cultural Heritage's instinct could possibly be to safeguard and promote a unified and unifying national image under traditional symbols of power and strength. These two instincts may very well be at odds, even if they are driven by similar (or at least related) impulses.

In any case, the *Masterplan Museumsinsel* does mark a shift in Berlin's cultural memory from one that in the 1990s/early 2000s was largely absorbed with thinking about voids and brokenness to one that embodies a return to the idea of wholeness, as well as a return to and re-appropriation of the historical centre. This shift is neither positive nor negative, it is simply an expression of the changing socio-cultural dynamics. Why the image of wholeness and connecting the twentieth century to longer narratives of history have become dominant images is still unanswerable (at least with the tools deployed in this study), though I have hypothesized in this chapter that it relates both to the longer-term effects of German reunification as well as the realities of globalised capitalism. The question why the nineteenth century and why Prussia, however, besides that these might

be easy images to sell, strike me as more interesting questions – ones that, unfortunately, sit outside the scope of this project.

It is important to realise that the image of wholeness itself can signify more than the manufactured glossy images put together by Polyform or the troubling totalizing language of those involved with the *Humboldtforum*. The early years of the *Masterplan* really did embody the idea of a wholeness that was non-totalizing – one that received its strength from the way its conflicting parts hung together. This image seems lost in the grand vision currently being peddled, thus forcing the question whether or not it is ever possible to extrapolate the intimate logic of a specific site, magnify it, and overlay it on another, much vaster context without completely damaging its intricate and specific nature.

Nevertheless, we must not forget that this logic is still there at the core of the *Museumsinsel* project. It is the logic of *concordia discors*, the ethical non-totalizing whole that is of interest to this study and to the establishment of a cultural memory theory and praxis that offers an alternative to the previously dominant models emphasizing trauma, prosthetics, and pre-determined empathetic performances. So while the *Masterplan Museumsinsel* no longer embodies this ethical model of wholeness, it may still be found in the *Neues Museum*, the very heart of the *Masterplan*. Furthermore, the *Neues Museum* also expresses a highly rigorous approach to how to use and transform the past in order establish an ethical and contemporary take on history. Part III of this dissertation will examine the *Neues Museum* and will attempt to elaborate this alternative model of cultural memory.

PART III: The *Neues Museum* Hypothesis

The previous chapters showed the waning surefootedness of a cultural memory model whose framing narratives focused largely on trauma, brokenness, voids, and the Holocaust (as evidenced by the first stirrings of criticism levied against the Jewish Museum) and the waxing interest (in Berlin) in developing a cultural memory model predicated on longer narratives of wholeness and of history (as evidenced by the *Masterplan Museumsinsel*). It seems our experience of history contains both fragments and wholeness, breaking apart and putting back together. These chapters attempt to develop and understand this new expression of cultural memory; the one whose framing narratives do not ignore the damage the twentieth century has done to both physical spaces and to a metaphysical belief in the possibility of progress for humanity, but also seek some form of (temporary) reconciliation.

Is there a way of telling that story in the shared space of a museum? And how would these stories look? Is it possible to develop and convey an ethical historical consciousness that expresses both brokenness and wholeness? I believe so, and furthermore, I believe that it would be a natural evolution for both cultural memory theory and praxis. The *Neues Museum* may be read as simultaneously broken and whole, and I argue that this presents us with an ethical, contemporary way of thinking about history.

The symbol that most succinctly conveys the brokenness and wholeness of the museum are its bullet hole constellations:

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Images: © SMB, photos: Kathryn Brechtel, Florian Duijsens (x2), Rebecca Clare Dolgoy

While these bullet hole constellations read as mythological in that they offer symbolic grounding in history, a kind of origin story, and they respond to the need to create some kind of meaning. Unlike traditional mythology, where heroic faces and magical animals line the night sky with permanence and certitude, these earthbound constellations instead help us pose a series of questions. Unlike traditional constellations, we are the ones who draw the metaphorical lines between the fragments by our engagement with them. How these bullet hole constellations are so emblematic of the cultural memory being practiced in and facilitated by the *Neues Museum* is due to the impetus to uncover meaning in our historical situation. We use these bullet holes as we cultivate our worldview – they give us a new way of seeing, a new sensitivity to the presence of the past in our daily lives: while in the *Neues Museum* the past has left its marks in the stone, this is not to say that other less obviously marked spaces have been untouched. We also appropriate and transform these bullet holes, giving them new context in the contemporary city.

The *Neues Museum*'s bullet holes offer a temporary but effective reconciliation between brokenness and wholeness: a *trompe-l'oeil* or ambiguous image like Wittgenstein's *Kaninchen und Ente*,[331] where what is lost and what is saved are perceived if not simultaneously, then by oscillating between them. Wittgenstein's example

[331] See Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. by G.E.M Anscombe et al. (Chichester, West Sussex, UK: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2009), p 204.

distinguishes between 'stetigen Sehen' and 'Aufleuchten', as well as between seeing 'als' and seeing 'dass'.[332] 'Aufleuchten' and 'als' evoke a subjective and dynamic way of seeing, one emphasizing the experience of perception rather than any pretence to objectivity and truth. Sometimes one sees a duck, sometimes a rabbit. The reason Wittgenstein's philosophical experiment is relevant to the model of cultural memory I develop in these chapters is because, rather than aiming at finding objective historical truth, it thrives on the importance of perception and ambiguous images. It also emphasises dynamic constellations of meaning gleaned and put together from experiencing material. Without the one perceiving and engaging with the images, there would be no ambiguity at all, there would also be no constellations. Recalling my discussion of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology from Chapter 1.III, without the individual experiencing and ultimately narrating it, there would be no time and no meaning.

Bullet holes are neither voids nor are they contrived. Instead they constitute some of the fragmentary material available to the visitors as they constellate meaningful experiences in the museum. Like with the visitor, the museum architects and curators work with fragmentary material in order to constitute a functioning (albeit provisional) whole. Using, appropriating, and transforming, my main cultural memory hypothesis, is also the main cultural memory hypothesis of the *Neues Museum*. How does the museum 'do history' and how to 'be historical' in the museum? What are its framing narratives? What does this methodology and do these narratives imply for the larger cultural memory critical context? These will be the main questions addressed throughout the remainder of this dissertation.

[332] See Wittgenstein, pp. 204-206.

In the next two chapters, the *Neues Museum* will be read as emblematic of two major shifts in the theory and praxis of cultural memory: the first is in the way history is expressed in museum spaces (from ersatz engagement to the phenomenological museum), the second can be found in the kinds of narratives of history that are being expressed (from narratives trapped in the trauma of the twentieth century to those that clearly include it in longer narratives of history). The narrative tropes threading through this new cultural memory theory and praxis include: the relationship between fragments and the whole, ruins, and the tale of *homo faber* (the one who makes and uses). After looking at the 'how' and 'what' of the museum, I will finally be able to conclude by situating it in the context of existing and developing discourse in cultural memory.

By offering a more diachronically focused reading, looking at the metamorphosis of certain images throughout the museum's history, the aim of this part of my dissertation is to excavate a twenty-first century theory and praxis of cultural memory emphasizing the use, appropriation, and transformation of heritage material. It aims to show that 'how we do history' can be just as much about wonderment as it is about the exploitation of suffering staged to solicit performances of empathy.

My reading makes use of, but does not reiterate, the excellent critical material on the early years of the museum (Maaz,[333] Savoy,[334] van Wezel,[335] Dorgeloh,[336] and

[333] Bernhard Maaz is an art historian as well as the deputy directory of the *Nationalgalerie* in Berlin. He has written extensively on the museum's original decorations and architecture. See for example his essay 'Architecture, Décor, History of Ideas', in *The Neues Museum Berlin: Conserving, Restoring, Rebuilding within the World Heritage* ed. by Ziesemer and others, pp. 22-30. He also wrote an essay on a similar subject, 'Eine Kulturgeschichte in Bildern: Wilhelm von Kaulbachs Wandgemälde', in *Neues Museum: Architektur Sammlung Geschichte*, ed. by Elke Blauert and Astrid Bähr, (Berlin: Nicolai Verlag, 2010), pp. 132-161. Please note that I will be citing several essays from this collection and will use an abridged version of the publication information to avoid cluttering the footnotes. Complete references for each essay cited may be found in the bibliography.

Petras[337] to give but several examples), as well as the immense amount of caring, detailed information on the restoration/re-think I garnered both in the museum bookshops put together by the SMB (two very detailed books of essays on the museum's restoration, a book of essays with contributions from architects/curators/art historians/cultural critics),[338] as well as material accumulated in conversation with various architects and directors throughout the research process. The detailed books, filled with minutiae of the step-by-step restoration/building process, provides room for all of the major parties involved – from the lead architects and curators, to the experts who re-worked the mosaic flooring and designed the heating/cooling system – to have their say. The degree to which the process of renovation itself was so highly documented attests to the importance of process to the *Neues Museum*, and to its inseparability from the final product. Most of these sources, at least the contemporary sources, are available in both English and German thus demonstrating how the project is aimed not only at Berliners and Germans but to a wider international public.

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[334] Bénédicte Savoy researches Berlin museums from several angles, but has most recently focused on the responses of visitors. See Bénédicte Savoy and Philippa Sissis, eds, *Die Berliner Museumsinsel: Impressionen Internationaler Besucher (1830-1990): Eine Anthologie* (Köln: Böhlau Verlag, 2013).
[335] Elsa van Wezel has written extensively on the history of Berlin Museums. For two examples, see: 'Die Konzeptionen des Alten und Neuen Museums zu Berlin und das sich wandelnde historische Bewusstsein', *Jahrbuch der Berliner Museen*, vol 43 (Berlin: SMB, Preußischer Kulturbesitz, 2001); she also co-edited a book with Ellinoor Bergvelt, and others, eds, *Museale Spezialisierung und Nationalisierung ab 1839: Das Neue Museum in Berlin im internationalen Kontext* (Berlin: G+H Verlag, 2011).
[336] Hartmut Dorgeloh is an art historian and archaeologist. He is also the General Director of the *Stiftung Preußischer Schlösser und Gärten Berlin-Brandenburg*. He was very active in the *Institut für Denkmalpflege der DDR* and wrote extensively on the *Neues Museum*. See for example Hartmut Dorgeloh, 'Ort und Ordnung der Weltkunst', in *Neues Museum: Architektur Sammlung Geschichte*, ed. by Blauert and Bähr, pp. 66-75.
[337] Renate Petras wrote about the *Museumsinsel* during the GDR/FRG. Her book *Die Bauten der Berliner Museumsinsel* (1987) was an important study. See note 249.
[338] These examples include: *Neues Museum: Architektur Sammlung Geschichte*, ed. by Blauert and Bähr; *The Neues Museum Berlin: Conserving, Restoring, Rebuilding within the World Heritage*, ed. by Ziesemer and others; and *Neues Museum Berlin*, ed. by Rik Nys and Martin Reichert (Cologne: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 2009). Please note that I will be citing several essays from this collection and will use an abridged version of the publication information to avoid cluttering the footnotes. Complete references for each essay cited may be found in the bibliography.

Here we may note a significant difference from the critical material available on the Jewish Museum. For the Jewish Museum, Libeskind's theoretical sources and inspiration adorn the building and appear in every significant publication on the museum or interview with the architect. For the *Neues Museum* it is the material, process of restoration/re-think, and building itself that is explored in the essays. Very little is said about Chipperfield's inspirations; it is not necessary to know the philosophical sources and theoretical justification for the architectural interventions. The materiality and history of the building guided the architecture. In fact, when asking Wildung about the philosophical underpinnings of the building he informed me that it was my job to find them – reception here clearly trumps artistic intention, or at least is equally important in terms of establishing the meaning of the building. Reception is an important aspect of my diachronic reading of the museum and Assmann's *mnemohistory* continues to serve as a relevant way of thinking about cultural memory.

There is a lot of material on both the historical and contemporary *Neues Museum* and re-telling this story is not within my purview. Instead, my critical approach here will follow the lead of the creators/designers, which was phenomenological in nature (as will be outlined in Chapter 4). Drawing from images, theoretical texts, texts written by the various people involved, and press clippings, Part III of this dissertation, will be divided into two chapters: The first (Chapter 4) looks at the methods employed in creating the museum's narratives. The second (Chapter 5) presents a reading of the narratives themselves. The concluding part of the dissertation will examine the various contexts in which these narratives resonate.

Chapter 4: The Phenomenological Museum: Concept and Case Studies

This section will continue to develop the concept of the phenomenological museum introduced in Chapter 1, and respond to the question of how history has been told in the museum (both historically and in the present day). Recalling the three main characteristics of phenomenology that are of use to this investigation – *Dasein*/the lived body as being of and in the world, *Jemeinigkeit/Entschlossenheit*, and *Befindlichkeit*[339] – in choosing to describe the *Neues Museum* as phenomenological I mean three things: the museum renders legible a phenomenon that is not normally recognised, that it invites perception and engagement from each visitor, and that any meaningful narrative emerges during the interaction between the visitor and the space. Artefacts, artworks, and architectural structures exemplify the cultural inheritance into which every individual is thrown. The museum is a place where this inheritance is uncovered, experienced, and transformed into framing narratives.

As was mentioned in Chapter 3, for the *Neues Museum*, the phenomenon that is on display and meant to be encountered by the visitors, is history. Visitors are thrown into a sea of framing narratives of history and need to negotiate between them. From its earliest years, both the museum's collection of Egyptian and Ancient/Pre-historical objects – objects so old that they are conceived as '*vor'* history, or even outside of it and thus potentially foundational – as well as through its series of framing narratives (to be examined in detail throughout the chapter), the curatorial and pedagogical strategies have

[339] See the discussion of phenomenology and phenomenological museum in Chapter I.III.

always focused on how history is to be experienced, but, moreover, also on how it is to be used in the facilitation of a national and personal historical consciousness.

Given the vital role played by architecture in the museum's framing narratives, and its own difficult trajectory through history, re-thinking the *Neues Museum* meant transforming it (including its former framing strategies) into an artefact.

This chapter will examine both the changing ways in which the museum has dealt with the phenomenon of history and the process by which the earlier ways were themselves turned into phenomena to be dealt with in their own right. I will thus be able to give a reading of the *Neues Museum* as a phenomenological museum. And since 'history' has always been (and continues to be) the main phenomenon expressed in the *Neues Museum,* I will first offer a brief typology of the museum's various framing narratives and how they were communicated, and then examine the contemporary museum's phenomenological narrative.

I) Histories in the Museum

This section presents a typology of the changing ways in which the museum has dealt with the phenomenon of history and how these various strategies have been transformed within the museum's current iteration. In order to do this, I will use two case studies (the *Treppenhaus* and the *Ägyptischer Hof*) to ground my analysis; both will be followed throughout the overall historical trajectory of the museum, ultimately allowing me to explicate how the contemporary *Neues Museum* works as a phenomenological museum.

A) The Early Years

Designed and realised by Friedrich August Stüler between 1843-1855 as a complement to Schinkel's *Altes Museum*,[340] and as the first structure to be built on the *Museumsinsel* after the royal *Freistätte für Kunst und Wissenschaft* pronouncement was made, the *Neues Museum* has always been the island's house of history.[341] The principal tasks of the museum continue to be its occupation with phenomena of history and how to represent it, more so than the other houses on the *Museumsinsel*, which were conceived of more as art galleries (*Altes Museum*, *Alte Nationalgalerie*, Bode Museum) or places to encounter historical monuments (the Pergamon). From the *Neues Museum*'s inception, its architects and directors have always searched for the most effective, evocative, and ethical ways in which to present history in the museum space. An understanding of its changing stance on history is thus most relevant to this study, as history and changing ways of telling historical narratives are ultimately the phenomena that the contemporary museum wishes to expose.

Particularly given their desire to connect with the collection in Schinkel's museum and to respect the historical nature of the *Neues Museum*'s collection (Ancient/Pre-history, Egypt, cast galleries), Stüler and the museum's first director, Ignaz von Olfers, were set on high-impact dramaturgy; in order to get nineteenth-century Prussian visitors to respond to the objects, they would need to tell them a good story. Stüler was aware of two things: first that it was impossible to separate an understanding and experience of a

[340] For a good reading of this see: Jörg Haspel,'From Building to Rebuilding: the Early History of the Neues Museum', in *The Neues Museum Berlin: Conserving, Restoring, Rebuilding within the World Heritage*, ed. by Ziesemer and others, pp. 14-21; and Wezel Chapter 6 'Der Bau und die Einrichtung des Neues Museums Architektur und Kunst im Dienste des Historischen Bewusstseins', in *Jahrbuch der Berliner Museen*, pp.157-219 (particularly pp. 157-182).
[341] See the discussion of the various museum houses on the *Museumsinsel* in Chapter 3.II.C.

culture from its art; and second, when tasked with building and ultimately organizing the museum's framing devices, it was important to weave the art and history into contemporary culture. This is evident when he writes about the need to contextualize the objects:

> [d]a aber der Zweck der Museen darin bestehen möchte, außer dem Genüsse schöner Kunstwerke auch eine möglichst klare und ausgedehnte Übersicht der Kunstübungen verschiedener Völker und Zeiten zu gewähren, die Kunst aber nie für sich abgesondert aufzufassen, sondern stets im Zusammenhange mit den Schwesterkünsten richtig zu würdigen sind, so glaubte der Architekt die Verpflichtung zu haben, in der Haltung und Decoration der Localien die Sammlungen so viel als möglich zu ergänzen, zumal in allen guten Kunstepochen die Architektur Träger der Skulptur und Malerei war.[342]

Thus Stüler and von Olfers (we may also add the German Egyptologist Karl Richard Lepsius, then director of the Egyptian collection, to this list) realised that the deployment of art, both 'Kunst' and 'Decoration der Localien', were crucial in ensuring the objects in the collection would be relatable to, and available for use in, larger framing narratives. Perhaps they understood that all objects and works of art have a historical original context that museums rob them of, necessitating the provision of a new and suitable one.

In hindsight it would seem they anticipated what the British engraver Henry Vizetelly in 1879 so clearly outlined in his two-volume study of Berlin cultural and social life entitled *Berlin Under the New Empire*. This early account includes a section providing an extensive discussion of three Berlin Museums (on the *Museumsinsel*): Schinkel's *Altes Museum*, Stüler's *Neues Museum*, and Stüler/Busse's *Alte Nationalgalerie*. The *Altes Museum* displays works of art from antiquity (sculptures, painting) and the *Alte Nationalgalerie* exhibits Neoclassical and Romantic works of (largely Prussian) European art. Vizetelly's account lingers tenderly before many of the

[342] Stüler, *Das Neue Museum in Berlin*, p. 1.

works in these two museums, indulging in lavish description. When it comes to the *Neues Museum*, however, he barely acknowledges the works on display except to emphasise the 'indifference' they provoke in him. He writes how it is hard to form empathetic relationships with urns and pots, and how challenging it is for an untrained eye to fill in the gaps between ancient and contemporary objects of use in order to establish the value, relevance, and beauty of these objects:

> In the erection of the New Museum […] the collections formed after all a mere secondary consideration, *the main object being architectonic effect* […] [The decorations] commonly serve to attract attention from the objects exhibited, more especially in the Hall of Northern Antiquities, where the public pass quite indifferently by the insignificant looking urns and utensils *and have eyes only for the wall-paintings representing scenes from ancient stages*. Certainly some special knowledge is required to appreciate such a collection as this, and to the uninitiated individual it is a matter of supreme indifference whether a rusty arrow-head, which he only recognises as such from the assurance conveyed in the catalogue, was found at Angermünde or Stendal, or out of what barrow this or that more or less shapeless washing-bowl was dug.[343] [italics added for emphasis]

For Vizetelly, not only do the framing strategies (eg. decorations and wall paintings) overpower the collection, the museum building itself and its framing strategies (and narratives) actually become the main part of the exhibition – the part that helps facilitate the development of historical consciousness and communicates the overall vision of history, while the objects in the collection became relegated to mere instruments or even obstacles to the acquiring of a historical consciousness. In Stüler's museum, it is the depiction of the ancient world rather than the traces of it that are of primary importance to the visitor's formation of a take on history.[344] But what was this depiction?

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[343] Vizetelly, *Berlin Under the New Empire*, II, pp. 147-148.

[344] Maaz has an excellent description of this in his essay 'Eine Kulturgeschichte in Bildern Wilhelm von Kaulbachs Wandgemälde', in *Neues Museum: Architektur Sammlung Geschichte*, ed. Blauert and Bähr, p. 134.

As was presented in the previous chapter, when constructing the story of Berlin's *Museumsinsel,* contemporary critics such as Schuster cast the *Neues Museum* as the house of history, whose household god is Hegel, the early nineteenth-century philosopher of history. What we in the present would deem to be an unsubtle interpretation and implementation of Hegel's philosophy of history served as the basis for two of the main features of the *Neues Museum's* original framing devices: Kaulbach's series of wall paintings depicting human history (from the Tower of Babel to the Reformation) and the ordering of the museum's exhibition spaces (from the dark underworld of Ancient Egypt and Ancient/Pre-history on the museum's lower levels to the enlightening study rooms on the top floor). Thus the phenomenon of history in the museum was originally staged in the fairly linear manner of a Hegelian dialectics of history. The narrative here, a progression from the pre-historic ancient world to the European Enlightenment seems quite obvious. Andreas Scholl, current director of the Berlin collection of Classical Antiquities, describes it as a *Gradus ad Parnassum*.[345] I will illustrate this argument using case studies.

i) The Treppenhaus/Treppenhalle

The *Treppenhau*s has always been one of the most important spaces of the *Neues Museum*, as it was both the architectural highlight of Stüler's museum as well as the central blackboard for the museum's original pedagogical mission. More has been written about the *Treppenhaus* and the Kaulbach frescoes than any other single architectural

[345] Andreas Scholl, 'Gradus ad Parnassum: Die Erechtheon-Zitate im Treppenhaus und ihre Bedeutung', in *Neues Museum: Architektur Sammlung Geschichte*, ed. by Blauert and Bähr, pp. 122-131. Neil MacGregor uses the same language when describing the contemporary *Museumsinsel* in the concluding section 'Germany Renewed' of his book on the Germany exhibition. See MacGregor, p. 555.

feature in the museum.[346] It was also the most controversial part of the present-day re-think. Looking at how the *Treppenhaus* was treated by the architects and directors will allow us to see how the phenomenon of history was originally embodied in the museum. Suffice to say, the original museum could hardly be called 'phenomenological'.

