

# Shades of Grey: The Role of the Sublime in the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe

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In our mind's eye we are accustomed to think of the Holocaust as having no landscape—or at best one emptied of features and color, shrouded in night and fog, blanketed by perpetual winter, collapsed into shades of dun and gray; the gray of smoke, of ash, of pulverized bones, of quick-lime (Schama, 1995, p 26).

As a 'post-disaster' landscape, the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe does, arguably, occupy ground where the mass extermination of the Jewish people of Europe was masterminded, but it is not physically a site of death. Commonly, memorial landscapes are erected upon the location where violence, tragedy and disaster have occurred. Divorced from the diasporic dead it seeks to honour, the memorial employs spatial form, the surrounding atmosphere and human memory to potentialise a sublime experience for visitors. The sublime plays an essential role in memorial landscapes because sublime experiences are heightened, unforgettable and enduring. This reduces the possibility that visitors will depart the memorial unscathed, leaving the monument to bear the burden of memory. While a sublime experience can be optimised, it cannot be given, thus, the onus of remembering the Holocaust remains our responsibility.

The Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe (which was unveiled in 2005) rises like an ancient forest in the heartland of Berlin a mere 100 metres from the Brandenburg Gate. The roots of the memorial are nourished by tainted soil. The office of Joseph Goebbels stood here in 1937, and the bunker where Adolf Hitler committed suicide on 30 April 1945 is nearby. During the 1960s, the memorial site was part of no-man's-land – a fault line separating East from West Berlin (Quigley, 2005). The notorious Berlin Wall once flanked the plaza, now apartment blocks, office buildings, a sports field and coffee shops surround the 19,000 square metre site. An allée of trees eases the transition between the memorial and the Tiergarten situated to the west, but, with only a few scattered plantings, the site is an exercise in contrasts, a stark concrete chiaroscuro.

I was initially unsure how I felt about this vast grey acreage. Described by some as banal (Lee, Bae and Choi, 2006, p 243), sober and drab (Quigley, 2005) and controversial even to the survivors Eisenman strived to commemorate (Brunberg, 2005b), the memorial is materially minimalist and monolithic, deceptively chaotic, as if assembled by a tremulous earth, and spread like a great dehiscence across the cityscape. 'In Berlin, a whole block near Potsdamer Platz in the centre of the city has been given over to a national memorial to the murdered Jews of the holocaust—the size of the gesture commensurate with the guilt that Germany feels' (Long, 2007, para 1). Perhaps in light of Shaw's (2006) comment,

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## REFLECTION

'In terms of the sublime, the pain of the Holocaust is such that it exceeds our ability to supply a concept' (p 128), it is appropriate that I struggle to comprehend the memorial, as it commemorates an event beyond knowing. I cannot find a way to be *within* a place I have never been, to understand a memorial that exceeds my lived experience of death, disaster and trauma.

The initial seeds for the memorial sprouted in the late 1970s when, as Schlör (2005) describes, there was a discursive desire within German society to open up discussions about '*de Schoah*' (p 25). Schlör reports that Federal President Richard von Weizsäcker's speech, conducted on 8 May in commemoration of the fortieth anniversary of the end of World War Two, acknowledged a desire for open remembrance of atrocities committed (*ibid*, pp 28–32). Initially, the site of Prinz Albrecht Palais was to be set aside as a location for a Holocaust memorial. The exclusion of the Sinti and Roma from this initial memorial incited controversy (*ibid*, p 32). In 1993, German chancellor Helmut Kohl selected the Neue Wache, a nineteenth-century guardhouse as the 'National Memorial for Victims of War and Tyranny' (Brunberg, 2005a, para 4). The inclusion of a sculpture depicting the Pieta by Käthe Kollwitz offended the Jewish community (*ibid*, para 4). April 1994 saw the launch of a competition to 'define Germany's own present-day memory of the Holocaust, a complex and difficult memory' (Schlör, 2005, p 34). The monument was to be sited 'in the heart of the German capital' adjacent to the Tiergarten (*ibid*, p 34). The winning design by Christine Jakob-Marks was rejected and the competition relaunched in 1997. A team headed by Peter Eisenman and Richard Serra won the competition. Construction began on 1 April 2003. Brunberg (2005b) reports that on the day the memorial opened, 10 May 2005, the sky over the concrete blocks was a uniform grey.