In its initial heyday, the *Treppenhaus* was a busy place. Painted red, it was highly ornamented, filled with sculptures and casts, and decorated by the aforementioned frescoes. Both historical images below, one an artist's rendering of the *Treppenhaus* and the other one of Stüler's original cross-section sketches of the building, show a space that is filled with material:

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With its three-storey sweep and pomposity, the *Treppenhaus* was designed to create a stirring first impression of the museum and initiate the visitor into the overall framing narratives and ambience of the space. Unlike with Schinkel's rotunda, the main entrance of the *Altes Museum*, the *Treppenhaus* was not aimed at facilitating devotion before the

[346] For similar discussions on this subject see the work of both of the museum's architects: Julian Harrap Architects, *Denkmalpflegerischer Leitfaden* (London/Berlin: Julian Harrap Architects, 1999), p. 62; and David Chipperfield Architects, *Presseinformation aus Anlass des Besuchs des Neuen Museums Durch Ihre Majestät Elizabeth II Königin des Vereinigten Königsreichs Grossbritannien und Nordirland und Seine Königliche Hoheit Prinz Philip Herzog von Edinburgh im Rahmen ihres Vierten Staatsbesuchs in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland am Mittwoch, dem 3. November 2004* (Berlin: David Chipperfield Architects, 2004), p. 8. Also see Kenneth Frampton, 'Museum as Palimpsest', in *Neues Museum Berlin*, ed. by Nys and Reichert, pp. 103-104.

individual work of art;[347] on the contrary, the visitor was confronted by a panorama of history: objects from the museum's collection were slotted in as part of the *mise-en scène*. As already outlined, the staging was essentially Hegel's philosophy of history culminating in Prussia, as depicted both in Kaulbach's frescoes and the way in which the exhibition was ordered. Stüler was highly aware of this:

> Mit eigenthümlicher Sinnigkeit begnügte er sich bekanntlich nicht damit, die Aufgabe durch diese Darstellungen [Kaulbach's frescos], welche, Characterbilder ganzer Völker und Zeiten, die Reflexion in die Vergangenheit und Zukunft zu den Veranlassungen und Folgen der Begebenheiten hinüber leiten, für gelöst zu erachten sondern er ergänzte sie noch durch die Gestalten der hervorragendsten Männer als Leiter der Geschichte, durch Andeutung der Länder, welche als Träger der Cultur in den verschiedenen Zeiten hervortraten, und endlich auch durch Darstellung der zu den Hauptbegebenheiten hinleitenden oder mit ihnen parallel laufenden Momente menschlicher Bildung und Geschichte.[348]

We can see how seriously the museum's architect takes the responsibility of facilitating 'Bildung' by encouraging 'Reflexion' about the past and the future. Here already the museum aimed to present the past as something that could be used rather than as an end in itself, as something to be displayed *an sich*. But while perhaps we might find the roots of the current museum's emphasis on using the past, the framing narratives were a far cry from what will be described as the open and dynamic narratives we encounter today. In the original *Neues Museum*, the myth of the great Prussia and a linear notion of progress was set both in paint and in the room sequence, waiting to be read by the visitors. Writing in 2012, Can Bilsel condemns this universal project, which he describes as the desire 'to build a museum as an architectural metaphor for history […] [as merely] a conservative project that legitimized the patriarchal rule of the king and of the Christian church over

[347] See Schuster, 'Berliner *Museumspläne*', in *Masterplan Museumsinsel Berlin: Ein europäisches Projekt*, ed. by Lepik, p. 11. See also Sheehan, p. 21.
[348] Stüler, *Das Neue Museum in Berlin*, pp. xvii-xx.

the initial project of instituting a fraternal, and civic community'.[349] While Bilsel's contemporary response to the approach is unsurprising, it is interesting to see how visitors responded to this narrative in the nineteenth century.

Even though visitors responded to this dramatic vista and its cumulative effect of decoration and objects with requisite awe, the response was not always positive. Vizetelly, for example, writes that while the *Neues Museum* exceeds the *Altes Museum* in proportion (he refers to the *Treppenhaus* as 'disproportionately lofty')[350] it definitely lacks a certain finesse:

> [t]he chief glories of the Treppen-haus are the mural paintings designed by Wilhelm von Kaulbach […] These comprise six immense compositions intended to represent the chief events in the civilisation of the human race […] The six great frescoes display all the peculiar qualities of Cornelius's greatest pupil, the representative of modern German art and its eclecticism […] but his brush for which such bounds are evidently too narrow, loses its way in the exuberance of detail, and sacrifices to a profusion of incidents that unity of impression which artistic beauty demands. […] These pictures exemplify the future triumph of the German people […][351]

Again we see that Vizetelly responds to the museum's framing strategies rather than the historical objects. This validates Preziosi's idea that often visitors learn more about the time in which a museum was built than the time in which its collection originated.[352] Even so, visitors often do not question or challenge the framing strategies, especially if they do not appear heavy handed immediately. In the case of the *Neues Museum's* early years, the past was mobilised in the service of creating the image of a great Prussia, and to say that the framing was obvious is an understatement.

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[349]Can Bilsel, *Antiquity on Display: Regimes of the Authentic in Berlin's Pergamon Museum* (Oxford: OUP, 2012), p. 86.
[350] Vizetelly, *Berlin Under the New Empire*, II, p. 149.
[351] Vizetelly, *Berlin Under the New Empire*, II, pp. 150-153.
[352] See Chapter 1.III.C.

The patriotic and nation-building narrative was not lost on the visitors, particularly those coming from abroad. Bénédicte Savoy's book *Die Berlin Museumsinsel: Impressionen Internationaler Besucher (1839-1990) Eine Anthologie* collects responses from a variety of sources, including published texts and letters. Nearly all of the visitors respond to the framing rather than the collection itself. The comments below show that while international visitors could read the message of the museum, it was not always well received. One example, François Lenormant's article for *La Revue Britannique* from 1861, referring to the tableaux and decoration, notes:

> [The tableaux] wurden unter der Leitung von Cornelius gemalt und stellen die immer wiederkehrenden Motive dar, die den Deutschen so gefallen, die es lieben, Dinge zu malen, die eigentlich nicht von der bildenden Kunst dargestellt werden können; nämlich: abstrakte Ideen. Die Fresken der Säulenhalle des Berliner Museums sollen, so habe ich erfahren, die symbolische Geschichte der Entstehung der Welt darstellen, der Geburt des Menschen, des Ursprungs der Zivilisation und der Entwicklung der Menschheit (nicht weniger!), doch ich gebe zu meiner großen Schande und Beschämung zu, dass ich, da ich mich nicht lang genug mit den philosophischen Hieroglyphen von Hegel beschäftigt habe, nichts von alledem habe verstehen können. Man sieht da Männer, Frauen, Götter, Göttinnen, Flüsse...kurzum: alles, was in dieser Welt denkbar ist, doch das ganze bleibt sehr enigmatisch, jedenfalls für mich.[353]

While snarky and seemingly benign (regarding the philosophical hieroglyphs and Germans always wanting to paint abstract ideas), the above suggests that the museum's message may not always have been understood, or rather that it tended towards the obscure, something that, according to Lenormant, was quintessentially 'German'. In the mind of this visitor, who feels simultaneously bemused and alienated by the 'Prussia as apotheosis' motif, a clear concept emerges of what is German and of the extent of the museum's framing strategies' ambition.

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[353] François Lenormant quoted in *Die Berliner Museumsinsel: Impressionen Internationaler Besucher,* ed. by Savoy and Sissis, p. 71. Savoy and Sissis' texts use German versions of all of the texts they have collected. Lenormant is actually writing specifically about the *Altes Museum* and Cornelius' frescoes in this review but considers Kaulbach's work to be a continuation on p. 74.

Other reports are darker in tone. For example, the following, ominous response to Kaulbach's paintings (and by extension to the organizing and philosophical stance of the museum), written by French journalist Victor Tissot in his 1875 piece *Voyage au pays des milliards*:

> Diese Malerei des Berliner Museums ist wie ein Schlachtruf der deutschen Nation; das sind die furchtbaren Prophezeiungen, von denen wir nur den Anfang gesehen haben und welche die zukünftigen Generationen zu erfüllen haben. Die "historische Mission Deutschlands" ist auf diesen finsteren Wänden wie ein Menetekel gezeichnet [...] So geht der "Heilige Krieg" an den Wänden des Berliner Museums symbolisch weiter, wie in diesem anderen Fresko von Kaulbach, wo man die Seelen der Hunnen sich in langen Reihen zu den Wolken erheben und im Himmel den auf der Erde vollendeten Kampf fortführen sieht.[354]

It does seem like the ghosts of the 1870/1871 Franco-Prussian War echo in the evocation of 'Heilige[r] Krieg', and that the lingering tensions flared up in Tissot's response to the museum. Tissot reads these paintings as threatening and aggressive, to him the 'Seelen der Hunnen' and the implication of violence cast a gloomy shadow over the entire museum.

Interestingly enough, none of these somewhat negative responses to the *Treppenhaus* challenge the impetus to paint such a story, thus making very clear how pervasive and acceptable these framing narratives were at the time, they merely challenge the result of the efforts: Vizetelly doubts the effectiveness of the execution, Lenormant questions the comprehensibility, and Tissot is concerned about the political implications. Perhaps we can say that it takes a bit of hindsight to see the irony in the framing. From our historical vantage point, it is hard to not read comments like Tissot's without the tint

[354] Victor Tissot quoted in *Die Berliner Museumsinsel: Impressionen Internationaler Besucher*, ed. by Savoy and Sissis, pp. 109-110. For another example see the American political caricature of Kaulbach's *Zerstörung Jerusalems* called *Das Ende der Republikaner* (1884) also cited in *Die Berliner Museumsinsel: Impressionen Internationaler Besucher*, pp. 110-111.

of foreboding knowing that the wars of the twentieth century (perverse *Heilige Krieg[e]* of sorts) would destroy both these paintings and their nationalistic sure-footedness.

ii) Ägyptischer Hof

Unlike the Kaulbach paintings and the room sequence, the strategy outlined and promoted by the Egyptologist Lepsius for the Egyptian exhibits did not necessarily suggest a linear conception of history. On the contrary, it compressed time and tried to bring the past into the present by making the visitor feel as though the exhibition was an ancient city, setting the objects in rooms that were designed to resemble their original *in situ* contexts. This is particularly the case in the *Ägyptischer Hof*:

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While perhaps more anachronistic than nefarious, this strategy reads as an attempt to frame the collection using nineteenth-century tools and adapted imagery in order to make these old and foreign objects feel present and actual. In a sense, this decorative strategy aims to decrease the distance between moments in time rather than arranging them chronologically and emphasising the temporal distance. It also aimed to return the objects to their original homes (or at least depictions of their original homes) in spite of their artificial surroundings. Rather than set the objects in the service of a contemporary

narrative, it used the contemporary imagination in the service of re-creating an ancient narrative.

The idea of simulating a familiar home for orphaned objects that would also provide exotic context for the visitors' engagement with the objects was not an isolated strategy. Another example, the Berlin Zoo, which opened in 1844, around the same time as the *Neues Museum*, featured enclosures that were designed to evoke the 'natural' settings of the animals held in captivity. These enclosures included the domed *Elefantenpagode* and the *Antilopenhaus*, resplendent with four minarets.

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Images: © Zoo Berlin

One wonders if these early exhibitions pre-figured the contemporary theme park or historical re-enactment/living history village. Though they were designed more to bring the past or a region to life and simulate the experience for the visitor rather than subjugate the past and other regions to overarching philosophies, these strategies come across to a contemporary visitor as misguided expressions of Orientalism. With the distance of hindsight, both the Zoo and the *Neues Museum* simulations are easy to see as simulacra, or rather as projections of certain nineteenth-century sensibilities. When we read them, we gain insight into a certain nineteenth-century imagination, its sense of far away, and long ago.

Though the *Ägyptischer Hof* is a slight move away from the linearity that dominated the *Treppenhaus*, the depiction of an ancient city looked suspiciously like a European nineteenth-century interpretation of an ancient city, this despite the efforts

made and the artist's visit to Egypt. Looking closer, we see a striking resemblance to various aesthetic tastes of the time: the wall paintings in the *Ägyptsicher Hof* seem to depict an imagined Arcadia rather than Amarna, and the Egyptian faces used in the decoration offer glimpses of imagined exoticism.

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Both of these case studies show how the framing strategies in the early years of the *Neues Museum* overpowered the collection and used the collection in the service of the museum's overall pedagogical mission. The way history is portrayed in both the *Treppenhaus* and the *Ägyptischer Hof* is closer to the ersatz engagement that I suggested characterised the Jewish Museum than the current *Neus Museum*'s phenomenological strategies, insofar as the visitors were similarly forced to interact with representations of history instead of the historical objects. Even though the *Treppenhaus* housed part of the collection, it was the Kaulbach frescoes and the general arrangement of the collection that told the stories, not the objects in the collection themselves. The *Ägyptischer Hof* also emphasised the setting and instrumentalised the objects within that setting.

Even when you conceive of these strategies as fascinating products of their time, what saves the early *Neues Museum* from provoking the critique I elaborated of the Jewish Museum is that it avoids the symbolic reduction: it stages rather than impersonates. This is not a value judgement so much as an acknowledgement that all

museums are products of their times and that times obviously change. The objects in the museum's collection were mobilised in the service of formulating a narrative of progress, optimism, and enlightenment; all narratives that no longer fit comfortably within our contemporary mind-set.

B) The Interim

This optimistic and ornamental conception of history was not to last very long. Even before the decimation of the museum's physical spaces and features (most specifically the Kaulbach frescos, which were essentially destroyed beyond repair during the war), some of the framing strategies were considered to be obsolete even as they were being completed. According to German (London-based) art dealer and publisher Karsten Schubert:

> The Neues Museum was an embarrassingly late child of the Enlightenment, the last attempt at a universal encyclopaedic museum organised under a single narrative arc, but by the time of its realisation the idea's moment had already passed. Universality had given way to specialisation, and the various components of the collection began to be considered autonomous.[355]

A simple totalizing narrative of progress had already fallen out of fashion, and aesthetic tastes (notably Bauhaus) had shifted collective aesthetic sensibilities away from the gaudy and bombastic clutter and towards more simplistic expressions.[356] The historical consciousness and framing narratives of the museum that was sandbagged and emptied of objects at the outset of World War II had already drifted away from those that characterized its earliest years. The drive towards a less ornamental presentation of

[355] Karsten Schubert, 'Contra-Amnesia: David Chipperfield's Neues Museum Berlin', in *Neues Museum Berlin*, ed. by Nys and Reichert, pp. 73-96 (p. 76). Harrap's comments regarding the miniatures in the courtyard are similar. See Julian Harrap Architects, *Denkmalpflegerischer Leitfaden*, p. 70.
[356] For a good description of the *Neues Museum*'s changing curatorial strategies see Joseph Rykwert, 'The Museum Rejuvenated', in *Neues Museum Berlin*, ed. by Nys and Reichert, pp. 25-48.

history and letting objects be encountered in a less aggressively mediated manner feels closer to the contemporary museum. However, the drive would ultimately be thwarted by the unforeseen consequences of its own decisions. It was during the time when Bauhaus design philosophy dominated the aesthetic scene, for example, that a false ceiling was placed over the blazing blue original ceiling with its golden hieroglyph-inspired markings in the *Neues Museum*'s *Mythologischer Saal.*[357]

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Image: © SMB, photo Kathryn Brechtel

Ironically it would be this false ceiling that ended up saving the original from the bombs and the water damage. In the photo above we can see the exact line where the false ceiling would have been, as no traces of the original decoration remain below this line.

The final way history was expressed in the pre-Chipperfield museum had nothing to do with directors or architects. Along with all of the houses on the *Museumsinsel*, the *Neues Museum* suffered extensive war damage. Unlike the other buildings on the island, it also suffered the neglect of years after; the building thus bears the literal expression of some of the twentieth century's largest ideological conflicts. During World War II and for the second half of the twentieth century, then, history would essentially curate itself in the museum. For many, this history called into question the possibility of ever returning to a philosophical or curatorial system with progress or wholeness as major tenets.

[357] For an account of this room see Olivia Zorn, 'Der Mythologische Saal', in *Neues Museum: Architektur Sammlung Geschichte*, ed. by Blauert and Bähr, pp. 114-121.

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The three images above show the *Treppenhaus* and *Ägyptischer Hof* in the early aftermath of World War II. Plants and trees would eventually grow amidst the stones making it seem as though the site was in a wilderness and not in the centre of a metropolis.

The symbolic and structural importance of the *Treppenhaus* and *Hof* were not diminished by the building's ruinous state, however. Chipperfield writes:

> The Stair Hall was, and even in its ruined state remains the most impressive room of the building. The bombs have removed all traces of the original decoration, as the splendour of the original hall is no longer visible. The created void, like the ruin itself, allows us to project our imagination onto the enormous absence that has been created. Although hardly compensation for the loss of Stüler's magnificent hall, the existing ruined hall, with its Piranesean dimensions and the overwhelming nature of the brick work mass, has taken on its own nearly antique quality. [358]

Here voids are used as a productive metaphor, rather than as shorthand for the Holocaust, as they are in the Jewish Museum and the critical context of the late 1990s early 2000s. While Till and Huyssen pick up on the idea of the void as a space for projection (the Jewish Museum) and potential (the 'becoming' that was the centre of Berlin where the Wall used to run), Chipperfield's *Neues Museum* actualised this potential by putting a roof over the void thus granting the space a renewed function.

[358] David Chipperfield Architects, *Presseinformation*, p. 8.

The previous paragraphs briefly summarize the major historical moments and the various ways in which history is embodied in the museum. The ruins of the *Neues Museum* contained remnants of all of these variations in a manner similar to an archaeological tell. Though unlike the way in which the archaeological tell metaphor applies to the *Museumsinsel* this tell most certainly contains traces of all of its various pasts. The main problem with which any contemporary re-think of the *Neues Museum* had to contend was: which history? To which point in time ought the museum be restored? The response of the architects, directors, and SMB was: all of them.[359] In order to do this, they established the point of intervention.

C) The Point of Intervention

As with the previous chapters on the Jewish Museum and the *Masterplan*, we return to 1999. While critical attention rained down upon the empty Jewish Museum across the river and the *Museumsinsel* thundered its way into the UNESCO list of World Heritage Sites, the *Neues Museum* was still very much a weathered war ruin.[360] Its status as a war ruin set the terms that were fundamental to its eventual re-birth in 2009 as the *Neues*

[359] For a good description of the point of intervention, see Rykwert's essay: 'Chipperfield has taken on the challenge frontally: he has chosen to accept all the marks and scars of the building, all the layerings that have taken it from Schinkelian sobriety through Wilhelminian opulence and Weimar *Sachlichkeit* to end in the raging horrors of the Second World War, so that the renewed building can stand as a witness to all of its past shelling and bombing scars, bullet holes and all. Whatever has survived has been retained […]', Rykwert, 'The Museum Rejuvenated', in *Neues Museum Berlin*, ed. by Nys and Reichert, p. 32.

[360] Though Chipperfield and Harrap won the second architectural competition in 1997 no major work was undertaken in that first year or so. In fact, one of the first reasons the final project was so rigorous and thoughtful is because of these quiet years spent contemplating, sketching, drafting, and thinking: all of the planning documents involving room-by-room, inch-by-inch restoration and construction strategies were compiled and assembled in 1999. Both Harrap [May 2013] and Martin Reichert [September 2011], senior architect in Chipperfield's Berlin office, have related the story of how after winning the contract the architects and directors essentially spent about a year thinking, conversing, and sketching. This is a luxury that architects are not normally accorded as tight deadlines for major cultural projects usually demand significant conceptual compromise.

Museum of today. 1999 marks the point of intervention. This was the point where the architects stopped the decay of the building and re-started its history.

This point is unique among the buildings on the *Museumsinsel*: while the others were restored to approximations of their mid-nineteenth-century and Wilhelminian splendour in the immediate aftermath of the war, the *Neues Museum* was left to accumulate patina and scars during the second half of the twentieth century. It is for this reason that Chipperfield describes the museum's restoration as 'outside of the normal chronology'[361] because it 'ha[d] been left stranded to be rebuilt by another generation'.[362] The generational delay may at first glance appear to accord with Hirsch's concept of the second/third generation response to the Holocaust, or post-memory. She writes:

> The "post" in "postmemory' signals more than a temporal delay and more than a location in an aftermath […] [It] shares the layering and belatedness of those other "posts" [ex postmodernism, postcolony etc.[…], aligning itself with the practices of citation and supplementarity that characterize them. [It] reflects upon an uneasy oscillation between continuity and rupture. And yet postmemory is not a movement, method, or idea; I see it, rather, as a *structure* of inter-and transgenerational return of traumatic knowledge and embodied experience. It is a *consequence* of traumatic recall but (unlike posttraumatic stress disorder) at a generational remove.[363]

While the response to trauma might be belated, as I will argue in this section, the *Neues Museum* rebuild does not emulate the structure of the transmission of traumatic knowledge. While perhaps the museum's framing narrative does 'oscillate between continuity and rupture', the oscillation is not necessarily uneasy. I will demonstrate that this oscillation underscores a sober optimism regarding the possibility of coming to at least a temporary reconciliation with the past. Moreover, the museum doesn't necessarily 'cite' or 'supplement'. I will show that the museum's architecture and curatorial

[361] David Chipperfield Architects, *Presseinformation*, p. 3.
[362] David Chipperfield Architects, *Presseinformation*, p. 2.
[363] Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory*, pp. 5-6.

strategies use, appropriate, and transform the fragments of the museum's various histories and framing narratives. Through its architectural intervention, the *Neues Museum*'s framing narratives show that it is possible to include the traumatic past as part of longer narratives, or as among the various fragments constituting a functioning whole.

In order to allow the visitors to encounter the phenomenon of history in its multifaceted forms, when establishing the point of intervention the architects had to take the plurality of these forms into account. In a sense, 1999 became a new ground zero: the architects froze the foundations, stabilising the ruin as it was at that time, and constructed the contemporary pieces that they would ultimately marry to the remnants of the original structure.

Because the *Neues Museum* is both somewhat outside of normal chronology and itself grounds a new chronology, it may be considered Berlin's last major cultural memory project of the twentieth century and the first project of the twenty-first, functioning as a bridge connecting two memory cultures. The *Neues Museum* signifies a changing relationship to the passage of time: rather than focusing on trauma, voids, and rupture, the museum emphasises continuity. Rather than failed categorical imperatives premised on empathy, the museum facilitates encounters with a more existential experience of time passing (slowness, decay, patina, wrinkles). This will be further elaborated in the next chapter's series of close readings. Yet before moving on to a reading of these narratives, we must look closely at what happened at the point of intervention in order to see how the museum restored all of the various layers of its history while simultaneously establishing a new and contemporary set of frameworks.

II) History in the Phenomenological Museum

> Better the rudest work that tells a story or records a fact, than the richest without meaning. There should not be a single ornament put upon great civic buildings, without some intellectual intention […] History, as such, was indeed entrusted to the painters of its interior, but every capital of its arcades was filled with meaning
> – John Ruskin, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (Published: 1907)

More than a century after it was published, Ruskin's *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, particularly Lamp Six, Memory, could serve as one of the foundational sources for an architecture grounded in the phenomenological tradition. It understands architecture, even the 'rudest' architecture, as monumental; or perhaps it can be better characterized as a *memento mori*, because it occupies a strange temporality of resilience and decay and juxtaposes that with the building's original pretence to permanence. Every stone that has been imbued with intention is a fossil, a precious survivor of a previous era. Ruskin's text was one of the principal sources to be consulted by the architects during the *Neues Museum*'s re-think.[364] Nevertheless, given Ruskin's firm stance against restoration,[365] it is unclear whether or not he would have entirely approved of the architectural intervention executed at the *Neues Museum*, as it may have caused too many disruptions to the original site and structure for Ruskin.

Happily, Ruskin's text was not the only source the architects consulted. The architectural works of Scott and Pugin, William Morris's manifesto for the Society for the Protection for Ancient Buildings (1877), the 1964 Venice Charter, and the 1981 Burra Charter set out by the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) were all fundamental in laying the groundwork of the overall architectural vision for the re-

[364] Julian Harrap Architects, *Denkmalpflegerischer Leitfaden*, p. 24.
[365] He likened it to a process of setting up a lie in bricks and mortar and used the analogy of confusing raising the dead with making a model of a corpse. See John Ruskin, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (London: Smith, Elder, and Co., 1849), pp. 179-180.

thought museum. According to chief restoration architect Julian Harrap: 'All these documents have established the basic definition of historic buildings as works of art rooted in their individual settings'.[366] Conceiving of the museum (or the historic building) as a work of art with a particular setting actually helps account for the peculiar kind of necromancy that constitutes this sensitive and context-specific restoration project: the architect is fully aware that the structure originated in a particular time and that it has, in its own way, experienced history. Any restoration must take both the building's starting point and its journey into account. While the architects may use the word restoration, they are not simply restoring a structure to a particular point in its history, they are preserving, transforming, and creating something new; they imbue the structure with a contemporary context that respects and includes the various ways in which it has been used over time. When conceiving of the project like this, it becomes impossible (and undesirable) to totally efface the traces of time and ignore the contemporary context.

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Image: © David Chipperfield Architects

The above image is Chipperfield's first conceptual sketch of his vision for the *Neues Museum.* The text reads: 'RE-ESTABLISHMENT OF FORM + FIGURE' and the image shows both a frontal and aerial view of the museum with its original volumes and proportions intact. Now, 're-establishment' suggests that the architectural strategy aims to

[366] Julian Harrap Architects, *Denkmalpflegerischer Leitfaden*, p. 24.

return the building to a previous state. Words like 're-building' and 're-birth' have also been used to describe the *Neues Museum* project. All of these words express the idea of a 're' meaning of going back to the original place; again, anew, once more, though also with a sense of undoing. Characterizing the work done at the point of intervention as a renewal of the museum's temporality, or a re-setting of its history, accords with this idea of a return. Establishing a return as the guiding principle of the project sets it firmly against the ersatz project we saw in the Jewish Museum; there is no need for a symbolic ersatz if there is a something to which one can return.

In creating a point of intervention, the *Neues Museum* becomes a kind of meta-museum, a museum of museums of history that have coincided in the same space over time. This coinciding casts the museum as the perfect example of the layering that Huyssen describes with the metaphor of the 'palimpsest'[367] or as I have described as an archaeological tell. The emphasis on working with and through authentic material in order to expose the various phases of the building's long history, and minimizing architectural grand gestures are two of the fundamental reasons why this architecture is phenomenological. Each room necessitated a different strategy, each tiny project called for a different response. The museum and the architects seemed to create the architecture together – each drawing the other into a shared world, making something new out of something old, constellating a dynamic principle of coherence, order, and meaning where there was once chaos.

The question for the architects thus became, what can one ethically and authentically bring back? What can be rescued? This section argues that while material

[367] See Huyssen's 'Introduction' to *Present Pasts*, pp. 1-10. Specifically note: 'Modernity has brought with it a very real compression of time and space […]' p. 4.

and forms could be saved and re-established, the ways of conceiving of history that established these forms and used this material could not. Every museum is a product of its time, and we can marvel at its skill, but promoting previous generations' framing narratives of history runs the risk of parody.

According to Chipperfield even though it would have been possible to recreate the details of the old building, 'either through surviving documentation or by deduction from the remaining elements, with sufficient authority to remake the building as a close replication of the original',[368] this was not the strategy that was adopted. Like Schinkel and his use of Ancient forms, Chipperfield interprets and re-contextualizes the traces of the various historical mind-sets that are embodied in the *Neues Museum* rather than replicates them. The plan was thus to recover 'form and figure' – to which I would add function – as the museum was designed to house its former collection while simultaneously fulfil all of the technical and hospitality requirements of a modern museum space. Within the larger *Museumsinsel* context, the *Neues Museum* was to re-establish its place of prominence and serve as the island's 'history' museum.

In order to re-establish form and figure and respect the state of the building at the point of intervention, the architects employed a two-pronged strategy: restoration and contemporary intervention. However, even if intervention perhaps technically only refers to the 'new' part of what has been described as an 'old and new' strategy,[369] 'intervention' can also be said to encompass the 'old' restorative part as every inch of the space necessitated choices to be made.

[368] David Chipperfield Architects, *Presseinformation*, p. 5.
[369] David Chipperfield Architects, *Presseinformation*, p. 5.

Another way of describing the project, one used by Barbara Grosse-Rhode from the *Bundesamt für Bauwesen und Raumordnung* (BBR, the organization tasked with overseeing the work on the *Neues Museum*), is 'complementary reconstruction'.[370] I, however, find her use of the word reconstruction to be a bit troubling and not at all accurate when describing the work done on the museum. In Berlin's museum landscape 'reconstruction' has two main connotations: critical reconstruction, former *Staatssekretär für Planung* Hans Stimman's favoured strategy, [371] and the forthcoming reconstruction of the *Berliner Stadtschloß*. Both cases entail re-creations of the old without much regard for the actual fate of the site and its material.

Reconstruction was a term used by the *Neues Museum* architects only when describing other projects, never their own. Harrap, while applauding the technical work done by critical reconstruction architects, carefully phrases why he would want to keep this strategy as far away from the *Neues Museum* as possible:

> The work at Charlottenburg and Potsdam is a monument to the meticulous re-creation of the edifices of the past to a point where the distinction between new work and old work is almost invisible except to the highly trained eye. This approach to restoration endangers the testament to the past that a building provides because it creates a new, modern reproduced context, which some would say falsifies the cultural significance of the original.[372]

In his guidelines he writes: 'Reconstruction is only to be considered in exceptional circumstances'.[373] In a similar vein, Chipperfield writes: 'Historical reconstruction would require the suppression, if not destruction of original material in a desire for "the made

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[370] Große-Rhode, 'From Invited Competition via Consultation Procedure to "Master Plan Museum Island"', in *The Neues Museum Berlin: Conserving, Restoring, Rebuilding within the World Heritage*', ed. by Ziesemer and others, p. 50.
[371] For a discussion of critical reconstruction see Naraelle Hohensee, 'Reinventing Traditionalism: The Influence of Critical Reconstruction on the Shape of Berlin's Friedrichstadt', *intersections*, 11.1 (2010), pp. 55-99. See also Colomb, pp. 208-215.
[372] Julian Harrap Architects, *Restaurierungskonzept: Wiederaufbau Neues Museum Berlin*, 2 vols (London/Berlin: Julian Harrap Architects, 1999), I p. 60.
[373] Julian Harrap Architects, *Denkmalpflegerischer Leitfaden*, pp. 94-98.

new again"'.[374] Opting for reconstruction over re-establishment would have seemed treasonous to the architects, a view shared by many commentators, including Rik Nys, whose essay in the collection published upon the museum's opening contains the following condemnation of reconstruction:

> […] the reconstruction of Berlin's Schloss, will ultimately not mend a brutal rupture in the city […] it is mind-boggling that modern regimes want to embrace symbols of past oppression (unless you claim there to be no funfair without a house of horrors). Perhaps we underestimate the incredible forces of consumer demand as our environment is eroded to create ever more 'tourist' landscapes' offering a franchise for Disneyland in every corner of the world.[375]

Instead, a re-establishment of form and figure involved working out a rigorous set of restoration principles and elaborating a strategy for each room and each fragment.[376] New pieces of architecture would fill in the gaps, returning the building to its original footprint. Several new architectural experiments were incorporated to solve some of the structure's specific problems.[377] Old and new then came together to re-establish the wholeness of the building. The intent was not for the joints to be seamless, but rather that these seams should provide for a pleasing aesthetic experience that did not deceive the visitor regarding the nature and age of the material. The method is akin to the restoration and displaying of a Greek vase whose dimensions and volumes have been restored by

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[374] David Chipperfield, 'The Neues Museum Architectural Concept', in *The Neues Museum Berlin: Conserving, Restoring, Rebuilding within the World Heritage*, ed. by Ziesemer and others, pp. 56-59 (p. 59).

[375] Rik Nys, 'The Treachery of the Fake', in *Neues Museum Berlin*, ed. by Nys and Reichert, pp. 145-168 (pp. 150-151).

[376] Harrap provided me with a CD Rom with three binders' worth of material. For an example highlighting this approach, one of the main requirements and technical challenges was to not resort to false ceilings or double floors. These would have allowed the climate control and technical systems of the building to be hidden from the public but they would have simultaneously robbed the public of the original ceilings. For a discussion of this see David Chipperfield and Wolfgang Wolters, 'Conversation', in *Neues Museum Berlin*, ed. by Nys and Reichert, pp. 229-239 (p. 234).

[377] The brick-domed cupola above the Helios statue is one of them. It starts with a square base and then works towards a round top.

putting a neutral material between the authentic fragments.[378] This method could also be categorized as an example of *concordia discors* as it was described in Chapter 3.

Because it was necessary to maintain balance and harmony between the many sometimes conflicting voices, Chipperfield has been described by Schubert as more of a conductor trying to co-ordinate an orchestra than a composer.[379] Chipperfield himself describes his role as architect for the *Neues Museum* like this: 'the architect must be a sort of director and provocateur, giving shape to ideas and process, he must be a guardian of the physical remains, he is entrusted to find a solution that best responds to these pieces'.[380] There was constant discussion, negotiation, and questioning – right until the museum opened.[381]

An example of the extent to which the project involved negotiation and finding middle ground is its bilingualism: British lead architects and German architects/craftspeople and clients on site. All planning material was duly prepared in both languages. The need for clear and explicit collective understanding and open communication is one of the reasons the project comes across as so rigorous.[382] As with the balancing act between languages, there were a few instances when compromises had

[378] David Chipperfield Architects, *Presseinformation*, p. 7.
[379] Schubert, 'Contra-Amnesia: David Chipperfield's Neues Museum Berlin', in *Neues Museum Berlin*, ed. by Nys and Reichert, p. 81.
[380] David Chipperfield Architects, *Presseinformation*, p. 4
[381] One anecdote given to me by Wildung [Spring 2013] involved standing at the top of the staircase and him pointing down to several strange-looking marks on the floor. He told me that it was his initial plan to install Nefertiti in that very spot (the markings were actually the traces of the security system that had already been installed). At a meeting not long before the museum's opening, Wildung announced the decision to move Nefertiti to the *Nordkuppelsaal*. After the meeting, Chipperfield approached him in order to laud his decision. It was clearly something Chipperfield wanted, though he also wanted to let Wildung come to the decision on his own.
[382] For a contextualization of this process, see the Portuguese architect Siza's comments: '[t]he rigour of this work is testament to a long process, intense dialogue and extensive participation. These are intimately related tasks which frequently fail to be addressed in today's architecture'. Álvaro Siza,'Preface', in *Neues Museum Berlin*, ed. by Nys and Reichert, p. 9.

to be reached in order to maintain the harmony of the overall project. These compromises, however, attest to the various stories that those involved wanted to tell.

Telling these stories necessitated and invited reinterpreting form and figure as much as re-establishing them. Two comments by Chipperfield illustrate this idea: 'In this general distrust of "pictures," "visions" and interpretations we have come to value the physical, the authentic, the innocent remains'[383]; and

> While building back the form of Stüler's stair and recreating the original geometries of the space it is in this space that the absence of original decoration will be most apparent. We cannot accept the emotional impulse to copy Stüler's original design. Not only is there a complete absence of original material but it would be inconsistent with the philosophy of the project.[384]

This accounts for the choice to re-establish the forms while consigning the decoration/traces of curatorial choices of the past to the status of artefacts to be displayed even if they were incorporated in the design and not necessarily put behind glass.

The reinterpretation is particularly evident in the *Treppenhaus* and the Courtyards, where form, figure, and function could be re-established while the decoration (and the spirit of its original intentionality) could not. Harrap writes: 'The solution, rather, is to recreate the original space without imitating decoration and detail, to create a new space out of the destroyed hall, based on the original design, and maintaining the impressive brick walls exposed by the bombs'.[385]

[383] David Chipperfield Architects, *Presseinformation*, p. 4.
[384] David Chipperfied Architects, *Presseinformation*, p. 8.
[385] David Chipperfield Architects, *Presseinformation*, p. 8.

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Image: © Julian Harrap Architects

Exposing the bricks lets the visitors encounter what they do not normally see, namely the internal support structures of buildings, the things below the drywall. This both recalls nineteenth-century bricklaying techniques and celebrates the programme of recycling old bricks both from the *Neues Museum* site but also other sites in Brandenburg of a similar era, and was essential for the reinterpretation of the form.[386] A contemporary life is given to historical material.

While traces of the original labour and skill that went into the constructing the staircase are now visible, it was not the original intention of the original architect and director to have these exposed (the bricks were covered by paint and frescoes). The *Treppenhaus* thus re-contextualizes the historical mind-set within the new museum. We can see the result of this in the images below:

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Images: © SMB / David Chipperfield Architects, photos Ute Zscharnt, Florian Duijsens

[386] See Julian Harrap, 'The Neues Museum: The Restoration Concept', in *The Neues Museum Berlin: Conserving, Restoring, Rebuilding within the World Heritage*, ed. by Ziesemer and others, pp. 60-64 (p. 60).

The grandeur of the Staircase, its proportions and drama, all remain at the heart of the building. However, rather than indulging in scenes depicting the mythic or ancient past, the largely unadorned staircase proudly displays its brickwork – the exception being a series of historical casts. In a sense, human labour is being given a place of honour in the museum, and history has taken on vaguely mythical proportions. As with Kaulbach's frescoes, these casts are interpretations of mythic and historical themes and images. Unlike Kaulbach's frescoes, however, they do not tell a causal or linear story, as the phenomenological museum allows the traces of the work of previous generations to be experienced by the visitor. The mythicizing of human history was perhaps the original intention of the museum, and, as I will argue in Chapter 5, persists to this day, though the nature of the myths has changed dramatically.

In terms of the *Ägyptischer Hof*, Chipperfield re-established the columns (albeit by interpreting them in a contemporary way). He also re-established the purpose of the room; what was once a mock-up of an Egyptian temple has become the underworld of the museum.

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Image: © SMB / David Chipperfield Architects, photo Ute Zscharnt

The extra exhibition space (where the various coffins are displayed in the image above) exists because of work commissioned by the East German government and the SMB conducted in the 1980s. Just out of the frame in the photo above Chipperfield added a mezzanine platform above the courtyard where statues and busts of the Amarna royal

family were displayed from the time of the museum's opening until the Amarna exhibition in December 2012. The juxtaposition of the dark/solid horizontal coffins on the lower floor with the transparent vertical cases (we will see images of this in the next chapter) on the platform above creates an interesting juxtaposition of two main possibilities for the afterlife: either an underworld where bodies lie decomposing or an afterworld in which images are suspended in glass vitrines.

Both the underworld and the afterworld are expressions of one of the central narratives in the *Neues Museum* which re-contextualises objects and narrative fragments outside of their normal chronology and invests them in a new chronology. This narrative is the basis of the phenomenological museum's approach to history.

Conclusion:

All of the strategies employed by the Chipperfield and Harrap (eg. exposing, restoring, thoughtful intervening) signal a phenomenological approach to heritage material and cultural memory: rather than building a monument or imposing a narrative on the material, the architects threw themselves into a situation, worked through it, and transformed old heritage material into new heritage material: they made it theirs, or rather ours, and, as I will argue in Chapter 5, their manner of doing so allows each visitor to make it 'mine'. Those executing the project researched the building, found its hidden histories, became familiar with the details and nuances of its materiality,[387] respected the past and the subject matter, and were conscious of the importance of historiography, or the museum's vertical or diachronic narratives. The architecture itself may be thought of

[387] One of the first things that Harrap said to me when I met with him is that he came to architecture through material and not through theory [May 2013].

as diachronic. This way of working serves as a guide for how the museum could be used by the visitors.

Chapter 5: Bullet Hole Constellations: A Close Reading of the Museum

This chapter will allow us to look in greater detail at some of the main narratives embodied in the *Neues Museum*, its bullet hole constellations – constellations because they have been pieced together by critical engagement with the space. While both the Jewish Museum and the critical moment it typifies emphasised brokenness, voids, rupture, and trauma, the *Neues Museum* tends to typify a critical moment turning towards wholeness and involving longer narratives of history. But what are these narratives and how are they conveyed in the museum?

I argue that they are conveyed through the museum's architecture, curation, and the relationship between its form and its content. Rather than use the museum space as a kind of *mise-en-scène* as was the case in the nineteenth century, the space itself becomes part of the story. It is less about aggressive framing strategies and more about echoing, repeating, or juxtaposing. I will look at three main narratives that are best described by the following keywords: fragments and the whole; ruins; and *homo faber*. These narratives are the museum's bullet hole constellations and convey the kind of contemporary mythology that is at the heart of the museum's understanding and expression of history. While perhaps reminiscent of grand narratives, these are not master narratives, as all three of these close readings feature ambiguous images and respect the principle of plurality.

I) Fragments and the Whole

From the first words and conceptual sketches signalling the architects' desire to 're-establish form and figure', the *Neues Museum* project has been about putting things back together. However, as was demonstrated when looking at the case studies in the previous section, putting things back together does not necessarily involve re-creating or reconstructing a wholeness that was. For the *Neues Museum*, putting things back together meant constellating a new order out of inherited material in the footprint of the original museum building. Perhaps the Aristotelian aphorism that has become an adage that has in turn become a cliché, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts,[388] may be applied to this new *Neues Museum*; simply adding up all of the various histories embodied in the museum does not account for the cumulative contemporary experience. What is 'greater' than the whole is the simultaneous persistence of the parts. It presents an ambiguous image in which both the whole and the parts may be experienced, and it is this complementary juxtaposition that allows the wholeness of the *Neues Museum* to read more as a plurality than a totality.

I will argue here that the *Neues Museum* embodies the idea of a non-totalizing wholeness. The best example of such non-totalizing wholeness actually comes from an exhibition of objects from the Oppenheim Collection, named after Max von Oppenheim, the German diplomat/archaeologist who excavated Tell Halaf (northern Syria/Turkey) shortly before World War I and then again briefly in the interwar period. During that time countless beautiful prehistoric statues (6100-5500 BCE) were brought back to the Earth's surface and shipped to Berlin. Oppenheim kept his collection in a museum in Dahlem, a

[388] Though it is not a direct quotation, Aristotle discusses this in his Metaphysics Book VII Part 10. See Aristotle, 'Metaphysics', *The Internet Classics Archive* <http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/metaphysics.7.vii.html> [accessed 3 March 2014].

neighbourhood in the Western part of the city. He was particularly fond of one statue, that of a seated woman with long hair and a proud, serene, and flawless face. He called her his Beautiful Venus. In November 1943, the British bombed the museum in Dahlem and the ensuing fire was so hot that Oppenheim's statues in the collection shattered into thousands of pieces. Devastated, Oppenheim kept the pieces. Decades later, enormous pains were taken to put these three-dimensional puzzles back together, to re-establish their form, figure, and function. Sixty statues were completed and put on display in Berlin's Pergamon Museum in the winter of 2011.[389] Here is how Oppenheim's Beautiful Venus looks today:

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Image: © SMB, Vorderasiatisches Museum, photo Olaf M. Teßmer

Though we can still perceive her ancient beauty and understand the reasons why he may have fallen in love with her a hundred years ago, when current visitors admire her it is her flaws that we notice first. They are what ultimately draw us to her. We see the lines and the fissures, the scars from her sojourn in history. The markings are attributable to both the slow natural decay wrought by time and the incendiary devices forged by human hands. The re-established work is not a false construction, one that smooths over traces of

[389] There is a nice article describing this process and the exhibition itself on the BBC website: Stephen Evans, 'Berlin's Pergamon Museum Exhibits Tell Halaf Statues', *BBC* (Berlin: 29 January 2011), <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-12308854> [accessed 3 March 2014].

its having been in history; the statue is perhaps even more beautiful because of having weathered the twentieth century and even more precious because of the attention and care invested in re-establishing her form. When we see her, we perceive both her brokenness/fragments and her wholeness.

This statue is the most compelling and concise exemplification of the idea that it is possible to put pieces back together while still respectfully acknowledging the damage that caused the original whole to be shattered. The overarching problem addressed in this section is whether this ambiguous image of wholeness/fragments can stand as a model for a contemporary framing narrative of history. I argue that the way in which the *Neues Museum* juxtaposes the whole and its parts does offer such a model and that this is expressive of a shift in the dominant attitudes and responses towards history.

In general terms, the *Neues Museum*'s wholeness, or its putting broken pieces together in new orders, seems to be synonymous with the idea of completeness. Chipperfield himself uses this word several times: 'A new building that was made of fragments or parts of the old, but once again conspiring to a completeness'[390]; 'This intention of continuity and completeness has been carried out within a philosophical and technical approach that elevated the protection of original fabric to its central credo'[391]; and finally, in response to an interviewer asking about the relationship between fragments and completeness:

> But I wanted to find a way by which we could give completeness by the addition of pieces, so it was not completeness by copy, but at the same time it wasn't just a sort of caricature of old and new, but that the project should again be one building. This was our ambition, then when you go into this space, you will be able to understand the layers of history but you will still understand it as one building […] You are

[390] Chipperfield, 'Introduction', in *Neues Museum Berlin*, ed. by Nys and Reichert, pp. 10-24 (p. 11).
[391] Chipperfield, 'The Neues Museum Architectural Concept', in *The Neues Museum Berlin: Conserving, Restoring, Rebuilding within the World Heritage*, ed. by Ziesemer and others, p. 59.

> continuously adjusting your conception based on all the parts, but all those parts must always aim at a continuous centre, a consistent centre. The idea that the project is held together by a singular vision.[392]

In all three quotations the key word may be 'completeness', but equally important are the words 'continuity' and 'again' – both words corresponding with the idea of re-establishing something that was once complete but that has experienced a period of being incomplete. But in every case 'completeness' did not mean reproducing the original completeness, while re-establishing form and figure meant reconstituting the original footprint, it did not entail reproducing the original vision of completeness. The completeness Chipperfield describes here is held together by a 'singular vision', a 'continuous [or] consistent centre'. While the idea of this 'singular vision' implies that there is a wholeness at the core of the museum's completeness, this wholeness is the hanging together of many different parts, another example of the *concordia discors* principle. Moreover, the image of wholeness is dynamic and modulates in accordance with the perception of the visitor and their 'contiuou[s] adjust[ments]'. There is thus no wholeness without the one who has appropriated and transformed the fragments.

Whether we can accept the idea that the building, or rather the fragments of the building, 'conspired' to the re-establishment of its form and figure – and thus seeming to imply that the material itself longed for both completion and wholeness – or not, we can take the clients who commission the projects at their word. The SMB and SPK wanted a *Neues Museum* that embodied completeness and wholeness, but that was not a copy or

[392] Juan Antonio, 'Conversation with Chipperfield: Conciliation of Opposites', in *David Chipperfield Architects 2006-2010*, ed. by Fernando Márquez Cecilia, and Richard Levene (Madrid: Croquis Editorial, 2010), pp. 6-27 (pp. 26-27).

recreation of the original building.[393] Instead they wanted an ambiguous image of wholeness/fragmentation. This seems to suggest that while fragments and brokenness were no longer the dominant metaphors for thinking about history, they must be part of the new image of wholeness. We begin to see how this new image might also work as a way of thinking of cultural memory beyond trauma.