As the last cobblestones were laid, and a temporary media pavilion was erected on the southern edge of the site, hail flew. Water lay on the stones like broken glass. It seemed a fitting atmosphere for a project whose completion had taken seventeen stormy years (Quigley, 2005, 'Endings', para 1).

Trolling the internet for images, I spy, amongst the sombre black and white photographs, models posing, a person performing calisthenics, children leaping from stela to stela as if the memorial were an enormous concrete funhouse. For residents in the overlooking apartment complexes, the continual vision of a megalithic sunlit acreage seems a cruel fate for generations two or three times removed from the horrors of the Holocaust. 'An unavoidable fixture of the city's life', observes Ouroussoff (2005), 'reassuring those who see the Holocaust as a singular marker of human evil while upsetting those who feel that Germany has already spent too much time wallowing in guilt' (para 5).

As a 'post-disaster' landscape, the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe occupies ground where the extermination of homosexuals, people suffering from mental and physical illnesses, the Roma and Sinti people, Nazi adversaries and the Jewish people of Europe was masterminded, but it is not physically a 'traumascape'. Traumascape, as defined by Tumarkin (2005), are 'a distinctive category of places transformed physically and psychically by suffering, part of a scar tissue that stretches across the world' (p 13). At sites of tragic death and destruction, regardless of scale, the presence of death hovers, visible and

tangible. But the deathscapes of the Holocaust are diasporic – former ghettos, concentration camps, cities and villages scattered across Europe, single-family homes, farms, forests and hillsides. Itinerant landscape memories must be gathered into this singular memorial. Situated upon a former ministerial garden, the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe lies mute before us; as Brunberg (2005a) comments:

In the end the design can't in itself wake up emotions among people who have not been affected by the Holocaust one way or another. The strongest emotions are to be found in the hearts of the people that experienced the atrocities, as perpetrators, victims or liberators (para 9).

When we see death markers – the singular cross on the roadside, the cairn that marks the resting place of a coffin, the tumuli, the headstone – we are aware that this is a site of human death, even if, as in the case of the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, we know that this is not physically a burial site. Following Treib (2005), the death signification of memorial marking is 'derived from the transaction between the perceiver and the place' (p 15) and is certainly not a transmission from an inanimate object situated within the landscape. The great field of 2,711 concrete stelae was intended by designers Peter Eisenman and Richard Serra (who withdrew from the project in 1998) to recall the standing stones that marked ancient sacred spaces. Each pillar is 95 centimetres wide by 2.375 metres long and the pillars vary in height, greatly exceeding the scale of a singular pine box; however, for some, they evoke a casket and collectively they may call to mind sites of mass extermination. Some stelae are expressed at the ground plane, while others are as tall as 4 metres, large enough to bury visitors in a dark labyrinth-like space. Eisenman (2005b) states:

The markers that were formerly symbols of individual life and death must be changed, and this has a profound effect on the idea of both memory and the monument. The enormity and horror of the Holocaust are such that any attempt to represent it by traditional means is inevitably inadequate (para 1).

In initial proposals for the site, Eisenman presented a vast monumental maze with massive pillars that threatened to collapse upon visitors to the memorial. Site lines to the surrounding city were obscured to potentialise a 'labyrinthine fear of entrapment' (Kaplan, 2007, p 157). Critics' objections surrounded three issues: that the memorial invoked a fascist monumentalism, that the lack of narrative 'muffled' victims' stories and, finally, that the memorial failed to achieve a 'new aesthetic capable of representing the Holocaust' (ibid, p 158).

Kaplan extensively explores the association of beauty and the sublime with representation of the Holocaust, stating: 'I chose beauty over the sublime as my central theme because the aesthetics of the sublime align politically with the idea that the Holocaust is too terrible to be represented' (ibid, p 9). While Eisenman does not specifically discuss the notion of the sublime in the context of designing the memorial, it is clear he did not wish for the site to be perceived as beautiful. 'I think it is a little too aesthetic. It's a little too good looking' (Eisenman, 2005a, para 8). The sublime traditionally contrasts the beautiful; it is associated with the unrepresentable, a masculine monumental scale, which is beyond human

comprehension (Kaplan, 2007, p 7). By employing abstract, immense non-representational forms, perhaps it was Eisenman's desire to evoke the horror associated within Burke's (1998) notions of the sublime, 'How, then, is it possible to aestheticize their crime against humanity if to aestheticize means in some way to transcend the ordinary through some form of beauty?' (Eisenman in Rauterberg, 2005, np).