Both the architects and the clients were responding to a deeper impulse, one that is within the horizon of cultural memory theory and praxis, but also an expression of a mythological impulse, namely the drive to make or find meaning in or out of history. Chipperfield writes:

> This process will give back meaning and significance to the fragments, suppressing the expression of destruction, but not confusing the history or the building by denying the last 60 years of history […][394]

His vision is specific: 'giv[ing] back meaning'. The act of giving back, like re-establishing, acknowledges that something was there before and implies that there is an appetite to return, to re-appropriate, or re-interpret these meanings. This compulsion to make and give meaning signifies the shift from the cultural memory ideas of the 1990s and early 2000s, when a desire to portray meaninglessness came across via voids, one of the dominant images of that time. The search for meaning in history, or the desire to 'give back meaning' to it, could not be more different an impulse from the one expressed by Libeskind's description of the Jewish Museum: 'You are at a dead end here. It's the end of the museum. It's the end of all museums. The Holocaust was the absolute

[393] See Große-Rhode, 'From Invited Competition via Consultation Procedure to "Master Plan Museum Island"', in *The Neues Museum Berlin: Conserving, Restoring, Rebuilding within the World Heritage*', ed. by Ziesemer and others, pp. 50-55. She gives an extensive account of the various stages of the architectural competition in her essay.
[394] David Chipperfield Architects, *Presseinformation*, p. 6.

extermination of all values'.[395] Though meaning and value are obviously different entities, of note here is that the *Neues Museum* chases the possibility of a meaningful-making whole of fragments while the Jewish Museum negates the possibility of finding meaning at all. These two stances are elucidations of two very different kinds of cultural memory narratives. The longing for and establishment of meaning is one of the most familiar mythological impulses.[396]

The rest of this section will examine how the ambiguous image of wholeness/fragments works in the museum's form (architecture), content (framing/cases), and the relationship between the two.

A) Form/Architecture

In the previous chapter I looked at the two case studies which best conveyed how various histories were embodied and transformed in the architecture of the *Neues Museum*. Here I want to look at two examples of how fragments have been re-contextualized: the historical room called the *Sternensaal*, and the *Fragmentarium*.

The *Sternensaal* is on the top floor of the museum in what is now the *Museum für Vor- und Frühgeschichte*. When the *Neues Museum* re-opened, the *Sternensaal* contained one of the museum's most show-stopping pieces, the famous Golden Hat. Historically it was one of the study rooms and, according to Harrap, 'the only room taking up Gothic themes […] [and forming a] cabinet-like appendix to the Western Art Chamber'.[397] The star-vaulted ceiling and corresponding room shape distinguishes the *Sternensaal* from the other historical rooms. The correspondence between the Golden Hat, a cultic

[395] See the film *Daniel Libeskind: Welcome to the 21st Century*. See note 202.
[396] See the discussion of myth in Introduction.
[397] Julian Harrap Architects, *Restaurierungskonzept: Wiederaufbau Neues Museum Berlin*, I, p. 101.

astronomical object from the central European Bronze Age, and the old desks, books, and cabinets that used to be housed in this room is perhaps not instantaneously obvious but still striking: in both instances, the contents of the *Sternensaal* functioned as a catalogue for knowledge and understanding.[398] Here is how the room looked at the time of the museum's opening:[399]

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Image: © SMB, photo Florian Duijsens

Though the piece in the centre of the room, the Golden Hat, commands attention, the eyes of the visitor are also drawn upwards to the ceiling and the tiny fragments of the original decoration that have been carefully saved and returned to their original homes.

[398] See Andreas Scholl, Matthias Wemhoff, and Dietrich Wildung, 'Das neue Nutzungskonzept', in *Neues Museum: Architektur Sammlung Geschichte*, ed. by Blauert and Bähr, pp. 20-29 (p. 29).

[399] The *Museum für Vor- und Frühgeschichte* opened with a temporary exhibition concept, having changed directors not long before the museum's official opening. I ought to note that the room has been completely redone. Re-opened in the summer of 2014, the curatorial concept is quite different. Still with the Golden Hat in the centre, the room is now dark. This higher and more intense level of dramaturgy mirrors the presentation of Nefertiti on the floor below and across on the other side of the museum. The entire new *Museum für Vor- und Frühgeschichte* exhibition concept, orchestrated by director Matthias Wemhoff, is excellent. Highlights include: the presentation of the historical collections in the old display cases; the room devoted to Berlin archaeology that communicates the idea of Berlin as palimpsest where bronze age artefacts and barbed wire share the same case; the thoughtful and artful display of groups of objects – more like art installations than traditional museum displays; the *Zeitmaschine* that shows images of changing landscapes; and the rehabilitation of the 1960s way of thinking about and exhibiting history by the exhibition of various dioramas portraying prehistoric times. Particularly given the lack of obvious references to the time of the divided Berlin, this new display is very welcome. Given that this dissertation really only looks at the initial museum concept, I will be unable to look closely at the newer interventions.

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The perspective of this photo distorts slightly, as the fragments appear much larger than they are when one encounters them in the museum space. When beneath them, they are like minnows swimming in a sea of white plaster, akin to the experience of catching glimpses of the red-orange or black authentic fragments of a Greek vase that has been restored.[400] Looking at the fragments on the ceiling of the *Sternensaal*, the ambiguous image of wholeness/fragments is easy to perceive: the room may be whole but the reminder of its brokenness prevents it from being totalizing.

Harrap and his restoration architects made a careful study of the museum's fragments. The images below offer two examples. The first (on the left) is for the *Sternensaal*, and the second (on the right) is for the nearby *Majolikasaal:*

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Images: © Julian Harrap Architects

[400] See note 378.

In the image on the left we can see some of the pieces that were returned to the *Sternensaal* ceiling, on the right is a mock-up of the *Majolikasaal*, with examples of where particular fragments would eventually be placed.

Even though these careful studies were conducted for every room and every available fragment, and despite the meticulous work and restoration principles, not all of the fragments could be restored to their original positions. Part of this is due to the choice to re-establish form and figure but at the same time not to re-create a historical framing narratives – it would have been too much as well as inappropriate to re-paint Kaulbach's frescoes. As such, many of the pieces that could not be re-contextualized in their original positions were given a new context entirely: the *Fragmentarium*.

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Images: © SMB, photo Florian Duijsens

The *Fragmentarium*, essentially the foundling home of the museum, offers a context for those pieces whose original contexts could not be re-established. Similar to a lapidarium, where archaeological material and broken statues are displayed in a relatively unclassified manner, the *Fragmentarium* houses what is left of the museum's nineteenth-century framing strategies, including some remaining pieces of the Kaulbach frescos (see middle image), the Egyptian-looking or perhaps better to say nineteenth-century Egyptomania-inspired heads that once adorned the *Ägyptischer Hof* (see image on the left), and other pieces of decoration that could not be replaced (see image on the right). They are housed in some of the original display cases of the museum. The labels above

the glass no longer match the contents of the cases, thus giving the impression that while these former framing devices have become part of the museum's collection, they are also anachronistic.

The two examples show very different things about the architectural strategy. In the case of the *Sternensaal* it was possible to re-establish the form and figure of the historical room and thus the fragments could resume their original function, whereas the *Fragmentarium* shows that the function of the fragments changes over time. In both instances, we see how the current museum works with and through the older framing narratives. The next section will look a bit closer at how the wholeness/fragments image works in terms of the museum's framing and collection.

B) Collection/Framing

By their very nature, collections play with the relationship between the whole and its parts: no antiquities collection will ever be total, yet a collection is also complete in a contingent manner. Curators and exhibition designers always make choices regarding what to show and what to say about it. Only a fraction of a collection goes on display, which is only a small portion of what has been unearthed, which is a miniscule time capsule of what once was. We, from the experts to the casual visitor, construct notions of the past and ancient cultures based on these small selections. For example, the two photos below show two different expressions of how collections come across as both whole and fragmented:

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Images: © SMB, photos Florian Duijsens, Kathryn Brechtel

In the photo on the left we see fragments of an ancient wall held together by the plaster sections forged to fill in what is missing. The wall is both whole and fragmented – in a paradoxical manner it is the absent sections that give the wall its stable presence. In the photo on the right we see a pair of lovers' hands from the Amarna collection: *Handpaar einer Doppelstatue des Echnaton und der Nofretete*. Though doubt has been cast on whether or not these were actually the royal Amarna hands,[401] what is important here is that they evoke images of the royal couple and consequently the overall spirit of the eighteenth dynasty.

In both examples there are only fragments on display: large sections of the wall and the bodies of Akhenaten and Nefertiti are missing. However, what is missing does not diminish the wholeness of the collection. Furthermore, the fragments themselves wield incredible power: not only can the whole be re-imagined (in the case of the wall), but an entire story can be told by starting with the simple image of these hands. Unlike other museums where photos or artists sketches fill in the gaps and complete the image (the Ashmolean Museum's display of the famous 'Princess Fresco' from Amarna Egypt is a good example of this), the visitors, not the curators, are the ones to imagine the Amarna love story using these hands alongside the other very tender depictions of the royal couple in the collection. To some extent all museums encourage such use,

[401] This is anecdotal evidence that comes to me via a curatorial assistant [December 2011].

contemplation, and construction or uncovering of narratives, of course. But, as will be examined in this section, the *Neues Museum* does this particularly well. In fact, facilitating individual interpretations of the historical material rather than providing an expert interpretation of it is the goal of the museum's framing strategies.[402] It is here where we see the importance of *Jemeinigkeit* and *Entschlossenheit*. In order for there to be a coherent and meaningful narrative, the visitor must own the 'mineness' of their particular museum experience. While encouraging and inspiring a plurality of interpretive possibilities is something that is obviously possible in every museum, it often only occurs by reading the museum against the grain.

This next section will first look at the general framing strategies of the museum and then look at two specific examples: first how the new museum frames the old museum's framing (similar to the analysis of how the new architecture interpreted and transformed the old architecture) and second the museum's revolutionary display of Egyptian sculpture and general use of vitrines.

i) General Framing

Closer to an art gallery than a traditional history museum, the *Neues Museum* presents its pieces as aesthetic rather than ethnographical objects. Its also invites the visitor to use the space in a relatively non-dogmatic manner, facilitating close encounters with the historical objects and exposing the various layers of history embodied in the building itself. Put succinctly, the strategy can be summed up as 'show, don't tell'. Because the

[402] Another interesting recent development that has occurred in the *Neues Museum* is that besides the increase in the number of information panels, on my visit in November 2014 I noticed the introduction of panels detailing research being conducted on the various parts of the collection. The framing strategies are clearly changing. The argument here refers to the original exhibition concept.

emphasis on the aesthetic experience and the intended result is to stimulate affect rather than impart a particular narrative or incite specific feelings, the main response it hopes to elicit is to the question: what does this mean for me?

It is easy to contrast this with the Jewish Museum, where the emphasis is on the framing itself (similar to the original framing of the *Neues Museum*). Rather than the arrows and axes of Libeskind's museum, the *Neues Museum* has no specific path through it. Both the sparseness of the wall texts and lack of recourse to digital interpretive material open an interpretive space for the visitor. It is up to them to find their own way through the museum and engage with the material using their own set of tools – namely their cumulative knowledge of history and their experience in museum spaces. Rather than offering them visual aids stipulating how they are to experience the collection, the objects are offered with as little obtrusive mediation as possible. The Jewish Museum, for example, even tells us where and how to look (photo on the left), and the *Neues Museum* (photo on the right) does not.

The image(s) originally presented here cannot be made freely available via ORA because of copyright restrictions.

Images: © Jewish Museum Berlin, photo Florian Duijsens; © SMB, photo Rebecca Clare Dolgoy

While in both instances we see objects that have been (literally) framed, the frames in the Jewish Museum resemble lenses, while the frames in the *Neues Museum* resemble windows. The distinction here is emblematic of the difference in the ways in which the museums tell history: ersatz engagement relies on the lenses of aesthetic reduction (in this case, the architect's), while the phenomenological museum tries to open a window to embodied history. These different methods are connected with the different mandates and

contexts of the two museums: the Jewish Museum was founded in a context where it was important for the founders to convey a particular historical narrative and approach to history (namely the West German strategy of 'overcoming memory'[403]), whereas the *Neues Museum* was founded in a context where *concordia discors* – the harmonization of various different framing narratives – was the dominant philosophy, regardless of whether or not this has been or can be actualised.

Minimizing mediation and facilitating as open an experience as possible was the intention of the architectural and curatorial team. Recalling one of Chipperfield's comments cited earlier, part of the museum experience is about individual visitors establishing their own understanding of completeness, or in other words, their own provisional notion of wholeness: '[the visitor is] continuously adjusting [his/her] conception [of the complete museum] based on all the parts'.[404] The emphasis here is on the visitor constituting a whole out of the available parts. Like with any phenomenological encounter the visitor is drawn into the space and the space becomes meaningful by the experience of the visitor. Recalling Merleau-Ponty's comments earlier 'Time is, therefore, not a real process […] it arises from my relation to things',[405] meaningful narratives are constellated during the interplay between the visitor and the museum.

By diminishing the importance of a master narrative (the one true path through a museum, or copious walls texts outlining the requisite amount of information to be

[403] See notes 175-176.
[404] See note 392. Schuster makes a similar point: 'In Chipperfield's Neues Museum there is a filigree diversity of perspectives, a multiperspectivity that treats what once was and what is now according to the venerable aesthetic principle of concinnitas, harmonious arrangements […]'. Peter-Klaus Schuster, 'A Temple of Memory: On David Chipperfield's Neues Museum', in *Neues Museum Berlin*, ed. by Nys and Reichert, pp. 169-205, p. 184. He is writing about the multiple architecture[s] of the space. I want to draw a link between the multiple architecture[s] and the multiplicity of visitor experiences.
[405] See notes 140 and 141.

absorbed by the visitor), the museum opens itself up to be experienced and interpreted in a plurality of ways – each visitor constituting their own wholeness, their own response to history, using the material the museum provides. The museum both initiates individuals into shared cultural inheritance and gives them the tools to appropriate and transform this heritage in ways that are meaningful each time for every person. 'Wholeness' here, the narrative of individuals in a shared context being able to take responsibility, helps us rethink the relationship between agency/responsibility on the one hand, and cultural inheritance/limits on the other. While all museums enable this to some extent, a phenomenological museum without a fixed narrative invites phenomenological responses. In this way, the framing complements the fragmentary wholeness of the collection itself as well as the fragmentary wholeness in the architecture.

ii) The New and the Old

The architects' choice to freeze the ruins, recuperate as much of the original material as possible, build a new building in the footprint of the old building, and marry the two together, has a slightly different equivalent in the museum's framing and curation: while the architectural form, figure, and function were stabilised then re-established, the old framing devices were restored but their function changed. As was evidenced in my discussion of the *Fragmentarium*, the old curation and framing have now become part of the collection. Even the restored and re-contextualized bits no longer function or convey the same meaning as they would have in Stüler's time.

Much of the restoration work (at least that which is visible to the visitor) involved the careful conservation and restoration of the various framing surfaces of the museum,

from the grand paintings (see the example from the *Vaterländischer Saal* on the right) to simple exit signs (see examples from the *Gräbersaal* on the left and in the middle).

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Images: © SMB, photos Florian Duijsens

The museum's strategy of allowing the phenomenon (in this case, historical processes) to express itself also allows for all of the various levels of the museum's past to resonate in the present. In the *Vaterländische Saal*, images from Norse mythology and the various older ages (Stone, Bronze, and Iron) may still adorn the walls, but they have lost their ability to stir nationalism – they also no longer have their original narrative function, because their panorama of world history no longer stands.[406] The *Gräbersaal* (and the *Mythologische Saal* before it, now a room dedicated to Egyptology) is perhaps an even clearer example of this. As with the objects in the cases of the *Fragmentarium*, the labels no longer match the contents. In the case of the *Gräbersaal*, the arrows and indicators also point to places that no longer exist.

In more general terms, the new museum's framing strategies frame the older framing strategies and narratives. Critics such as Rykwert have noted this:

> History as a grand narrative, as it originally shaped the Neues Museum or informed Kaulbach's vast paintings, no longer corresponds to the way we order our past – which is much more fragmentary, much more concerned with the particular […] rather than an epic account of the progression from one epoch to another. […] The reborn building now speaks anew to the visitor in accents that echo the intentions of its original designers and assumes the role of a witness to its own tragic story. [407]

[406] For a good account of this room see Marion Bertram, 'Der Vaterländische Saal', in *Neues Museum: Architektur Sammlung Geschichte*, ed. by Blauert and Bähr, pp. 106-113.
[407] Rykwert, 'The Museum Rejuvenated', in *Neues Museum Berlin*, ed. by Nys and Reichert, pp. 31-34.

For Rykwert, the idea that the museum was 'reborn' and that it is both a 'witness' and a place where its own past 'echoes' makes the museum itself both an object and a frame. The framing strategies from previous iterations of the museum are now cultural objects in their own right, thus echoing their previous functions.

iii) Vitrines: Heritage Objects as Works of Art

The final framing strategy is literal in nature and involves the custom-designed and fabricated black-framed vitrines in which the majority of the collection (at least the Egyptian collection at the time of the museum's opening) was displayed. Former director of the Egyptian collection Wildung spent years testing various means of presenting Egyptian sculpture. He was highly influenced by the curatorial work of renowned German Egyptologist Bernard von Bothmer (1912-1993), who served as the curator of the Egyptian collection at the Brooklyn Museum.[408] Bothmer had a background in art history as well as Egyptology, and it was from him that Wildung drew inspiration to display Egyptian sculpture as works of art in a gallery space, thus using the museum space to give the objects a museum context emphasizing their aesthetic rather than their historical value.

Wildung accomplishes this by arranging the sculpture collection according to aesthetic form rather than chronology. To further enhance this experience, visitors encounter the objects in highly reflective metal-framed vitrines designed by Michele de Lucchi. While reflective vitrines are not unique to the *Neues Museum*, they are integral to

[408] On Bothmer (but it could just as easily be said about Wildung) Bergman writes: 'The gallery spaces he created for the display of the Egyptian collection, every object in which was a masterpiece, were spacious, leaving generous amounts of room around each object. The walls were painted gray, to cause no distraction from the art, and the label content was short and factual. He wanted the viewer to be inspired to seek out a book to learn more'. Dianne Bergman, 'Bernard V. Bothmer' (unpublished article, 2013), p. 7.

the museum's phenomenological curatorial strategies that allows for quotidian conditions to become visible, without making them obvious. The rendering visible of what is in plain sight but difficult to perceive, namely the presence and continuing relevance of various pasts, is one of the main missions of the museum. It is analogous to the way in which the difficult past of the German twentieth century is made obvious by the architecture but is not the focus of the exhibition, thus suggesting that the difficult past should neither be evaded nor privileged – it is simply part of our experience of history.

The vitrines serve two main purposes. The first is that they simultaneously delineate the space and give the objects – even the tiniest ones – their own worlds.

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Images: © SMB, photos Kathryn Brechtel

As with the architectural fragments, these pieces are allowed to be encountered by the visitors without recourse to overbearing mediation. However, unlike with the architectural fragments, no attempt has been made to restore an 'original context' to these pieces – neither the original museum context nor the *in situ* feel of a Stüler/Lepsius-era museum trying to create a kind of ersatz experience. For example, rather than shrouding the *mastaba* ('eternal house'/tomb) in ambient darkness evocative of its tomb-like nature, the *Neues Museum*'s *mastaba* is brilliantly lit so that visitors can marvel at the both the carvings as well as the veins and hues of the stone.

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Unlike with the museum's original approach, the invitation here is to connect with the objects by relating to them in the present rather than by being transported into a simulacra of their original contexts thus prompting the question: what do these objects mean for us in the contemporary world?

Instead, Wildung's intention was to orchestrate framing strategies that would make the past feel close and '[…] intensify people's visual and emotional responses to the original works of art'.[409] For Wildung, the role of the museum is to facilitate an aesthetic experience of the collection (as opposed to facilitating an aesthetic experience of the historical phenomenon as is the case with the Jewish Museum). This strategy challenges one of the dominant history museum strategies: imparting as much material about objects' provenance and original context as possible. Wildung instead believes that the truth of the past is less important than the stories we can tell about it and the experience we can have in our encounters with it through the collection and the space.

This is both similar and different to the Jewish Museum's approach. It is similar because the Jewish Museum also relies heavily on the aesthetic experience informing the development of the historical consciousness. It is different because the framing of the

[409] Dietrich Wildung, 'The Neues Museum: The Museological Concept', in *The Neues Museum Berlin: Conserving, Restoring, Rebuilding within the World Heritage*, ed. by Ziesemer and others, pp. 65-69 (p. 66).

collection at the *Neues Museum* does not do the work for the collection or for the visitor. This could again be due in part to the times in which these museums were established and the kinds of history they are portraying – obviously German-Jewish history and Ancient Egypt cannot be equated in the minds of the museum visitor. However, it does allude to one of the fundamental questions about the role of truth in the museum: while it is obvious that museums should not tell outright lies and can never tell the truth in its entirety, how forceful should a museum be when it comes to imparting a particular take on history? The extremely domineering framing strategies of the Jewish Museum seem to assume complete responsibility for the historical truth, though reading against the grain it is of course possible to see how it is not in fact the historical truth that is on display, but rather the architect and curator's particular framing narratives of history. The less dogmatic framing of the *Neues Museum* seems to prompt the visitor to take responsibility for establishing meaningful constellations of historical truth, their own provisional image of wholeness and history, fuelled by associative logic and by using their own experience as a tool rather than relying on walls texts and other guiding devices (though there are audio guides for those who are so inclined). Articulating history, or rather stories about the past, is the responsibility of the visitor. The general *Bildung* here assumes that the visitor comes to the museum with interest and that this interest will continue after the visit. The museum does not try to do everything. It gives a space in which an individual's attempt to take responsibility for what he or she has inherited is already going on and can be continued or allowed to develop. The emphasis on form rather than chronology increases the temporal proximity of the available material for the visitor to use.

The second function of the vitrines is to contribute to the plurality of interpretive possibilities of the museum; they allow the visitor to get close to the objects while simultaneously never losing sight of the museum context as other visitors and street scenes from outside may be momentarily caught in the glass. We can see examples of this in the images below:

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Images: © SMB, photos Florian Duijsens, Turlach O'Broin (x3)

In the photo on the left we see people wandering through the main Egyptian sculpture room. We see them catching glimpses of themselves and other sculptures in the glass. We also note the cranes outside busily working on what will ultimately be the *James-Simon-Galerie*, the main entrance building to the whole of the *Museumsinsel*. The next two images show the pieces contemplating themselves and the world outside the world of their vitrines. The final one is a very clear example of the outside world being caught in the glass of the display case. The fleeting images in the vitrines permit the constant interweaving of contemporary and ancient images.

The experience is thus dynamic, pluralistic, and ever changing; it always depends upon who is in the room and what is happening outside. As with the work of contemporary artists such as Olafur Eliasson, who often employs mirrors and shadows in his installation spaces,[410] the *Neues Museum* vitrines establish a set of conditions against

[410] For an example of Olafur Eliasson's work that requires the presence of the visitor, see the 'Your Uncertain Shadow (Growing)' (2010) that needs somebody to be there in order for there to be shadows as the room is set up with a projector. For a description of this phenomenon in Eliasson's work, see

which any number of dramas can play out. Regardless of the number of visits, the *Neues Museum* can never be experienced in its totality; the experience is constantly changing. Though this is true for every museum, the curatorial parameters specifically play with this idea. While a visit to the *Neues Museum* is something that visitors do together, the constellating of references is an individualised experience. Visitors will never plumb the totality of the space, as their experience in and of it is always dynamic and subjective.

In order to show how the vitrines facilitate a subjective perceptive experience that is both whole and fragmented I want to discuss two specific examples. The most striking is the museum's prize object, the painted bust of Nefertiti that stands nearly alone in a dark room, lit with spotlights from above. Though alone, she may be perceived stereoscopically; when seen from behind, internal vitrine reflections of her two profiles and face may be simultaneously experienced. Though this possibility to perceive an object from several viewpoints while standing still is in itself a privileged experience, this experience is incredibly fleeting as at any moment this view may be interrupted by another visitor. This stereoscopic vision of Nefertiti will have to remain simply an evocation for the moment, as taking photos of Nefertiti is forbidden and the stereoscopic experience is entirely dependent on perfect positioning. I do however, have a photo taken by Wildung where we see Nefertiti viewed from behind, her lovely face caught in reflection of the vitrine as she stares down the length of the museum towards the colossal Helios statue at the other end.

Birnbaum's comments in the *Innen Stadt Außen* catalogue: 'A theme that seems to link Eliasson's work to […] Merleau-Ponty is the notion of alterity […] At the very foundation of *ourselves* we find *others* […] His work brings you outside to your innermost exterior. To a certain extent you produce the work, but in turn you are produced as a subject by the environments that the artist constructs. "It could be called a relationship of co-prduction," says Elisasson. And this, he would insist, is just as true once you leave the Gropius-Bau and re-enter the city that offers so many different points of view'. Daniel Birnbaum, 'Outside', in *Olafur Eliasson: Innen Stadt Außen*, ed by Daniel Birnbaum (Köln: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 2010), pp. 25-52 (p. 37).

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Image: © SMB, photo Dietrich Wildung

In Nefertiti's reflective frame the visitor encounters ancient beauty, a twenty-first-century re-think of a nineteenth-century museum, and the ever-changing moveable topography of the room's visitors.

The second example will ultimately lead us into the juxtaposition between the form and the content of the building. It is a reading of one very specific moment in the museum and encapsulates what I mean by an experience that is both whole and non-totalizing.

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Image: © SMB, photo Kathryn Brechtel

What we see in this photo are ancient/pre-historic swords on display in a highly reflective display case in whose glass Berlin's iconic *Fernsehturm* appears. The photo captures an ephemeral moment in one particular visit to the museum in which it was possible to experience simultaneity of the ancient world (via the weapons), the GDR (via the reflection of the tower), and the present day. Multiple pasts that are normally not juxtaposed thus coalesce in the vitrine. Though the image is not contrived, in that the

architects and curators did not attempt to trap the *Fernsehturm* in the glass (unlike Rem Koolhaas' Dutch Embassy in Berlin, which is precisely designed to permit a perfect view of the *Fernsehturm*), they did set up the structures to permit this juxtaposition to occur. Though the views and juxtapositions depend entirely upon the visitor moving around the space.

This photo perfectly exemplifies several key points about the curation of the museum: the idea of phenomenological exposition in that the vitrines form an interface between the inner history of the collection's objects and the museum and urban contemporary contexts, the need to have someone there experiencing and perceiving in order for there to be meaning, and the fleetingness of how these objects are experienced. In a sense, these vitrines facilitate the creation of a Benjaminian *dialektisches Bild*. The *dialektisches Bild* is a 'cipher of social reality'[411] or a riddle containing the presence of the past. It is experienced in a flash, and captures the phenomenological encounter between perceiving and being perceived.[412]

In the *Neues Museum*, the form (architecture) and content (objects/curatorial decisions) are part of a continuous (albeit non-teleological) story. The main story illustrated in this image is that of 'progress'. The next section will use this narrative to examine the relationship between form and content in the museum.

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[411] Susan Buck-Morss, *The Origin of Negative Dialectics: Theodor W. Adorno, Walter Benjamin and the Frankfurt Institute* (New York: The Free Press, 1977), p. 97.

[412] For a succinct definition of Benjamin's *dialektisches Bild* concept, see 'Konvolut N': 'Das dialektische Bild ist ein aufblitzendes. So, als ein im Jetzt der Erkennbarkeit aufblitzendes Bild, ist das Gewesene festzuhalten. Die Rettung, die dergestalt – und nur dergestalt – vollzogen wird, läßt immer nur an dem, im nächsten Augenblick schon unrettbar verloren <sich> vollziehen'. Walter Benjamin, *Das Passagen-Werk*, 2 vols (Frankfurt am Main: Edition Suhrkamp, 1983), I (1983), pp. 591-592.

C) Relationship Between Form and Content[413]

The question of progress, whether an inevitable quest or an impossible dream is among the more important phenomena expressed in the museum. As already outlined, the old framing narratives earned the museum the reputation as the embodiment of a Hegelian philosophy of history. In this philosophy of history, Prussia is portrayed as the pinnacle of world culture. That world culture was also conceived as a progression. The current museum clearly cannot share this optimism. Instead the current *Neues Museum* questions progress. How it does so is best conveyed by the following example, which shows how juxtaposing the form and content of the museum puts the twentieth century in a continuous narrative of history, thus posing a challenge to a cultural memory paradigm that reads the twentieth century as a rupture or a void.

The museum houses a collection of ancient weapons. There is an undeniable narrative of progress when it comes to technology: first we made weapons, then we made deadlier weapons. At some point we started decorating them. Our destructive and aesthetic capabilities continued to progress without interruption. This 'progression' is evident in the collection. However, when at any point one turns around, one can see the effect of this unyielding progress in weapons technology made explicit in the bullet holes that are still dotting the walls and that are reflected in the very display cases housing these weapons.

[413] In Harrap's material, this relationship is described as 'The Dialogue between collection and envelope' ('Dialog zwischen Sammlung und Hülle'). Julian Harrap Architects, *Denkmalpflegerischer Leitfaden*, p. 9.

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Images: © SMB, photos Florian Duijsens

Progress in technology and aesthetics has clearly not resulted in progress on a profoundly human level: the technological advances whose traces we see in the collection would ultimately lead to the very technology that caused these bullet holes in the wall. Progress is thus problematised by juxtaposing the architecture and the museum objects.

Allowing the recent past, particularly the traces of World War II, to join longer narratives of history by including it in the juxtaposition marks a shift from how the recent past has been portrayed in other museums in Berlin. Granted, the subject matter and mandate differ, but the Jewish Museum starts with the position that the twentieth century (or rather the Holocaust) represents a total rupture in what used to be a long narrative of continuity. Other museums dealing with long narratives of history, the *Deutsches Historisches Museum* or even the city's *Märkisches Museum*, do place historical events from the twentieth century within their longer narrative framework. No other museum, however, juxtaposes the ancient and recent pasts by allowing the visitor to contemplate how something that happened thousands of years ago in a distant location might have bearing on contemporary issues.

We could still say that the *Neues Museum* works towards establishing threads through world history, but if this were to be the case, these threads are not woven into a master narrative of history as they would have been in the nineteenth century. Instead, the museum's discordant harmony of form and content embodies the current ways in which

we relate to history and memory, all of which are characterized by notions of ambivalence and ambiguity. The permission and invitation to contemplate the scars caused by twentieth-century weapons while simultaneously looking at a display of ancient weapons within a space that facilitates interpretive plurality increases the amount of the past that is available for us to contemplate, while not limiting the ways in which we are allowed to contemplate it – thus opening up the possibility of a framing narrative of history that aspires to wholeness but that is non-totalizing.

Conclusion:

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Image: © SMB, photo Florian Duijsens

This is a *Jugendportrait des späteren Kaisers Tiberius* found in the first century AD in Troy. The nose-less emperor appears as though he is surveying the courtyard below in the aftermath of a great battle. As will be examined in the next section, the *Griechischer Hof* below was torn apart by bombs, and shrapnel traces still dot the walls. With Tiberius' weathered expression, it is hard to read his eyes, and the same weathering has also drawn a long gash in his forehead – almost as though bearing the weight of a millennium of worrying – watching catastrophes accumulate like Benjamin's *Engel der Geschichte*[414] until it becomes one long catastrophe, one single morning of aftermath.

[414] See Thesis IX of Walter Benjamin, *Über den Begriff der Geschichte* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp,

Reputedly a great general and the *trisissimus hominium* (gloomiest of men),[415] he certainly would have been accustomed to the sight of vanquished courtyards. Tiberius is a melancholy ambassador of the principle of non-totalizing wholeness: his position in the museum and the resilience of his quiet poise convey both brokenness and wholeness, both resignation and strength.

The architecture, collection, and curation of the *Neues Museum* tell the story of how, in the aftermath of destruction, fragments may be pieced back together in the footprint and shadow of their former order. However, they also tell the story that even if completeness and wholeness is the aspiration, flawless perfection is never attainable unless it is mere façade. The emperor's visage and the Beautiful Venus statue are both layered with care and experience. The museum space is like these statues: both complete and yet never really perfectly finished, as its sojourn in history is still on-going. The museum invites us to love these fault lines as constant reminders of being in time or of having lived and experienced. It presents us with a new kind of wholeness, one that incorporates brokenness. If we transpose this into a way of conceiving of history, this means there are no voids, only fissures.

II) Ruins, Traces

The second close reading of this chapter will focus on how the museum uses ruins. Unlike some of the images that dominated cultural memory discourse during the 1990s and early 2000s, such as voids and rupture, ruins evoke an image of that which has been left behind rather than that which is lost forever. In the *Neues Museum*, ruins are used as

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2010).

[415] This description comes from Pliny the Elder, *Natural Histories*. The reference was found on Wikipedia, 'Tiberius', < http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tiberius> [accessed 4 March 2014].

both metaphor and material. In both instances, ruins appear as things that have been inherited and that may be transformed. The emphasis on transformation is suggestive of practices of cultural memory underpinned by the idea that how we use the past is just as important as how we mourn for it. This section will look closely at how ruins are transformed and used in the *Neues Museum*. I will first sketch a general description of the way ruins relate to the museum (ruins as metaphor), and will then look at specific examples of the way the phenomenon works in the *Neues Museum* (ruins as material).

A) Ruins as Metaphor

In his book called *In Ruins*, one of the sources to which Harrap turned when thinking about how to cope with the ruins of the *Neues Museum*, Christopher Woodward describes ruins as part of a 'familiar dialogue of fragmentation versus wholeness'.[416] Wholeness and fragments constitute but one of the ambiguous images represented by the metaphor of ruins. Additionally, ruins embody images of decay and resilience, of destruction and preservation, and of what is lost and what is left.

Woodward believes that **'**[i]n ruins movement is halted, and Time suspended'.[417] 'Suspending time' and 'halting movement' sound very much like the decision made by the architects to stop the deterioration of the *Neues Museum* building by establishing a point of intervention. The notion of an intervention here reminds us that, unlike with voids, something has indeed been left behind in which we can intervene – there is something that we can use. As much as ruins express loss and decay, they also start to

[416] Christopher Woodward, *In Ruins* (London: Vintage, 2002), p. 210. Woodward also gives a beautiful reading of Ruth Macaulay's novel *The World My Wilderness*, where she describes two children coping with the ruins of London. He writes: 'The final words of the book argued for the reconstruction of wholeness from the fragments of modernity'. Woodward, p. 233.
[417] Woodward, p. 36.

appear as a metaphor that is productive and optimistic. Following this ambiguity, ruins are often endowed with a sentimental or even romantic quality as well as with a strange temporality. This section will look at both of these characteristics.

The sentimental quality may be summed up as 'nostalgia', as it is by Huyssen:

> […] over the past decade and a half, a strange obsession with ruins has developed in the countries of the northern transatlantic as part of a much broader discourse about memory and trauma, genocide and war. This contemporary obsession with ruins hides a nostalgia for an earlier age that had not yet lost its power to imagine other futures […] The cipher for this nostalgia is the ruin.[418]

Taken from his 2006 article 'Nostalgia for Ruins', this quotation portrays the ruin as somewhat ambiguous. It on the one hand capitalizes on a cultural memory context that is obsessed with trauma and damage, while on the other hand embodies nostalgia for a time before this damage, a time when it was possible to 'imagine other futures'. This strange temporality – longing for a past that imagined other futures, or in other words, longing for futures that are no longer possible – is why Huyssen's reading is so interesting. The nostalgia here does not arise because we want to go back to the past, or to a lost home, but rather because we want to retrieve the possibility to imagine a different future, something that, according to Huyssen, has been lost.[419] Although, as was made evident in the previous close reading, one cannot re-establish a former approach to history, one can appropriate and interpret the traces of these approaches.

Huyssen describes what has been lost as a 'modernity that dare not speak its name after acknowledging the catastrophes of the twentieth century and the lingering injuries of

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[418] Andreas Huyssen, 'Nostalgia for Ruins', *Grey Room*, 23 (Spring, 2006), pp. 6-21, (p. 7). Benjamin discusses ruins and fragments in his analysis of allegory in his *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels*, in *Gesammelte Schriften*, 14 vols, ed. by R. Tiedemann and H. Schweppenhäuser (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970-), I (1991). For Benjamin, ruins function in a landscape where the guiding narratives are gone. In my analysis of the museum, ruins are part of the rediscovery of possibile narratives.

[419] In his article, Huyssen gives the standard reading of nostalgia as 'homesickness' (from the Greek *nostos algos*) but crucial for nostalgia is the idea that 'home' can never actually be completely recovered. Huyssen, 'Nostalgia for Ruins', p. 7. See note 240 on Boym's definition of nostalgia.

inner and outer colonization'.[420] While I won't be able to fully explicate this argument until the concluding chapter of this dissertation, the *Neues Museum* is an expression of this 'modernity that dare not speak its name', an embodiment of a revival, or rather a re-interpretation and appropriation of certain tropes of earlier modernities. The way in which the *Neues Museum* functions as an ambiguous image of wholeness/fragments and the way in which it uses ruins are both fundamental to this expression and to its appropriation. While in Huyssen's reading of ruins it seems as though it would be impossible to reconcile the longing for a return or for wholeness with the recognition that this return is impossible and fragments are all that is left to us, and while ambiguous images in general are not exactly meant to be reconciled (because we are meant to flip between their two faces), I argue that the ways in which ruins are used in the *Neues Museum* offer a temporary respite from the oscillation.

Ruins also are imbued with a strange temporality, enabling those who encounter them to project into the future as well as connect to the past. They invite one to imagine how it could be for others to come across traces of our lives, constructions, and choices. Woodward writes:

> When we contemplate ruins, we contemplate our own future. To statesmen, ruins predict the fall of Empires, and to philosophers the futility of mortal man's aspirations. To a poet, the decay of a monument represents the dissolution of the individual ego in the flow of Time; to a painter or architect, the fragments of a stupendous antiquity call into question the purpose of their art. Why struggle with a brush or chisel to create the beauty of wholeness when far greater works have been destroyed by Time?[421]

In all the instances outlined by Woodward, ruins do seem to evoke 'futility' and I will dispute this claim in the final close reading of this chapter. At present, however, it is

[420] Huyssen, 'Nostalgia for Ruins', p. 7.
[421] Woodward, pp. 2-3.

important to note that ruins are just as much about the way in which we in the present relate to the future as they are about the way we relate to the past, just as much about how we remember and how we want to be remembered.

Part of deciphering ruins is to decipher this particular temporality. The temporality of nostalgia and ruins in architecture, particularly in the case of museums or other great cultural institutions, may not simply be characterized by a longing for a lost past. Museums are built not only as places to learn about the past, but also as statements made about the present with the future in mind. Woodward describes this as the 'Ozymandias Complex'.[422] Though cultures build great structures with the intention of them lasting forever and attesting to the greatness of the particular moment in which they were built, even the mightiest fall, as the poet Shelley tells us in his 'Ozymandias' poem: the tension between the 'sneer' and the 'shattered visage' on the 'half sunk[en]' desert face, the cruel irony of the lingering 'look on my works, ye mighty, and despair' juxtaposed with the 'nothing beside remains'[423] reminds us that even (or perhaps especially) our greatest monuments are bound within historical frameworks; nothing is inviolable.

There is a tradition of monumental works of (or about) architecture, at least in the nineteenth century, that face this Ozymandias Complex head-on – as though the painters and the architects already planned for the eventuality of an end in ruins.[424] The two paintings below are examples of this projection:

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[422] 'The Ozymandias Complex', is the title of Chapter 9 of *In Ruins*, pp. 177-204. Woodward discusses Soane's Bank of England building.

[423] See Percy Bysshe Shelley, 'Ozymandias', in *The Poetical Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, ed. by Harry Buxton Forman (London: Reeves & Turner), [downloaded 3 March 2014], p. 376.

[424] For an illustration, see the 'Ruin Lust: Artists' Fascination with Ruins from Turner to the Present Day' exhibition at London's Tate Britain (4 March – 18 May 2014). Interestingly enough the curator Brian Dillon traced a very similar genealogy of ruins starting with the German idea *Ruinenlust*, and continuing

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Images: Hubert Robert,'Vu imaginaire de la galerie du Louvre en ruine' (1796), *Wikimedia Commons*; Joseph Gandy, Bank of England as a Ruin' (1830), © Sir John Soane's Museum

On the left is Hubert Robert's painting of the Louvre's Grand Gallery in ruins, and on the right we see Joseph Michael Gandy's take on the Bank of England as a ruin.[425] Robert's painting was made in 1796, just three years after the Louvre's opening. Gandy's painting was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1830, towards the end of John Soane's tenure as architect and surveyor to the Bank of England. As the Louvre Grand Gallery remains intact and in use, Robert's view of the ruins remains purely imaginary. Gandy's view of the ruined Bank, however, seems like a more prophetic vision: the bank was demolished in 1925 and, as Woodward notes, 'photographs of the time show an uncanny similarity to Gandy's vision, even down to the demolition men swinging their pickaxes. As ever, posterity is a dab hand at dramatic irony'.[426] The aerial view provides for perhaps more dramatic irony, knowing how both British and German cities would have looked from above in 1945. Dramatic irony's 'dab hand' never tires.

Both Soane and Robert were influenced by Piranesi, one of the main subjects of Huyssen's ruin's article, and, as will shortly be made apparent, certainly one of the quiet

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with several of the images I use here including the Robert and Gandy paintings and Piranesi's drawings. The exhibition culminated in late-twentieth-century scenes of urban ruin. The exhibition also stressed the strange temporality of ruins and quoted several sources that I haven't mentioned explicitly in my study here (e.g. Sebald's *Austerlitz*) but that form part of the project's general background reading. See Brian Dillon, *Ruin Lust: Artists' Fascination with Ruins from Turner to the Present Day* (London: Tate, 2014).

[425] Michaela Giebelhausen also makes reference to this painting in her essay on the *Neues Museum* called 'In the Museusm's Ruins: Staging the Passage of Time', in *Museum Making: Narratives, Architectures, Exhibitions*, ed. by Suzanne Macleod, Laura Hourston Hanks, and Jonathan Hale (London: Routledge, 2012), pp. 234-246 (p. 234).

[426] Woodward, p. 162.

inspirations behind the current *Neues Museum*. Many of Piranesi's idealised ruin-scapes, such as the series at Paestum (example below), hang in the picture gallery of Sir John Soane's Museum, located in Soane's former residence spanning several houses on London's Lincoln's Inn Fields:

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Image: Giovanni Battista Piranesi, 'Paestum, Italy: Interior of the Temple of Neptune' (1778), © Sir John Soane's Museum

During his life, Soane's house was also his office, laboratory, and museum. It was filled with architectural fragments from antiquity, works of art from various periods, and contemporary models and sketches. As he bequeathed the collection and the houses to the nation upon his death, the public continues to be able to wander through the passages of his playful and eclectic imagination.

While it is dangerous to run the risk of reading too much in happenstance, there is an important connection between John Soane, ruins, and the *Neues Museum*. Schinkel visited Soane at Lincoln's Inn Fields during his 1826 grand tour of England and France. The *Altes Museum* was to open four years later (coincidentally the same year in which the Gandy painting was first displayed). While Schinkel painted and sketched ruins, his response to classical antiquity was mostly to use it as an idealised allegory in his framing narratives of culture, as well as to inform his neoclassical romantic forms, as can be seen in his panoramic painting, *Blick in Griechenlands Blüte*, which is often cited as the original impetus behind the *Museumsinsel* temple city:

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Image: © SMB, Karl Friedrich Schinkel, 'Blick in Griechenlands Blüte' (1825)[427]

The image depicts the golden years of the antique world and was intended to inspire a renewal of their forms and philosophies in contemporary Prussia.[428] For Schinkel, as was described in Chapter 3, it was more the inheritance, interpretation, and transformation of classical forms at the height of their bloom that influenced his architecture than their fragmentary ruinous forms. Nevertheless, Soane and his fascination with ruins and classical antiquities greatly influenced Schinkel and thus the nineteenth-century fate of the *Museumsinsel*, of which Stüler's *Neues Museum* is an integral part.

Soane and his quirky museum would continue to be closely interwoven with the history of the *Neues Museum* in the twenty-first century. In 2008, one year before its official opening, Sir John Soane's Museum hosted an exhibition entitled 'The *Neues Museum*, Berlin; Restoration, Repair and Intervention', which the Soane's Museum's website describes as:

> The exhibition at Sir John Soane's Museum will explore the philosophy and development of this remarkable project, using original site drawings. Chipperfield, an admirer of Sir John Soane's work, is famed for his sensitive – and yet daring – approach in the restoration and reuse of historic fabric.[429]

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[427] Please note that the original was destroyed in World War II. The one hanging in the *Alte Nationalgalerie* is a copy made by August Wilhelm Julius Ahlborn in 1836.
[428] For a good analysis of this painting see Adrian von Buttlar's essay 'Freiheit im Werden', in *Karl Friedrich Schinkel: Geschichte und Poesie, das Studienbuch*, ed. by Heinrich Schulze Alteappenberg, Rolf H. Johannsen, and Christiane Lange (Berlin: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2012), pp. 117-128. The book was published to coincide with a big series of Schinkel exhibitions in Berlin during the winter of 2012.
[429] See Sir John Soane's Museum, 'Past Interventions: The Neues Museum Berlin', <http://www.soane.org / exhibitions/ the_neues_museum_berlin_restoration_repair_and_intervention> [accessed 6 February 2014].