Shaw (2006) draws a distinction between the 'natural' sublime and 'cultured' sublime – the sublime as a product of language. The natural sublime is constructed as a 'quality inherent in the external world' and, in the past, was often associated with divinity (p 28). As Treib (2005) observes: 'nature was the great source of the sublime, a world of precepts so vast and so beautiful that they reflected the Divine Nature of the deity. Landscapes, rendered or constructed, embodied these visions' (p 17). Sublime experiences in nature are often triggered by atmospheric conditions, encounters with forms that greatly exceed or compress human scale, and moments of embodiment where we somehow release our iron grip on the material world and become one with landscape. These spatial experiences can be expressed in dimensional language and harnessed within memorial landscapes to optimise sublime experiences. While Shaw (2006) posits that, as a product of language, the contemporary sublime can be 'freed up from its slavish dependence on the natural world' (p 47), memorial landscapes *are* experienced in the 'natural world' and those conditions temper our experiences of built works.

Regardless of origin or application, the sublime remains a difficult experience to capture. 'Our ability to discern boundaries or spatial or temporal limitations is brought into question by the sublime ... The sublime frustrates judgment ... the sublime, in short, is presented here as an affront or "outrage" to our powers of comprehension' (Shaw, 2006, p 78). Clearly, in the design of the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, Eisenman intended to push visitors beyond the limits of understanding, to distil a sense of dislocation, to wangle uncertainty (Eisenman in Rauterberg, 2005, np). The paradox of representing the Holocaust in such a manner is that, in divining the sublime, one may reawaken trauma in survivors; alternatively, the initiation of a sublime experience in visitors could 'induce a visceral understanding' (Kaplan, 2007, p 159).

The memorial is deliberately disorienting and the banality of form and lack of material reflectivity bury the visitor in shades of grey. One could lose all sense of self within the disordered blocks. I imagine it feels like death.

These spaces condense, narrow, and deepen to provide a multilayered experience from any point. The agitation of the field shatters any notions of absolute axially and reveals instead an omnidirectional reality. The illusion of the order and security in the grid and the frame of the street grid are destroyed (Lee, Bae and Choi, 2006, p 243).

Hopelessness, emptiness, death. 'The stones make us deaf, they swallow the everyday' (Rauterberg, 2005, np). Death is the ultimate in sublime because, despite our apparent denial, there is nothing we fear more than our own dying. Thoughts of death are limitless – vast, horrifying – and can paralyse us with fear; and yet our own death is inconceivable. Freud (1939) observed:

Our own death is indeed unimaginable, and however often we try to imagine it, we realize that we are actually still present as on-lookers. Thus ... fundamentally no one believes in his own death or, which comes to the same thing: in the unconscious each of us is convinced of his immortality (p 183).

When walking within the memorial, does death awareness violate being, flooding consciousness with thoughts about the victims of the Holocaust and about the endless grief of the bereaved? Or does the evocation of the sublime awaken our own fears? Perhaps the experience of the memorial forces a confrontation with our own terrors – fear of losing loved ones, the seemingly randomness of death and our own demise. If we have suffered trauma, this confrontation with the memorial could break down emotional firewalls, allowing for the interpenetration of banished emotions. I wonder: Do we bear our own stones to the memorial?

‘All attempts to give voice to this event necessarily fail since, at present, no idiom exists by which to do it justice. In terms of the sublime, the pain of the Holocaust is such that it exceeds our ability to supply a concept’ (Shaw, 2006, p 128). For designers of memorial landscapes, the challenge is to say that which cannot be said, to use built form to stimulate memory and, where appropriate, communicate the sublime embedded within spatial expressions of tragic death. But for Holocaust survivors, recovery from traumatic loss and grief is particularly convoluted. Memories are not merely repressed; they are repudiated (Krystal, 2002). To design a memorial to commemorate the Holocaust is to *bring to speech* that which should never be forgotten nor remembered, for the very presence of the memorial could reawaken terrors beyond description for survivors. ‘The people who have lost everything really have no chance of completing mourning successfully’ (Krystal, p 213). However, as Huyssen (2003) remarks:

Everybody recognizes that there can be no perfect solution to memorializing the Holocaust in the country of its perpetrators. But it must be commemorated, through an act of political will and with a commitment to the democratic future, even though any monument will always run the risk of becoming just another testimony to forgetting, a cipher of invisibility (pp 80–81).