To my knowledge, this is the only major exhibition of the *Neues Museum* architecture concept that took place outside of Berlin. Chipperfield, however, is not the only *Neues Museum* architect to have a history with John Soane's Museum: Harrap Architects have been restoring the museum's historical spaces since 2011. In addition to the personal connections many of the *Neues Museum* architects had with Soane and his museum, the actual museum itself is very much preoccupied with both innovative intervention in old structures and the careful preservation of ruins and material.[430]

Thus even if it is perhaps happenstance, we can trace a miniature genealogy of an aesthetic of ruins from Piranesi, Soane, and Schinkel to Harrap and Chipperfield. There is also the lingering sense among these architects (Piranesi did study architecture even if he is mostly known as an artist) that ruins are not just about the past – they possess posterity. Posterity implies a leaving behind or a legacy and is thus forward looking. Others in the future will use the cultural inheritance we leave for them. This kind of forward looking posterity suggests that what was destroyed may live as ruins or find its way into the afterlife of images safely stowed in a vitrine.

B) Ruins as Material

Up to this point, my reading of ruins has been rather metaphorical and theoretical, and has thus evaded what is perhaps the central point of the way ruins are used in the *Neues Museum*. In addition to ruins being used as a cipher of nostalgia occupying a metaphorical space, as Huyssen suggests, ruins are also used as the actual museum material. The movement from metaphor to material is somewhat analogous to a

[430] For an example, see the pop-up exhibition at Sir John Soane's Museum entitled: 'Cities and Other Ruins: Reflections on Astley Castle by Witherford Watson Mann' (4-15 February, 2014).

movement from reducing history to an aesthetic ersatz phenomenon or symbol, on the one hand, to allowing it to be encountered on the other; while both the ersatz and the phenomenological museum are immersive worlds that embody history, the phenomenological museum emphasises the way in which individual visitors might use history, as opposed to the way in which the curator/architect intends the visitor to use it. Using ruins as material rather than as an overarching metaphor allows both the architects and the visitors to get closer to what was actually left behind, thus lending a rigor and connectedness to the process of establishing historical consciousness. As I have already discussed how ruins were used in the architecture of the *Neues Museum*, this reading will look at two case studies, the *Griechischer Hof* and the museum's columns, to see how ruins are used in the context of the new building and how they resonate with the matters we have discussed so far.

i) Griechischer Hof*: What is Lost and what is Saved*

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Image: © SMB, photo Turlach O'Broin

This is an image of Hermann Schievelbein's 1848 narrative frieze called *Der Untergang von Pompeji*. The frieze depicts the Pompeians fleeing Vesuvius, portrayed in the frieze by an angry face spewing liquid. The Pompeians are running in two directions and their paths take them around the entirety of the courtyard.

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Images: © SMB, photos Florian Duijsens (x2), Rebecca Clare Dolgoy (x2)

Though it is difficult to make out in the photos, on one end we see Stüler, the architect, and on the other von Olfers, the museum's first director; the two men are waiting to collect the treasures of the destroyed city. I once heard a museum guide state that one of the directions led to the sea and to relative safety, the other led to the museum. Both interpretations offer a kind of survival and immortality, albeit one more organic than the other. The choice of sea or museum recalls the underworld (coffins) and afterworld of images (museum vitrines) orientation of the *Ägyptischer Hof* in Chapter 4.II. Looking at this in another way, in her 2011 article 'Working Through Ruins: Berlin's Neues Museum', Kerstin Barndt writes that 'ruins and museums are bound up with each other as the two faces of destruction'.[431] Destruction has its victims (ruins) and its beneficiaries (museums).

This equation, however, portrays ruins in a purely negative light, and misses the other face of the ambiguous image. Ruins, in the case of the *Neues Museum*, embody both decay and resilience, both the courtyard that was damaged and the courtyard that was restored. It might then be possible to re-organize the terms of Barndt's equation: in the *Neues Museum* destruction and construction are the two faces of ruins.

In the *Griechischer Hof*, the visitor thus perceives a dialectic of destruction and preservation. The metaphor of Pompeii's destruction and the museum's subsequent victory (it receives the spoils) is juxtaposed with the materiality of the courtyard's ruins:

[431] Kerstin Barndt, 'Working Through Ruins: Berlin's Neues Museum', *The Germanic Review; Literature, Culture, Theory*, 84.4 (2011), p. 294.

the 79 AD eruption both destroyed Pompeii and ultimately guaranteed its place in lore and museum collections, while the February 1945 bombing that destroyed the courtyard ultimately imbued it with its enigmatic and hieroglyphic bullet-hole graffiti. The courtyard is one example where recent and ancient pasts seem to coincide or at least concur. While the Vesuvius eruption and the Allied bombings were very different kinds of historical events, they both produced ruins.[432] And the similarities continue: both ruins were allowed to gather patina – they were re-discovered, excavated, and re-interpreted after a period of delay. Finally, what is important when thinking about the fleeing Pompeians, the aftermath of the bombing, and the ultimate rising from the ashes of both traumatic events is that regardless of the path the Pompeians took (to the sea or to the museum) – or whatever decision the SMB or the architects made – the means for their survival of sorts came via human hands reinterpreting and re-contextualizing the ruins. The frieze, while ostensibly about the downfall of Pompeii, is thus also about the persistence of humanity through and over history.

Much of Barndt's article focuses on a reading of the courtyard as a metonymy for the larger conceptual narratives of the *Neues Museum* and of museums in general. While depicting an architect and museum director happily waiting to collect treasures after such decimation has taken place is practically unthinkable today, the urge to preserve and to order (or curate) is also a contemporary one. *Weltordnung* has been added to the name *Griechischer Hof*, though in the early phases of planning it was referred to as the Chaos and Order Courtyard in honour of the architect ordering the chaos of the twentieth century as well as creating a portal between various historical epochs as the courtyard

[432] For a good reading of the courtyard, see Giebelhausen, 'In the Museum's Ruins: Staging the Passage of Time', in *Museum Making: Narratives, Architectures, Exhibitions*, ed. by Macleod, Hanks, and Hale, pp. 238-241.

figures in the *Masterplan*'s *Archäologische Promenade*. Though perhaps not waiting to accept the treasures of the past like Stüler, Chipperfield accepts the chaotic cultural inheritance of the space and orders it. Ordering the chaos is another way to express the idea of re-establishing form and figure as well as putting the fragments back into a meaningful order. Ordering is also what we do when we tell stories in ways that are meaningful for us.

The current museum's framing narrative, as found in its drive to order chaos even when only provisionally, stands against the melancholic futility Woodward found in contemplating ruins. The way in which the restoration of the courtyard harmonizes with the depiction of the fall of Pompeii is a strong statement about the simultaneous fragility and resilience of human creation: cities might be buried under ash and museums might be burned and shelled, but there is always the possibility that what is lost might one day be found, that the desert will yield more of its treasures.

In fact, when Barndt wrote her article, she referenced the Courtyard's temporary exhibition of *entartete Kunst* that had been unearthed during the digging of a new U-Bahn line. The image below was taken during this exhibition.

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Image: © SMB, photo Florian Duijsens

Seeing the *entartete Kunst* in the *Neues Museum* courtyard is an example both of how what is lost may be found but also how the museum experience (especially the phenomenological museum) renders visible that which we encounter or use all the time

but cannot really perceive; the past is always underfoot – while not always experienced in as dramatic a manner as in the *Neues Museum*, traces of the past are part of daily life.

While this is true everywhere, it is particularly true in Berlin. One could, as the American-born Berlin-based artist Erik Smith did in the fall of 2011, start digging in a nondescript 'vacant lot' in the former 'death strip' at what was at that time the *Skulpturenpark Berlin Zentrum*, the headquarters of the *KUNSTrePUBLIK e.V* (an artist collective), and unearth something surprising. According to his website:

> After two days of digging, he unearthed the top of a curved wall, whereupon his shovel struck a hollow sound. Like an archaeologist on the precipice of a chance discovery, Smith methodically uncovered a wholly intact, cast-iron, spiral staircase, a nineteenth-century remnant […] Smith produces an architecture, a staircase downward emerging.[433]

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Image: © Erik Smith

A 'staircase downward emerging' might be an enigmatic and arresting expression, but it essentially describes the process of excavation. One digs downwards only to have objects emerge. Looking at perhaps a grand example of what might emerge, when Nefertiti came back up to the earth's surface in December 2012 after having spent millennia under the sand, her name, meaning 'the beautiful one has come' may well have been amended to 'the beautiful one has come back'.[434] Though Smith's digging yielded less iconic results,

[433] For an account of the project, see Erik Smith, 'Test Dig No. 1', <www.eriksmith.de/TD/td_1.html> [accessed 6 February 2011].
[434] See Lars Petersen, 'Nofretete im Fokus: Die ersten Fotografien der Nofretete-Büste', *Im Licht von Amarna: 100 Jahre Fund der Nofretete*, ed. by Friederike Seyfried (Petersberg, Hesse: Michael Imhof Verlag, 2012), pp. 445-451.

the process and possibility that buried objects might come back to the surface is comparable.

Though Smith's approach was described as archaeological, this relates more to the careful digging than the careful research and categorization. Besides happening upon such a striking find (the staircase), he found all kinds of evidence that led him to speculate that the space used to house a restaurant (see for example the piece that I found when I went to visit in December of 2011).

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Image: Rebecca Clare Dolgoy

He could have easily done the research, but ultimately what had been in this space before the war and before the Wall did not really matter to Smith. While on the one hand this ambivalence could signal an emptying out of the specificity of the space or an abstraction, it could also signal a change in the meaning of 'digging for truth' when it comes to establishing historical consciousness. So much in cultural memory theory and praxis, particularly to do with the Holocaust, has focused on witnessing and testimony – a desperate need to establish as much truth as possible before the survivors die and parents/grandparents can no longer tell the stories of what they did during the war. [435] Smith's use of the ruin ('staircase downward') as a space for projection is similar to the *Neues Museum*'s lack of interpretive material; for Smith, the power of projection onto the

[435] For relevant examples of this see: Felman and Laub, *Testimony*, pp. xiii-xx; and Harald Welzer, Sabine Moller, and Karoline Tschuggnall, *'Opa war kein Nazi': Nationalsozialismus und Holocaust im Familiengedächtnis* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 2010). Chapter 3 'Sinn machen: Wie die Geschichten sich auf ihrem Weg durch die Generationen verändern', pp. 44-80 is particularly relevant here.

ruins of the staircase was more valuable than any historical truth the space could possibly provide. The projection here is tantamount to a disclosure of our on-going relation to history, it allows us to consciously perceive and participate in what we normally do tacitly. The value is that the staircase inspires the imaginations of the visitors/viewers and invites them to create their own story using the available material.

ii) Columns and Temples: The Strange Temporality of Ruins

The final case study of this section will look at the way in which the museum uses its columns. More than any other architectural feature, the columns of the *Neues Museum* embody the visible damage of World War II.

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Images: © SMB, photos Turlach O'Broin; Florian Duijsens

The two images above show pockmarked columns both in the outdoor Colonnade (on the right) and on the inside of the building (on the left). These columns provoke an emotional response in the visitor; they are fragile and damaged while also being resilient. Columns also evoke the idea or image of an idealised past – traces of a temple city that was part of a *Masterplan* that was never actualised. Once associated with the interpretation of classical forms (in Schinkel and Stüler's time), the columns in today's museum are also interpretations; where the original columns could not be restored, new, square columns

have taken their place. The choice for replacement rather than recreation falls within the parameters of the overall restoration strategy.

The colonnades and gardens of the *Neues Museum* were integral to the original conception of the *Mueumsinsel* as a *Freistätte*, they provided for the contemplative oasis between the museum buildings. The same intentions permeate the restoration or re-design of the gardens and colonnades today, as they are intended to 'transport [the visitor] away from the city'.[436]

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Images: © SMB, photos Florian Duijsens; Rebecca Clare Dolgoy (x2)

In these images we see a green space surrounded by damaged columns. Schuster has described this space as having 'an almost Arcadian serenity'.[437] Though the Arcadian impulse seems slightly at odds with the urban setting of the *Museumsinsel*, in one of Arcadia's most famous depictions, the seventeenth-century painting by Nicolas Poussin, shepherds clustering around a tomb are coming to terms with the idea that even in Arcadia there is death; even in paradise there are traces of the ephemeral, of human intervention. Arcadia is thus not only pastoral, it also relates to nostalgia; as Huyssen

[436] See Levin Mosigny quoted in Norbert Heuler, Klaus-Henning von Krosikg, and Klaus Lingenauber, 'The Colonnades, Colonnade Garden, and Bridges,'in *Museum Island Berlin*, ed. by Eissenhauer, Bähr, and Rochau-Shalem, pp. 220-235 (p. 231).
[437] Schuster, 'A Temple of Memory: On David Chipperfield's Neues Museum', in *Neues Museum Berlin*, ed. by Nys and Reichert, p. 184.

suggests, 'nostalgia can be utopia in reverse'.[438] To think of a utopia in reverse conjures the idea of a golden past or 'the good old days', times when things were simpler. Though the history of this space is not one of simple serenity.

Filled with columns, colonnades, and gardens, these contemplative spaces were originally intended to be a beautiful *Freistätte* for preserving the best of human achievement and potential: learning (*Wissenschaft*) and art. But though this space may be considered an urban Arcadia now, the death, decay, and the melancholic spirit Woodward finds in ruins are also very much present. Even so, the traces of human intervention are not only destructive: humans both constructed and re-established these columns as much as they filled them with bullet holes; and they planted and re-planted these gardens even if they also trampled them in between the plantings. The Arcadian element of the *Neues Museum* does not signal an idealised past, instead it signals the past in both its terrible and beautiful dimensions

Recalling the paintings of Soane's bank and the Louvre in ruins, another way of looking at the columns and temples in the museum pertains to the temporality of ruins. In the images below we see one of the wall paintings in the *Ägyptischer Hof*. The first image shows the context of the painting – it has been restored and sits on the main level of the *Hof*. Above is Chipperfield's platform, where the Amarna portraits were displayed, supported by square columns and below is the underworld of the museum (display of various coffins/Book of the Dead). The second is a close-up of the image.

[438] Huyssen, 'Nostalgia for Ruins', p. 7.

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Images: © SMB / David Chipperfield Architects, photo Ute Zscharnt (and close up/cropped look at image)

The painting is of a temple resting on a hill overlooking a body of water. Despite the water, it is an arid scene; the sky is pale and the trees and greenery are hardly lush. Though its melancholic emptiness makes the temple seem abandoned or awaiting re-discovery, clearly humans did intervene in this landscape.

It is only dramatic irony that lets us read the image above in a prophetic manner, knowing that the ruins of the museum would ultimately come to resemble the depiction of the temple in the decoration: The image of the ruined temple actually became a reality (see middle image below).

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Images: Georgina Paul, © SMB Zentralarchiv

The ruins of the *Neues Museum* did not embody an idealised past, but rather served as a stark reminder of history. Even so, these ruins were not merely symbolic. In spite of the photo giving the impression of a totally abandoned space, these, the ruins of the *Neues*

Museum, formed an integral part of the city's urban identity; they were a space for public use (see the benches in the photo on the right) and were an integral part of daily life in East Berlin. Incorporating the ruinous elements into the re-established museum both pays respect to this time in its history and allows the ruins to continue to be used as material in the formation of historical consciousness.

Conclusion:

From the grandest sculptures to the most meagre objects of everyday life, ruins ultimately remind us not only that there are no voids, but that traces of our own lives may at some point find new contexts. At any moment new light might fall upon an image or object from the past. Ruins are thus both images of melancholy and hopefulness; they stand for a past that cannot be fully recovered but also for potential futures that are at hand, for the possibility of moving between Aleida Assmann's conception of *Funktions*- and *Speichergedächtnis*.[439]

The *Neues Museum*'s use of ruins as material expresses both their creative and destructive potential. There is however a complex relationship between ruins and intervention; human intervention either facilities a rapid decay or stops it altogether. The *Neues Museum*, with its architectural strategies between intervention and restoration, tries to find a middle ground. In the museum, ruins are still ruins but the process of ruination is essentially halted.

[439] See note 87.

III) *Homo Faber*: From the Tower of Babel to the Rubble Mountains

The final close reading will examine an image that has always been at the core of the *Neues Museum*: *homo faber*. The *Neues Museum*'s *homo faber* is as close to a mythical figure as is possible for a human. Borrowing this concept from Hannah's Arendt's *The Human Condition, homo faber* is humanity as it works, builds, and creates a world, or human structures that are separate from nature:

> The work of our hands […] fabricates the sheer unending variety of things whose sum total constitutes the human artifice […] The durability of the human artifice is not absolute; the use we make of it, even though we do not consume it, uses it up. The life process which permeates our whole being invades it, too, and if we do not use the things of the world, they also will eventually decay, return into the over-all natural processes from which they were drawn and against which they were erected […] From this viewpoint, the things of the world have the function of stabilising human life […] [440]

The image of humanity is one where to be human is to make, to use, and to do. The *Neues Museum* celebrates 'the work of our hands'; its collection is filled with objects of everyday life, tools and the products of these tools. Its original decoration glorified the determined but ephemeral nature of human creation. While this idea was very much espoused in the original framing narratives of the building, the new *Neues Museum* continues to stress an image of humanity that makes something out of its cultural inheritance – in this case making a wholeness out of ruins and fragments. Given that the *Neues Museum* is essentially a history museum, the question is whether it is possible to construct or uncover a historical consciousness with the tools and material the museum puts at the visitor's disposal. This section will look at two case studies: the first, the Kaulbach 'Tower of Babel' fresco, will help to get a sense of how the original museum handled what I am describing as the image of humans as *homo faber*, the second, the

[440] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), pp. 136-137.

Niobidensaal, will serve to both confirm the reading of the original museum and to see how the current museum has transformed the original narrative.

A) Babel

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Image: Wilhelm von Kaulbach, 'Der Babelturm' (1860), *Wikimedia Commons*

In this image we see people at the base of the tower awaiting their punishment for trying to build it too high in order to reach the heavens. For Kaulbach, Stüler, and the original *Neues Museum*, the narrative of human history begins with the introduction of human artifice and creative powers as exemplified by one of the first important human-made structures in the Judeo-Christian tradition. Unlike in Schinkel's museum, where mythological themes such as 'The Forces of Nature, called into existence out of Chaos into the reigning Daylight'[441] served as the grounding narratives, the *Neues Museum* has always been about the human world (not the natural one). Even taking into account the biblical themes presented in Kaulbach's series, Eden, or for that matter the time before the Great Flood, are not even referenced. Also noteworthy is that the story does not begin with Abraham. It is the building and the destruction of the Tower of Babel that Kaulbach, Stüler, and von Olfers took as the origin of human history. The fall of the tower marked the invention of multiple languages, and the spreading of humanity throughout the world.

[441] See note 264.

Human history thus begins with tools and with language. Language is also a tool. Like with *Dasein* and the situation into which we are all thrown, we come into a world of tools, references, signs. As with God, whose words brought things into being, humans from Babel onward possessed the ability to create, to make things, to bring them to life through words and tools. This is part of the nature of *homo faber*. Arendt writes:

> *Homo faber*, the creator of the human artifice, has always been a destroyer of nature. […] only *homo faber* conducts himself as lord and master of the whole earth. Since his productivity was seen in the image of a Creator-God, so that where God creates *ex nihilo*, man creates out of given substance, human productivity was by definition bound to result in a Promethean revolt because it could erect a man-made world only after destroying part of God-created nature.[442]

In the original *Neues Museum*, humans have replaced the gods as the rulers of history. While the original museum decoration contains references to traditional mythology, there are to my knowledge very few representations of gods/God, or figures we would include in any of the traditional Pantheons, in the museum's decoration. The exception can be found in the *Vaterländischer Saal*, where depictions of Norse gods and scenes from mythology originally decorated the room.

Images can also be considered tools, or instruments in the establishment of nation-building narratives. The Norse gods here are not presented as creators and thus responsible for the human history, they are used to provide some justification for Prussian aspirations of grandeur. The rest of the frescoes in Kaulbach's series are firmly placed in history: 'Homer and the Greeks', 'The Destruction of Jerusalem', 'The Battle of the Huns', 'Crusaders at the Gates of Jerusalem', and 'The Age of the Reformation'.

[442] Arendt, p.139.

Interestingly enough, nearly all of the tableaux (Homer and the Greeks being the exception, perhaps) involve some kind of violence or destruction. Claiming Babel as a starting point also highlights both the precarious nature of the works of *homo faber* and our ambivalent potential; our tools both create and destroy. The tableaux' depiction of several scenes of the destruction of great civilizations (albeit civilizations which were on the losing side of the progress of history) reminded visitors that the works of human hands have a limited lifespan and are meant to be used. This is a theme that is picked up throughout the museum, the Schievelbein frieze depicting the destruction of Pompeii being another example that not only glorifies the work of human hands, but credits humans for saving these works from obscurity. Implicit here is that the images created for the museum (the frescoes/frieze) and the images of history created by the museum in these frescoes and friezes might also be used as tools for humans.

B) The Niobidensaal

Even if gods do not figure prominently in the museum's decorative strategies, strong human figures or divine figures closely associated with human artifice do. The clearest example of this comes in the *Niobidensaal*, the best preserved of the historical rooms. [443] The *Niobidensaal* is a microcosm of the museum's original celebration of human achievement and its enactment of Hegel's *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte*, with Prussia being the rightful heir to the spoils and virtues of Antiquity.

[443] The *Niobidensaal* is the room in which the competition was judged and many of the meetings/meals took place during the work on the museum. See Chipperfield and Wolter's 'Conversation': 'It's taken on a special status within the building because it was the most complete of all the decorated rooms. Consciously or unconsciously, it affected our attitude to the room in that we have probably restored it to a more complete level than we have in other places'. Chipperfield and Wolters, 'Conversation', *Neues Museum Berlin*, ed. by Nys and Reichert, p. 236.

Henze, the main commentator of this room, writes: 'Der Niobidensaal ist einer der für die Intentionen Stülers, Olfers und Friedrich Wilhelm IV. bezeichnendsten Säle des Neuen Museums'.[444] In this section I will first look at the ample remnants of the original framing strategies and then examine how the new room uses these remnants.

My analysis of this room begins simply with its caryatids, which the museum visitor would have first encountered in the *Treppenhaus*.

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Images: © SMB / David Chipperfield Architects, photo Ute Zscharnt; © SMB Kunstbibliothek

The caryatids, copies of the Erechtheion Porch of the Maidens on the Acropolis,[445] depict women. As with Atlas and the world, these women shoulder a great load, in this case the museum of history itself. Unlike Atlas, a titan, however, these women are human. Just as with Stüler and von Olfers waiting to collect treasures of Pompeii, these caryatids are symbolic (though they are also) structural features depicting the way human institutions accord a form of afterlife (or immortality) to museum objects. Maintaining the weight of the building is not a punishment for rebellion, instead, bearing (the responsibility for) the weight of history is a great honour.

[444] Wulfgang Henze, 'Der Niobidensaal', in *Neues Museum: Architektur, Geschichte*, ed. by Blauert and Bähr, pp. 174-181 (p. 180).
[445] For a good reading of caryatids see Scholl, **'**Gradus ad Parnassum', in *Neues Museum: Architektur Sammlung Geschichte*, ed. by Blauert and Bähr, pp. 122-131.

The second way in which human ingenuity and tools are fêted in the *Niobidensaal* can be found in the golden letters of the room's two inscriptions: 'STAUNLICHES WALTET VIEL UND DOCH/ NICHTS ERSTAUNLICHERES ALS DER MENSCH' (reference to Sophocles) and 'ES SCHUF PROMETHEUS/JEDE KUNST DEN STERBLICHEN' (reference to Aeschylus).

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Images: © SMB, photos Kathryn Brechtel, Florian Duijsens

Though the room doesn't have a third inscription, Arendt's motto for *homo faber*, 'the oldest conviction of *homo faber* – that "man is the measure of all things"',[446] would not be out of place because both of the inscriptions praise humans and their ability to create.

However, when looking at the contexts from which these inscriptions are drawn, it becomes clear that the praise is not given blindly; they also remind us that not only is human artifice ephemeral, it also has incredibly destructive potential. The first quotation, from Sophocles, comes from *Antigone* and is part of the famous 'Ode to Man'. At this moment in the play, Creon has just exited, furious that someone has performed the funerary rites for Polynices. He does not yet know that Antigone is responsible. After he leaves, the Chorus begins:

[446] Arendt, p. 306. She is referring to Protagoras.

CHORUS Numberless wonders, terrible wonders walk the world but none the match for man – that great wonder crossing the heaving gray sea, driven on by the blasts of winter on through breakers crashing left and right, holds his steady course […] He conquers all, taming with his techniques the prey that roams the cliffs and wild lairs […] Man the master, ingenious past all measure, past all dreams, the skills within his grasp – he forges on, now to destruction now again to greatness.[447]

Though the Chorus' emphasis is on man's techniques and skills, Antigone's actions in life (burying her brother, defying her uncle, suicide) are both 'destructive' and 'great'. Her actions display great courage and conviction but they also lead not only to her suicide, but to the suicides of her betrothed and her uncle. Her uncle, the embodiment of political power and the human-forged institution of law he upholds, is also 'great' and 'destructive'. Antigone's choice to act, 'hold[ing] [a] steady course' in spite of knowing the likely consequences, makes her an example of humans taking responsibility for the known and unknown consequences of their actions.

The second quotation, from Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound*, comes from a conversation between Prometheus and the Chorus. Here is the context of the exchange:

PROMETHEUS As for the benefits hidden beneath the earth for human beings, bronze, iron, gold and silver, who could claim that he discovered them before I did? No one –unless he's fond of pointless chatter. One short word sums up all you need to know: all human arts derive from Prometheus.

CHORUS Don't offer mortals help out of proportion and disregard your own unhappiness. I'm hopeful you will yet escape these chains, and once freed, be as powerful as Zeus.[448]

Without Prometheus' gift of fire, there would be no tools, no buildings forged by the tools, no museum objects, and no museum buildings, so in a sense, Prometheus is correct when he claims that 'all human arts derive from [me]'. It is perhaps fitting that he has been made the patron saint of this room; the architect and directors chose a figure who

[447] Sophocles, *The Three Theban Plays: Antigone, Oedipus the King, Oedipus at Colonus*, trans. by R Fagles (New York, NY: Penguin Classics,1982), pp. 76-77. This corresponds to lines 373-409.
[448] Aeschylus, *Prometheus Bound*, trans. by D. Roberts (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2012), pp. 24-25. This approximately corresponds with lines 500-507.

enabled humans' ability to create rather than a divine creator. Prometheus is as close to a prelapsarian figure as one finds in the room (and perhaps in the whole museum). There are no gods in history, we reap the benefits and consequences of our own actions.

Both Prometheus as a character and his gift of fire are however also troubling within the context of the *Neues Museum*. We see his arrogance – a titan, the self-professed teacher of all these arts confidently awaiting his release and ultimate elevation to ultra-divine status, 'you will yet escape […] and once freed, be as powerful as Zeus'. His motivations notwithstanding, he, like Antigone, made his choice aware of the potential brutal consequences. Prometheus, Antigone, and even the caryatids remind the visitor of the necessity to shoulder the burdens of our own choices; we may have fire, but we choose how to use it. Fire, like knowledge or enlightenment, is symbolic of the highest pinnacles to which we can aspire. Yet it also burns buildings. *Homo faber* is capable of having both possible fates. Though even some of the original museum's early visitors noted this paradox,[449] it would be more obvious to a contemporary visitor, given the current state of the building.

The two inscriptions both complement and challenge one another. On the one hand we see the emphasis on tools, artifice, that which can be made by human hands; Prometheus is celebrated. On the other there is the depiction of man as both 'terrible' and wond[rous]', and the elegizing of his 'skills', 'technique', and 'ingen[uity]' which ultimately lead to the cycle of 'destruction' and 'greatness'; the excessive arrogance of Prometheus is a warning. So is Antigone's death, which is symbolic of the failure of our institutions and our propensity to fetishize laws and structures at the expense of humane

[449] See note 354 where I discussTissot's reading of *Heiliger Krieg* in Kaulbach's frescoes.

decisions and compassion; Creon relents and then, overcome by the grief of seeing his son and niece hanging in the tomb, he takes his own life.

All this to say: we have powerful tools but their ethical deployment is not a given. Being the beneficiaries of human history means inheriting 'Staunliches' – both the 'wonders' and the terrors. The room's inscriptions are taken from exchanges involving the Chorus – the conscience of the play. It is as though through these inscriptions the age is questioning itself. In order to engage with our inheritance and our potential there must be a reflective choice.

How then to inherit? What to do with this inheritance? The current *Niobidensaal* offers an interesting solution. Nestled between the ancient inscriptions and caught between the gazes of Nefertiti and Helios (the sun queen and the sun god), the *Niobidensaal* is now affectionately known as the museum's Library of Antiquity, housing examples of the museum's papyri collection. Sun, enlightenment, and knowledge are the tropes of the current gallery space.

The library is composed of four long display cases, each containing part of the museum's vast collection of specimens of early human writing. Each case contains selections relating to specific themes: literature, knowledge, daily life (legal documents), and religion.

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The display contains many remarkable treasures, including ancient doodles, Homeric fragments, a commentary on Platonic dialogues, and records of various legal/economic transactions; all records of human achievement and experience. The fragmentary and delicate nature of the papyri attests to the fragility of human creation, but also to an unbroken continuity of human experience. The examples I mention, from the great works to traces of the familiar and quotidian, are what has come down to us as cultural inheritance. There is an unbroken line of inquiry and discourse between Plato and the writer of the papyrus, as well as between the writer and the contemporary student of philosophy. Here more than ever the *Neues Museum*'s ability to connect the present day with longer narratives of history may be read.

But reading and writing are not intended to be thought of as purely contemplative acts – both reading and writing are, in their own ways, forms of action and of work. We uncover and constellate meaning by engaging with the arguments and the images we encounter. To read signifies joining a world of references, and to write means to create more of them, to establish our own relationship with them. Both of these acts make use of and transform inherited material and are thus part of the world created by *homo faber*.

Conclusion:

The three main discoveries of this close reading – non-totalizing wholeness, ruins as material, and the assumption of responsibility for both the 'wondrous' and 'terrible' potential of human creation and institutions – all express a particular kind of storytelling and cast us as storytellers. We unite the fragments by coming into an awareness of our

cultural inheritance and making something with it. The stories in the museum are akin to an ephemeral mythology set within the confines of human history, a mythology whose constellations are embodied in the bullet holes in the walls of the museum's courtyards and columns of its colonnade. Not only is the desire to make meaning with and in history indicative of a mythological impulse, the repetition of cycles and patterns resonates as a mythic eternal return: building and breaking, coming together and splintering apart. Constructing the *Neues Museum* on the marshy *Spreeinsel* was a technologically stunning feat, both in Stüler's time and in our day. The waters continue to threaten (or at least pose significant challenges) to the ongoing construction of the *James-Simon-Galerie*, the building intended to be the entry to the whole of the *Museumsinsel*.

Thus, in a sense, the conceiving and realization of the *Neues Museum* has sought to achieve a victory of human history over nature since its earliest days. But today, by re-establishing its form and figure, resuming its original footprint, reclaiming its ruins, and by its very propensity to wholeness, provisional ordering, and the artificial freezing of the ruins, the *Neues Museum* establishes a new framing narrative of history, an act which, as will be discussed in the concluding chapter, might signal a shift in philosophical and literary thinking – from an era of fragmented postmodernism to one that more resembles the experimental wholeness of earlier modernisms.

Conclusion: Closing the Frames

The field of critical work on Berlin and its cultural institutions has opened significantly in recent years. Serious work has also been done on its urban marketing and city branding/image.[450] The corpus on Berlin memorials continues to grow as well.[451] In the process, discourse on cultural memory in Berlin has broadened from what had almost exclusively been a conversation about the Holocaust to include other topics, most notably the memory of the GDR. Whether this inclusion is implicit or explicit, much of this work assesses the effects and impact of reunification and the attempts, whether organic or forced, to find a unified/unifying national narrative. Despite the widening terms of the discourse, however, the *Neues Museum* has been largely ignored by Anglo-American academics working in the field of Cultural Memory Studies.

Perhaps this is due in part to its presentation of a positive image of wholeness or its inextricability from what is often perceived as the steamrolling *Museumsinsel Masterplan* – both might provoke suspicions. Or perhaps it is because the twentieth century, while amply present in the museum, is not the focus of the exhibition. In her essay on the *Neues Museum* (one of the few essays of its kind that I encountered during my research), for the anthology *Museum Making: Narratives, Architectures, Exhibitions*, Michaela Giebelhausen puts forward the possibility that perhaps scholars too easily relegate museums dedicated to old objects, such as the *Neues Museum*, to the 'cemetery

[450] See Chapter 3.II.B.
[451] For examples see: Cornelia Siebek, 'Inszenierung von Geschichte in der "Berliner Republik": Der Umgang mit dem historisch-symbolischen Raum zwischen Reichstagsgebäude und Schlossplatz nach 1989', *Werkstatt Geschichte*, 33 (2002), p. 45-58; and Dekel, 2013, pp. 1-22. Also of note is the major conference that was held in Berlin entitled: 'Memorial Mania', American Academy/Haus der Kulturen der Welt, 2011.

where arts and culture go to die [according to the avant-garde artists]'[452] or the charnel house where echoes of Adorno's condemnation of the adjective 'museale' as 'stale' and 'deathly'[453] continue to hover. I, however, believe that it is an error to underestimate the contemporary power of old stones.

Perhaps the *Neues Museum* does not necessarily fit within the Anglo-American cultural memory context because its narratives of wholeness, ruins as material, and *homo faber* are not caught up in the endless cycles of trauma transmission, secondary witnessing, or even city branding. I hope to have shown that the museum belongs to another discourse, one much closer to the Assmann model of cultural memory, where cultural memory signifies a kind of mythical history or *mnemohistory*.[454] However, unlike in the Assmann model, this mythical history is not set in a kind of 'absolute past'. The narratives here might sound mythical but the history is recent, or at least combines ancient and recent pasts.

These truly bold framing narratives of history might either put commentators ill at ease or seduce them. Yet I think that the changes in framing narratives (from those of the late 1990s and early 2000s to those of today) are inevitable, if not necessary: we are no longer in the twentieth century, and thus thinking about the twentieth century and all its events within longer narratives is not just permissible, it is also within the realm of normal expectations.

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[452] Giebelhausen, 'In the Museum's Ruins: Staging the Passage of Time', in *Museum Making: Narratives, Architectures, Exhibitions*, ed. by Macleod, Hanks, and Hale, p. 234. Though her article in the Museum Studies anthology is about narratives and actually gives a very good reading of the space and narratives, it does not talk about the terms of the cultural memory discussion.

[453] See Giebelhausen's essay, 'In the Museum's Ruins: Staging the Passage of Time', in *Museum Making: Narratives, Architectures, Exhibitions*, ed. by Macleod, Hanks, and Hale, p. 234. She is referencing Adorno's essay 'Valéry Proust Museum' which can be found in Theodor W. Adorno, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 20 vols (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Taschenbuch, 2003), X.1: *Gesellschaft I*.

[454] See the discussion of Jan Assmann's *mnemohistory* in Introduction.

However, I would not go so far as to say that these narratives are emulated across the city's cultural memory landscape. While part of a brand and a general trending away from the narratives of the Jewish Museum, the *Neues Museum* is still somewhat of an anomaly. Other Berlin cultural memory projects, such as the revamped *Topographie des Terrors* or the recently opened *Gedenkstätte Berliner Mauer* and its interpretive centre, continue to offer visitors ample opportunity to visit with the city's sordid past: besides the need to commemorate the past, we cannot forget that dark tourism is a very lucrative industry. Moreover, the *Neues Museum* runs the risk of being buried in the *Masterplan*. Though the *Masterplan* perhaps in its beginnings made a case for *concordia discors*, Chapter 3 showed how this principle was fleeting and may have been swept away in face of aggressive branding and booming development. The worry is that the specificity of the *Neues Museum*, the aspect that makes it so interesting and relevant, might ultimately be drowned out by the cacophony of the cranes engaged in the building of the problematic *Stadtschloß* across the boulevard; for as much as some of the other sites in the city capitalize on the horrific past, the *Stadtschloß* will do everything it can to erase it. Is there an ethical way in between? I would argue that the *Neues Museum* clearly presents this ethical alternative – the ambiguous image between sickness and health, brokenness and wholeness, never forgetting and moving on.

Perhaps the synchronic landscape is already shifting again – after all, it always already is – but the eloquent arguments and stories set in the *Neues Museum*'s stones are not going away. Like any other artefact they are there to be used, to be forgotten, to be re-discovered, to mean something else. The *Neues Museum* clearly embodies Aleida Assmann's idea of *Funktions*- and *Speichergedächtnis* given that in our own lifetimes the

museum went from a ruin, an archival footnote reminding us of what was lost during the second half of the twentieth century, to one of Berlin's premier sites of transmission or mediation, telling the story through the metaphorical language of its bullet holes. Chipperfield, Harrap, Wildung, and the others activated the stones, putting them in a new order and letting their meaning be encountered. They did something with this cultural inheritance, making sure its belated temporality did not simply imply a return of the traumatic, rather inviting a kind of thoughtful and delicate reconciliation. What do we, the visitors and commentators, do with this newly transformed heritage? How does it become part of our worldview?

This concluding chapter will look at the critical context in which the *Neues Museum* finds itself. Like the two analytical axes explored in this dissertation, the museum's critical context is both synchronic and diachronic: synchronic in that it both has meant and means something in its local landscape, particularly in the case of German *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*; and diachronic in that its narratives echo in a longer context of aesthetic redemption most recently associated with expressions of modernism. I will look at each of these contexts and then conclude the dissertation by bringing them together.

I) Synchronic

Even if Anglo-American commentators have not really plumbed the depths of the *Neues Museum*, the opening of the *Neues Museum* did usher in a new critical context. Ample critical material now exists on the *Neues Museum* (reviews, essays in SMB/SPK publications, pieces in architecture and museum studies journals). A significant portion of

this material was written by German critics, signalling just how important the museum is for German *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, both its theory and its praxis. The book of essays accompanying the museum's opening and the many reviews by Berlin culture critics are perhaps the best examples.[455] As I have already covered some of the reviews in my discussion of Chipperfield the architect and the *Masterplan*, here I want to concentrate on one important image, scars/*Narben*, an ambiguous image of the wound and its healing.

A) Scars and Aufarbeitung

We have already encountered the word 'scars' in our analysis of the *Neues Museum*. It was in the context of the discussion of non-totalizing wholeness, Oppenheim's 'Beautiful Venus', the *Jugendportrait des späteren Kaisers Tiberius* looking out over the *Griechischer Hof*, as well as the architectural point of intervention and the decision to include the scars.[456] Scars/*Narben* is also a word that comes up constantly in the reviews, particularly in the German press.[457] The scars in the museum are like scars on a body in that they are an indelible embodiment of history: they might fade over time, but they will always be there as a reminder of what has happened. As with some of the other ambiguous images that have been examined throughout this dissertation, such as wholeness/fragments and decay/resilience, the ambiguous image of damage/healing

[455] See the discussion of the material available on the *Neues Museum* in Chapter 3.III.A.
[456] See Chapter 5.I.Conclusion.
[457] See the following reviews: Poschardt, 'Narben als Ornament', *Welt am Sonntag*, 1 March 2009; Tietz, 'Die Ganzheit des Fragments', *Neue Züricher Zeitung*, 2 March 2009; Christian Thomas, 'Raum für Raum', *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 5 March 2009; Anja Lösel, 'Schlangestehen vor Nofretetes neuem Heim', *Der Stern*, 6 March 2009. All of these reviews may be found in *Pressespiegel*, ed by. David Chipperfield Architects.

makes it possible for the visitor to move between perceptions and, by maintaining both views, allows for a temporary reconciliation.

I will look at one typical review that notes these scars in its discussion of a shift in the cultural memory paradigm of Berlin. In his review for the *Berliner Zeitung*, Harald Jähner writes:

> Die architektonische Kombination erhaltener Bauteile mit explizit modernen Elementen ist in Deutschland lange Zeit mit der Aufarbeitung der Geschichte begründet worden. Es entstand eine Ästhetik der Narben und Wunden, die der Schuld am Zweiten Weltkrieg und der Scham über die Verbrechen des Holocaust entsprach [...] Inzwischen hat sich diese Ruinenästhetik aber längst von der moralischen Schuld-und-Wunden-Rhetorik abgelöst und kann ihre Reize ganz ohne ideologische Rückversicherung ausspielen. Es geht längst nicht mehr um Mahnung und Gedenken, sondern um die Schönheit der Geschichte als solche. Um den Zahn der Zeit und die kleinen Siege über sie. Um die Zerbrechlichkeit dessen, was überdauert. Es geht um so etwas wie Errettung aus dem Fluss der Zeit.[458]

Jähner's first point pertains to the general relationship between architecture and cultural memory, specifically in the Berlin context. Works of architecture, and chief among them certainly monuments and museums, are a means of coming to terms with the past. Jähner even uses the word 'Aufarbeitung', an Adornian word usually translated as 'working through' and the integral part of the title of one of Adorno's most famous essays, 'Was bedeutet Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit' (1959). As was discussed in Chapter 1, this essay served as a foundational text for German *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, so Jähner's use of this word seems hardly a random choice.

Aufarbeitung, for Adorno, means a dialectical working through and invokes the mystic Hegelian term *Aufhebung*, a sublation of sorts involving the past's simultaneous

[458] Harald Jähner, 'Wir Zeitgenossen Nofretetes', *Berliner Zeitung*, 17 October 2009, in *Pressespiegel*, ed. by David Chipperfield Architects, II, pp. 82-85 (p. 83).

preservation, negation, and transcendence.[459] While still a vague concept, perhaps it can best be understood as including and implicating the past, and in the case of the museum we might take this to mean the materiality of the past in the new vision of the present. In the *Neues Museum*, *Aufarbeitung* is tied to the phenomenological architectural and curatorial strategies that both work through the material (objects, architectural fragments) but also offer an experience of working through for the visitors. The methodology here means exposing what Adorno would call the *'*objektiven gesellschaftlichen Voraussetzungen'[460] rather than eradicating them (something along the lines of the *Stadtschloß* project) or allowing them to fester (something along the lines of dark tourism or even what might happen when historical trauma becomes structural). The beauty of the museum is that it neither shies away from its scars, not overly fetishizes them. As Chipperfield writes: '[we] create[d] a new building from the means of the old, a new building that neither celebrates nor hides its history but includes it'.[461] Because of its ambiguous images and phenomenological approach to the past, the museum manages to avoid the neither/nor conundrum of erasure on the one hand and re-enactment on the other, it allows for the scars to be incorporated into the historical narratives of the museums and worldview of the visitors.

[459] For a detailed description of Adorno's concept of memory and dialectics see Rebecca Clare Dolgoy, 'Between Truth and Trauma: The Work of Art and Memory in Adorno' (MA thesis, Université de Montréal, 2011), <https://papyrus.bib.umontreal.ca/xmlui/handle/1866/2950/browse;jsessionid=42F363CB31823B5EBFCFD206AD4826A4?value=Dolgoy%2C+Rebecca+C.&type=author> [accessed 3 March 2014].
[460] See note 72.
[461] Chipperfield, 'Introduction', in *Neues Museum Berlin*, ed. by Nys and Reichert, pp. 8 (p. 11).

B) Scars and the Aesthetics of History

The second noteworthy point in Jähner's review is that he grasps a shift in the process of *Aufarbeitung* itself: from one where an aesthetic of 'Narben' and 'Wunden' represents 'Scham', to one where scars might allow for the 'Schönheit der Geschichte' to be experienced. Though the precarious beauty here has nothing to do with traditional figures of *Germania*, it has everything to do with the bullet hole constellations and their spidery veins. Ruins, wholeness made of fragments, and the resilience of *homo faber* – none of these are triumphal images. But perhaps they are hopeful images.

This is a sharp move from the aesthetic embodiment of history in the ersatz voids of the Jewish Museum. Young writes:

> [The voids'] aim is not to reassure or console but to haunt visitors with the unpleasant – uncanny – sensation of calling into consciousness that which has been previously – even happily – repressed. The voids are reminders of the abyss into which this culture once sank and from which it never really emerges.[462]

The scars and damage to which Jähner refers and the voids that Young references actually come from a similar time period; both have to do with World War II. Yet voids and scars could not be more different from each other – voids are analogous to wounds that will not close or, as Young writes, 'from which [culture] never really emerges,' while scars are ambiguous images of damage and healing. This is not to say that the *Neues Museum* does not haunt us. It haunts us because it forces us to confront both sides of the Promethean potential: fire burns and fire builds.

Chipperfield reminds us that with damage there is also the chance for some kind of redemption, some kind of reconciliation: '[…] each decision, whether about repair, completion or addition, was [an] attempt to inflect to a singular idea; an idea not of what

[462] Young, *At Memory's Edge*, p. 180.

is lost, but what is saved'.[463] Even if the *Aufarbeitung* will never end and the accounts be never entirely settled, the *Neues Museum* does offer some hope. While hardly offering an 'mythic, untarnished'[464] image of Germany, as Till claimed was the aim in 2005, the image of Germany presented in the *Neues Museum* is one that is scarred but still somewhat mythic, as it supports a new foundational narrative (begun at the point of intervention). Moreover it is because of its scars that the museum is so arresting, so provocative, and so beautiful; it is the incorporation of fragments and brokenness into the image of wholeness that accounts for the intensely ethical framing narratives.