Events of contemporary violence, tragedy and disaster unsay the world (Corner, 1997, p 99); they are seemingly beyond our ability to express them. Sites of death wound the flesh of the earth. Battlefields tear pastoral landscapes asunder – the remnants of a regiment buried beneath a series of hand-hewn crosses, the scorched girders of the World Trade Center towers remaining erect amongst the smoke and ashes, a room of empty ovens; even as images, these places have the power to evoke pathos, absence, pain, terror – to awaken the sublime. As Burke (1998) states:

Whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain, and danger, that is to say, whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror, is a source of the sublime; that is, it is productive of the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling (p 36).

Sometimes the sublime is evoked in memorial sites because of our pre-existing knowledge of the tragedy. When visiting the National September 11 Memorial in New York City recently, I had no idea that viewing the endless stream of water

within the memorial fountains would awaken the horrific memory of victims tumbling from the tower heights. Sometimes, it is our knowledge of history or a willingness to delve deeper into the seemingly benign appearances of a site that releases the sublime. Tumarkin (2005) names this form of inquiry the ‘vertical imagination’ (p 224):

To answer a vertical question, of course, we need vertical imagination, the eyes to see what lies under the surface. Horizontal imagination flattens the layers of history, making complex, shared, resonant spaces appear empty of meaning and barren of history. Yet places of loss and trauma are never empty or blank (pp 224–225).

This notion, that sites of loss and trauma taint the earth, could be seen as a projection of pathetic fallacy – the scars of grief that invisibly mark the body of mourners are echoed upon the death plain. Senie (2006) observes: ‘there is pervasive evidence that we believe the ground we walk on holds the content of its history—offers direct access to what has occurred there. Mourners at spontaneous memorials often act as if the bodies were buried there’ (p 46). To host such woe creates a palpable atmosphere of sorrow in the landscape. For example, when I pass a roadside memorial at highway speed, the vision of a site marking death initiates an atmosphere of sorrow inclusive of the surrounding landscape – the vast prairie, the endless sky, the storm clouds rising on the horizon – collectively these awaken the burden of grief that slumbers fitfully in my heart.

To Norberg-Schultz (1979) the atmosphere that lies dormant within particular environments is the *genius loci*. As Seamon (1984) explains, ‘The ancient Romans held that all natural places possessed a *genius loci*, a spirit of place. This spirit, it was believed, gave life to people and places and determined their character or essence’ (p 134). Norberg-Schulz (1979) posits that particular landscapes are entrenched in human cosmology because they allow us ‘to dwell between heaven and earth’ because of their association within human consciousness and experience (p 23). We often equate the sublime with ancient forests, vast deserts and stormy seas. For the Nazis, the concept of *Blut und Boden* or ‘blood and soil’ expressed the intertwined relationship between a pure Aryan being and a ‘native’ landscape. This concept extended to all manifestations of ‘dwelling’ (Heidegger, 1971) – art, architecture, farming practices, landscape gardening, landscape architecture – each was potentially an expression of fealty to National Socialistic doctrine, but, on a deeper level, these modes of ‘dwelling’ were seen to emit from ‘deep roots in place attachment, a chthonic “spirit of place”’ (Dovey, 1999, p 58).

Gröning (2002) extensively discusses the role of German landscape architects in the blood and soil campaign, noting that, once a landscape had been cleansed of ‘inferior races’, designers were to convert the landscape into one where ‘the Germanic man would feel at home and where his “Nordic longing for landscape” would be met’ (p 122). For Eisenman, there was a deliberate effort to subvert the Aryan *genius loci* of blood and soil by avoiding the use of materials ‘that came out of the soil because the soil was for the Germans’ (Eisenman, 2005a, para 6). Further, by destabilising the ground plane of the memorial, Eisenman imposes a shattered grid, introducing a chaotic topography that expresses the disorienting spirit of a damaged place and breaks the rationalist grid of an ordered city.



Further, the absence of arboreal elements denies any association with a Teutonic landscape mythos.