However, it is worth noting that this approach, or rather this choice to save or work through the material instead of re-creating or reconstructing, that sparked the ire of some of the project's harshest critics. The *Gesellschaft Historisches Berlin* (GHB)[465] and several early negative reviewers were primarily put out of sorts because Chipperfield did not reconstruct the glorious decorative schema of Stüler's museum.[466] The current efforts to reconstruct Berlin's *Hohenzollern Stadtschloss*, a project wholly supported by the GHB, attest to the continuing appetite for such reconstructive projects.[467] Ironically, those who strive to 'protect' and 'preserve' history are the biggest advocates for the kind of

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[463] Chipperfield, 'Introduction', in *Neues Museum Berlin*, ed. by Nys and Reichert, p. 11.
[464] See note 239.
[465] This is documented in the following sources: Chipperfield and Haubrich, 'Interview', *Die Welt*, 16 October 2009, in *Pressespiegel*, ed. by David Chipperfield Architects, II, p. 54; and Lösel's review and description of a small protest that was held outside the *Neues Museum* when it opened: 'Schlangestehen vor Nofretetes neuem Heim**,'** *Der Stern*, 6 March 2009, in *Pressespiegel*, ed. by David Chipperfield Architects, I, p. 121.
[466] For a good description of the tension, see Dankwart Guratzsch, 'Berlin und sein zusammengeklebter Trümmerrest', *Weltonline*, 27 February 2009, in *Pressespiegel*, ed. by David Chipperfield Architects, I, pp. 38-45 (p. 39).
[467]The *Gesellschaft Historisches Berlin*'s values and aims are illustrated by the following remarks: 'Wir befürworten auch die Rekonstruktion nicht mehr bestehender Bauten (z. B. Schloss, Bauakademie) die von besonderer Bedeutung für Berlin sind. Insbesondere gilt unsere Arbeit der Wiederherstellung des historischen Stadtgrundrisses von Alt-Berlin'. Gesellschaft Historisches Berlin e.V <http://www.ghb-online.de/> [accessed 3 March 2014]. Dresden's *Frauenkirche* is mentioned on their website as an example to be emulated.

reconstruction that robs sites and material of their historicity by ignoring their accumulated historicity.

I have found next to no evidence of major criticisms leveled against the museum in the press and critical disourse after its opening. Through its narratives placing the twentieth century in a longer narrative of human history, the *Neues Museum* allows for the twentieth century to be experienced as a scar on an aging body, one that is organic and that is allowed to grow, to age, and to fade. Scars, like bullet holes, are embodied memory. We tell the story of how they came to be, how the wounds healed, and what they mean now.

II) Diachronic

The second major aspect of the *Neues Museum*'s critical context can be found in its resonance within contemporary visions, expressions, and transformations of modernism.[468] According to Peter Brooker, modernist works 'employed myth and

[468] For examples of this see the following: *performatism* (Raoul Eshelman, 'Performatism, or the End of Postmodernism', *Anthropoetics* 6/2 (2000/2001), <http://www.anthropoetics.ucla.edu/ap0602/perform.htm [downloaded 7 September 2013]); *digimodernism* (Alan Kirby, 'The Death of Postmodernism and Beyond', *Philosophy Now*, 58 (Nov/Dec. 2006), <http://philosophynow.org/issues/58/The_Death_of _Postmodernism _And_Beyond> [accessed 23 September 2013]); and *metamodernism* (TimotheusVermeulen, and Robin van den Akker, 'Notes on Metamodernism', *Journal of Aesthetics & Culture* vol 2, (Stockholm, 2010) <http://www.aestheticsand culture. net> [downloaded September 23 2013]). Also of note is the most recent work of Fredric Jameson that explores the return of certain tendencies traditionally associated with modernism such as the link between ethics and aesthetics, what he describes in his work as a 'resuscitation' of modernism. Fredric Jameson, *A Singular Modernity* (London: Verso, 2012), p. 40. Even Linda Hutcheon, the renowned theorist of postmodernism calls for a new label and way of thinking about modernism/postmodernism. See Linda Hutcheon, *The Politics of Postmodernism* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2002), p. 181. Finally, while also somewhat of a caricature, the *Neues Museum* certainly does embody nearly all of the characteristics on Ihab Hassan's famous 'Table of Differences between Modernism and Postmodernism'. See Ihab Hassan 'The Culture of Postmodernism', *Theory, Culture and Society*, 2. 3 (1985), pp. 119-132 (pp.123-124). This is cited in David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1990), p. 43. For a more nuanced characterization of modernism and postmodernism see Harvey, pp. 3-120. With regards to conceiving the *Neues Museum* as specimen of contemporary modernist architecture, of particular note is Harvey's description of postmodernism as wallowing in fragmentation, p. 44. The *Neues Museum*'s inclusion of fragments as part of its dynamic wholeness certainly places it in another philosophical category.

musical forms […] in a struggle to incorporate and so order the material of "chaos", to distance and transcend contemporary history certainly, but also to resuscitate and "recycle" the past'.[469] For modernist artists and intellectuals, myths provided recourse to the idea of ordering, and to making sense or meaning out of disparate material by forging a provisionally stable ground amidst rapidly changing cultures.[470] Moreover, myth also provided an opportunity for the establishment of individualized tellings. Blumenberg writes:

> Mythen sind Geschichten von hochgradiger Beständigkeit ihres narrativen Kerns und ebenso ausgeprägter marginaler Variationsfähigkeit. Diese beiden Eigenschaften machen Mythen traditionsgängig: ihre Beständigkeit ergibt den Reiz, sie auch in bildnerischer oder ritueller Darstellung wiederzuerkennen, ihre Veränderbarkeit den Reiz der Erprobung neuer und eigener Mittel der Darbietung. Es ist das Verhältnis, das aus der Musik unter dem Titel "Thema mit Variationen" in seiner Attraktivität für Komponisten wie Hörer bekannt ist. Mythen sind daher nicht so etwas wie "heilige Texte", an denen jedes Jota unberührbar ist.[471]

Ordering chaos and opening up space for interpretive plurality while still offering a shared referential plane is at the core of the *Neues Museum*'s phenomenological approach and my own concept of cultural memory. The modernist appropriation, use, and transformation of mythic images and archetypes demonstrates that ancient material might always be 'in each case mine' but moreover, the act of storytelling is a responsible act by which the teller connects themselves to a long history and uses the past as a lens through which to perceive the present.

This section, the one that establishes the *Neues Museum*'s diachronic context, explores how the museum helps visitors re-examine what it is to be a 'modernist' today. In accordance with Brooker, Mali, and Blumenberg, I will explore two things: first the

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[469] Peter Brooker, ed., 'Introduction', *Modernism/Postmodernism* (Harlow, Essex: Longman Group, 1992), pp. 1-34 (p. 27).
[470] Mali, p. 284.
[471] Blumenberg, p. 40.

museum's use of mythic images and transformation of inherited material, and second the creation of 'common ground' which is essentially both the fundamental condition for interpretive plurality (and non-totalizing wholeness) as well as the hallmark of Chipperfield's architectural modernism. These two features (the museum's use of images and 'common ground') will help us reconsider modernism by the light of the *Neues Museum*.

A) Everything Old is New Again

Though it perhaps is dangerous to invoke Pound's famous 'make it new',[472] could this not be a very apt way of conceptualizing the new *Neues Museum*? How does this idea, so very expressible in literature, come across in the language of stones? Does it not revive its own heritage by making it new, by 'making it mine'?

The history of the *Museumsinsel* has Schinkel and his romantic transformations of classical forms as its original touchstone and, while Stüler's skill in this endeavour did not necessarily equal that of his teacher, it was still Stüler's intention to pursue a narrative of continuity rather than one of breaking with the old.[473] The way in which the *Neues Museum*'s current architects transformed inherited forms (such as the columns, and the *Treppenhalle*) gives a contemporary spin to a nineteenth-century expression of classical forms. Furthermore, the three narratives I developed in the close reading (non-totalizing wholeness, ruins as material, and *homo faber*) offer a contemporary rendering of certain themes of earlier modernities and even Romanticism. If, as according to Jameson, modernity is a 'narrative category',[474] then its main story, according to Foucault, 'is the

[472] Mali gives an interesting reading of this, p. 11
[473] See Chapter 3.II.B.
[474] Fredric Jameson, *A Singular Modernity* (London: Verso, 2012), p. 40.

will to 'heroize the present'.[475] *Homo faber*, the patron saint or ultimate hero of the *Neues Museum*, working amidst the ruins in order to establish a home made of fragments and a concept of world that is piecemeal, is an example of a contemporary heroic figure. *Homo faber* as a contemporary mythic hero might fall within the lines of what Jan Assmann refers to as an *Anthropogonie*.[476] Rather than a *theogony*, where the origins of the gods and transcendental questions are given fixed places in the heavens, the *Anthropogonie* is an earthbound mythology, something that would feel very much at home amidst the bullet hole constellations of the *Neues Museum*'s courtyards.

The turn to this secular mythic figure falls in accordance with Mali's reading of certain philosophical and intellectual trends associated with modernism. He refers his readers to Steven Aschheim's observation:

> [the] German Jewish [sic] intellectuals who came of age during World War I shared with their fellow German and other European intellectuals a keen appreciation of the mythical as essential to their own new radical and apocalyptical ideologies of redemption – whether Anarchism, Communism, or Zionism – which they forged out of and against the older German-Jewish tradition of *Bildung*.[477]

The mythic, whether it is in the political or cultural realms, connects those in the present to a long tradition and thus provides grounding and direction with the ultimate aim of aesthetic redemption. Because the work of art, like every individual, is both a product and,

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[475] Michel Foucault, 'What is Enlightenment', in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. by Paul Rabinow (London: Penguin Books, 1984), p. 40.

[476] For a discussion of the *Anthropogonie* concept, see Jan Assmann, *Thomas Mann und Ägypten: Mythos und Monotheismus in den Josephsromanen* (München: Verlag C.H. Beck, 2006), p. 207. Mann's *Joseph* tetralogy is a brilliant example of using myth as an analytical tool. It also has an interesting connection to the *Neues Museum* as Mann used one of the statues of Akhenaten as the basis of the physical depiction of his character in the novels. It thus also serves as an ideal example of using and appropriating an image or fragment from the past and transforming it into a contemporary story. For an analysis of Thomas Mann's *Joseph* tetralogy and myth as analytic, see Rebecca Clare Dolgoy, 'The Egyptian Enlightenment and Mann, Freud, and Freund', *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 15.1 (2013), <http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol15/iss1/4> [accessed 3 March 2014].

[477] Mali, p. 34. He is referencing: Steven A. Aschheim, 'German Jews beyond Bildung and Liberalism: The Radical Jewish Revival in the Weimar Republic,' in *The German-Jewish Dialogue Reconsidered*, ed. by K.L. Berghahn (New York: Peter Lang, 1996), pp. 125-140.

in its own way, a producer (or results in the production) of culture, it may also be critical – or rather used and invoked as part of cultural criticism. The potential for aesthetic redemption offered by the *Neues Museum* via its *Ästhetik der Narben* might help it find its place in a long line of cultural works crafted in the aftermath of disaster, forged from the fragments of the catastrophe itself. The very search for aesthetic redemption already signifies a move towards re-appropriating and reinterpreting modernism.

While wanting to avoid caricatures and unsubstantiated claims, I do think that the *Neues Museum* inherits and transforms certain traits that are found in the great literary works of the early twentieth century, most notably the heroizing/mythicizing of the everyday (of which Joyce's *Ulysses* is the prime example), the appropriation and transformation of inherited images/stories (of which Mann's *Joseph und Seine Brüder* tetralogy is an excellent specimen), the portrayal of individualized perception (of which Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* emerges as a clear case study), and of course the attempt to recover time and convey the idea of 'presence' where, due to the rush of involuntary memory, past, present, and future co-exist (Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu* is the most cited example of this phenomenon). All of these works were written during and after a time of great political and cultural upheaval. The writers all had to contend with turn-of-the-century *malaise* and the shattering effects of World War I. The *Neues Museum* is also a response to violence and even traumatic history, though like these works, it affirms the continuity of life rather than its utter decimation.

B) Common Ground

While reading the *Neues Museum* as a contemporary architectural expression and transformation of various modernist themes is a big claim to make, it is not entirely without substance.[478] Chipperfield is a self-proclaimed and widely renowned architectural modernist,[479] though it is clear that his particular modernism is a transformation of what is traditionally labelled as modernist architecture, namely the work of Mies van der Rohe, Le Corbusier, and Frank Lloyd Wright. However, like all of these architects, he clearly adheres to the 'form follows function' proclamation (as opposed to Libeskind, who does not).[480] This is quite evident in the phenomenological approach he took to the *Neues Museum* re-think, because by working closely with the fragments he sought contemporary forms that allowed the building and its pieces to re-assume its original function. According to Sandra Hofmeister:

> Von "Chipperfieldismus" zu sprechen mag zugegebenermaßen trotzdem etwas übermütig sein. So ist die Chipperfield'sche Philosophie alles andere als ein Ismus. Sie hat weder Gemeinsamkeiten mit dem Futurismus noch mit dem Dekonstruktivismus, bleibt undogmatisch, aber ist sich in der Sache dennoch

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[478] For a discussion of how the Jewish Museum is an example of postmodern architecture see Young: 'If modern architecture has embodied the attempt to erase the traces of history from its forms, postmodern architecture like Libeskind's would make the traces of history its infrastructure, the voids of lost civilization literally part of the building's foundation, now haunted by history, even emblematic of it'. Young, *At Memory's Edge*, p. 180. Perhaps the *Stadtschloss* project might be a closer example of Young's characterization of modern architecture than the *Neues Museum*. It might also be possible to conceive of the *Masterplan*, and the *concordia* at the expense of the *discors* in accordance with what Harvey describes as typical of modernist town planners looking for 'a "mastery" of the metropolis" as a "totality" […]' Harvey, p. 44.

[479] For examples of critics that describe Chipperfield's modernism, see: William Cook: 'Interview with David Chipperfield: It is Better to be Fond of Architecture Than Amazed by It', *Spectator*, 7 December 2013, <http://www.spectator.co.uk/arts/arts-feature/9091741/ interview-with-the-architect-sir-david-chipperfield/> [accessed 30 December 2014]; and Victoria Jessen-Pike, 'Interview: David Chipperfield, Quiet Storm', *designbuild-network.com*, 1 February 2007, <http://www.designbuild-network.com/features /feature895/> [accessed 30 December 2014]. See also: references to Chipperfield's modernism in: Poschardt, 'Narben als Ornament', p. 58: Bartetzko, 'Die Schrift an der Wand', p. 74; and Hofmeister, 'Gehry-Effekt und Chipperfieldismus', p. 148. All of these are found in *Pressespiegel*, ed. by David Chipperfield Architects.

[480] See note 214.

sicher.[481]

For her, 'Chipperfieldismus' is a context-based architecture that relies on more respect for what is there than grand gestures. Rather than imposing a form or a vision on a site, this 'Chipperfieldismus' 'works through' the site and function of the building and translates them into built form.

But what is particular about Chipperfield's contemporary modernism is how it is not afraid to find and forge grand (or mythic) narratives, albeit grand narratives in a manner akin to the *Neues Museum* itself in that they are not master narratives. Chipperfield's idea of architecture is pluralistic but constructive rather than deconstructive. For him, architecture has the possibility to act as a 'common ground' for what we share, while at the same time being open enough to facilitate multiple pathways through this shared cultural space. 'Common ground' was the name of the 2012 Venice Architecture Biennial, which he curated:

> […] I was inspired to direct this Biennale towards concerns of continuity, context and memory, towards shared influences and expectations, and to address the apparent lack of understanding that exists between the profession and society […] The theme of la Biennale was a provocation to my colleagues to demonstrate their commitment to these shared and common values, encouraging them away from a monographic presentation of their work, and towards a portrait of the collaborations and affinities behind it […] that despite our different concerns, backgrounds and points of view we do indeed share common ground, and this forms the basis of something we might describe as an architectural culture. Furthermore, this provides us with a basis for dialogue, debate and opinion.[482]

Common ground is the basis for a working and applied definition of non-totalizing wholeness, it is the hallmark of plurality. Similar to an image that every individual makes

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[481] Hofmeister, 'Gehry-Effekt und Chipperfieldismus', in *Pressespiegel*, ed. by David Chipperfield Architects, I, p. 153

[482] David Chipperfield, 'Common Ground', <http://www.labiennale.org/en/architecture/archive/13th-exhibition/chipperfield/> [accessed 30 December 2014]. A similar discussion may be found in David Chipperfield, 'Introduction', in David Chipperfield, Kieran Long, and Shumi Bose, eds, *Common Ground: A Critical Reader* (Venice: Marsilio Editori, 2012), pp. 13-18.

resonate for themselves, or a familiar story that everyone tells in their own words, it shows that it is possible to share history without eliminating difference. Common ground is yet another expression of the *concordia discors* principle – where shared collective culture and its many individuals are in a dynamic relationship.

We see this in the *Neues Museum* in a most obvious manner. Perhaps the only instance where Chipperfield and Harrap decided to re-construct or re-create was in the case of the mosaic floors.[483] Unlike with the Jewish Museum, whose floors were designed to cause disorientation,[484] the *Neues Museum*'s floors literally offered common ground – something shared and some place safe from which visitors could make their own way through the museum. The path is not prescribed but the ground is stable.

C) Modernism Reconsidered

With its appropriation and transformation of inherited forms, as well as its instauration of common ground the *Neues Museum* helps us re-consider what it is to be modern in an age that has already experienced postmodernism. But like the modernists of old, fragments and traumatic history find themselves included in complex and dynamic narratives of history. For example, its *Ruinenästhetik* may be read as an expression of neo-Romanticism, though one that does not feature idealized ruins of long ago; its instinct for fragmentary wholeness can hardly be considered a form of deconstruction, but nor can it be considered a totality; its emphasis on presence is one that includes absence; and finally the re-setting of its temporality at the point of intervention carves out a dynamic and contemporary origin principle. So the question is, how to

[483] See Reinhard Böckenkamp, 'New Mosaic, Levels 1 to 3', in *The Neues Museum Berlin: Conserving, Restoring, Rebuilding within the World Heritage*, ed. by Ziesemer and others, pp. 188-189 (p. 188).
[484] See the discussion of the architectural features of the Jewish Museum in Chapter 2.II.

characterize the *Neues Museum*'s modernism?

To offer a conclusion, we can return to the idea that there is something between effacing the past (traditional modernist architecture) and fetishizing it (postmodernist architecture). We find this reconciliation in the work of the great modernist Marshall Berman and his definition of what it is to be 'modern' at the end of his seminal work *All That is Solid Melts into Air*:

> To be modern, I said, is to experience personal and social life as a maelstrom, to find one's world and oneself in perpetual disintegration and renewal, trouble and anguish, ambiguity and contradiction: to be part of a universe in which all that is solid melts into air. To be a modernist is to make oneself somehow at home in the maelstrom, to make its rhythms one's own, to move within its currents in search of the forms of reality, of beauty, of freedom, of justice, that its fervid and perilous flow allows.[485]

For Berman, it was not a question about choosing fragmentation (postmodernism) over wholeness (modernism), for him, to be modern is to endure and flourish in a condition of both fragmentation and wholeness. Harvey notes Berman's reading of modernity as a 'paradoxical unity […] of disunity'.[486] The disunity guarantees that the unity will never be totalizing while the unity is a hopeful promise of solidarity.

In Berman I see a model of what it is to be modern that, while not seeking recourse in anything transcendental, finds both poles of modernity ('distintegration and renewal' or 'fragmentation and wholeness') in lived experience – particularly in urban space, making it an earthbound and dynamic mythology. Berman celebrates the capacity to be 'undeterred' by the overwhelming forces of the institutions we create (such as bureaucracy and capitalism) and 'to fight to change [our] world and make it our own'.[487]

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[485] Marshall Berman, *All That is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (Toronto, ON: Penguin Books, 1988), p. 345-346.
[486] Harvey, p. 11.
[487] Berman, p. 345-346.

The institutions, archetypes, and structures that might superficially seem transcendental are merely historical products, so this fight is worth having. Berman's analysis of modernity offers hope that there is something between or beyond rigid categorizations – Berlin's *Neues Museum* occupies this space.

Berlin's *Neues Museum*, with its ambiguous images (not shying away from *concordia discors*, making a case for both wholeness and fragments) and its ability to 'include' (rather than 'hide' or 'celebrate') its history, is a museum that fulfils Berman's vision of what it is to be modern; it is a 'home in the maelstrom', a house of history in what Benjamin conceived of as the ambivalent '*Sturm*' of '*Fortschritt*'.[488] Moreover, because the museum tells history in a phenomenological way – thus providing the material for visitors to contend with the 'maelstrom' using their own tools – it allows its visitors to 'make its rhythms [their] own'. While Berman often describes general cultural conditions and exemplary individuals from Baudelaire to Jane Jacobs, from Ivan Karamazov to Stephen Dedalus – all of whom fought for ways to make a home amidst the tensions of modernity – here, in the final lines of his book, we finally find an indication as to how we could all be able to make our world into our home.

Looking at this in the context of the *Neues Museum*, it is clear that we are all *homo faber* – albeit *homo faber* aware of the constructedness of our works and the need to keep revising, maintaining, and improving them. For this reason alone, we can see how the *Neues Museum* might fit into the overall project of modernity. Conceiving of the *Neues Museum* as part of this discourse and the overall cultural project of renewing and transforming modernism allows its expression of history to find potential natural

[488] See Thesis IX Walter Benjamin, *Über den Begriff der Geschichte* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2010).

contemporaries along diachronic lines. But what does it mean to be poised at this intersection?

III) Beyond the Frames: What does it Mean to be Contemporary?

I am reminded of a conversation I had long ago with Martin Reichert, one of the senior partners in Chipperfield's Berlin office. He asked me whether I considered the *Neues Museum* to be contemporary. Though my initial response was yes – it was made by contemporary architects and embodies this particular moment in time – I immediately regretted this response, as the museum does not employ 'contemporary' curatorial strategies (such as digital technology) and the architectural interventions are subdued and nothing like the starchitect work being imposed on many old structures (of which the Jewish Museum is the prime example in this dissertation). Furthermore, I struggled to think of a 'contemporary' for the museum – a peer of sorts. I have still never encountered anything like it in its synchronic context, though looking at it diachronically I see how it resonates with works of literature and architecture from times past and might prefigure works that are to come. The critical context for the *Neues Museum* demonstrates both that it is an integral part of an on-going local dynamic and that it has been thrown into a large argument, a *Situation*, whose geographical and temporal scope far exceed it. So what does it mean to be contemporary?

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Maurizio Nannucci's sans serif 'neon writing' claim: 'ALL ART HAS BEEN CONTEMPORARY,' which hovered between the portico and colonnade of Schinkel's *Altes Museum* in 2005, might give us a clue. It is the perfect encapsulation of the contemporary relevance of museums (both structures and objects).

The mid-nineteenth century Schinkel building itself was once 'contemporary'. His neo-classical architecture transforms and re-interprets ancient forms that, at one time, were also contemporary. Moreover, the museum itself is filled with objects that have been contemporary at various moments in history, but also have found themselves made contemporary through various curatorial strategies of which the Nannucci piece is perhaps an optimal example. Thus what might perhaps appear on first glance as a juxtaposition of modern and ancient past, might actually read more like an exposition. When thinking about museums, in particular museums that have been renovated several times, Nannucci's phrase might be amended to ALL ART HAS BEEN CONTEMPORARY AND MAY BE CONTEMPORARY AGAIN through processes of inheritance, transformation, interpretation, and appropriation.

If Nannucci's convincing neon declaration and my extension of it are to be believed, then being contemporary is about asserting presence and establishing relevant

constellations of meaning. The contemporary itself, like the idea of the past, is an analytic tool. To be contemporary then is to transform one's cultural inheritance, to make it one's own. It is to confidently assume one's place at the intersection between the synchronic and diachronic horizons of one's life. In other words, it is to be able to sit at the Passover Seder and, when it is one's turn to speak, to say 'as if it were me': it is to mean not that I was there, so much as that I am here – *hineni* – I am the one in the museum using the images to tell a story.

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