Living in closer proximity to an 'animate Earth' (Abram, 1997, p 149), as our hunter-gatherer and agrarian ancestors once did, promoted a deep intertwining of earth-being and human-being, and a healthy respect for the raw power of nature. Regardless of how we moderns might romanticise this prelapsarian intimacy (Oelschlaeger, 1991), the exposure to pestilence and disease, warring rivals, marauding animals and extreme weather destabilised everyday life. In response, the ancients developed cultural rituals, systems of belief and gods to account for phenomena beyond their understanding. These cultural schemas stabilised the relationship between human beings and nature by providing a means of accounting for the cosmological chaos that extends beyond human control. Yet particular phenomena continue to resist human desire to rationalise their occurrence. We do not always possess the ability to express particular sensations such as fear, pain, death and the wonder of the wild in plain language. There is a moment, as Shaw (2006) observes, where 'the ability to apprehend, to know, and to express a thought or sensation is defeated' (p 3). Regardless, artists, poets, architects and landscape architects continue the struggle to express these notions, to portray the sublime.

The scar, the wound, the place marking death exceeds our sense of order. One impulse is to repair, to repudiate, to erase in an attempt to aid forgetting. In discussing the fate of traumascapes, Tumarkin (2005) observes the propensity to soothe over sites of tragedy, to erase 'the material remnants of past horror' when, potentially, these relics have the power to 'provide entry points into human experiences' (p 200).

Material remnants of atrocities testify to histories that elude language altogether or for which a new language is yet to be invented. They reach people in a myriad of unknowable ways, which, by virtue of being pre-verbal and pre-ideological, can never be fully manipulated or contained (p 200).

To depart from the knowable is to enter the infinite world of the sublime. As Derrida (1987, as cited in Shaw, 2006, p 118) notes, '[The sublime] "is not contained in a finite natural or artificial object", it must be sought, rather, in that which has no boundary'. The irony of this notion of boundary is, of course, that once we attempt to define sublime phenomena through language, written, spoken or spatial, we thereby bind it. Glickman (1998) observes that, 'Language therefore serves a mediating function: it attempts to name and contain the sublime, to make sense of it' (p 40). In reflection of this comment, certainly the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, as a built form, potentially contains a sublime experience, but it cannot give one. It remains an object, bounded by its inanimate state; only by experiencing the monument can we bring its purposes to presence. The realm of the sublime may exceed everyday language, but it can be experienced. In this, we turn to Heidegger (1971) who states, 'A boundary is not that at which something stops but, as the Greeks recognized, the boundary is that from which something begins its presencing' (p 154). In other words, the sublime emerges from our conscious awareness of it, through our *presence* within a given lived experience.

Schama's (1995) inquiry into landscape and memory employs 'vertical imagination' to excavate the subterranean subliminally of the terror that lies beneath the beauty of the ancient forest, the *puszcza*, that spans the borders of Belarus, Lithuania and Poland.

There was, I knew, blood beneath the verdure and tombs in the deep glades of oak and fir. The fields, forests and rivers had seen war and terror, elation and desperation; death and resurrection; Lithuanian kings and Teutonic knights, partisans and Jews; Nazi Gestapo and Stalinist NKVD (p 24).

A tumulus in the landscape attracts his glance towards the town of Giby in north-east Poland. Atop the hill stands a wooden cross. Schama describes the vision as if it were a scene from a Caspar David Friedrich painting, all Gothic and dramatically lit by the late-afternoon sunlight. The mound is a commemorative site, dedicated to supporters of the Polish Home Army slaughtered in 1945 by Stalin's security police (Schama, 1995, p 25). Stones bearing the names of 500 men and women are raised upon the hill. Standing atop the burial mound, gazing about the landscape, Schama marks the scene to memory – small timber residences surrounded by agrarian scenes, crops in the fields and fowl in still waters, a river glistening through the valley floor, and framing the scene – the darkness of the forest primeval.

Schama finds the beauty of Giby at odds with his expectation of place and of ancestry, 'I had always thought of the Jews of the Alte Land as essentially urban types' (ibid, p 27), but many lived and laboured in the forest, amongst them members of Schama's family. The beauty of the fringe lands aside, the ancient ancestral forest fills Schama with discomfort, for the 'brilliantly vivid countryside' is under-painted with the horror of the Holocaust. 'For Poland's Jews en route to the charnel house, a view of the countryside had been blotted out by the shutters and nailed-down slats of transport wagons clattering relentlessly toward the death camps' (p 26). These two landscapes coexist in Schama's mind. The sublime beauty of the great primal woodland of the *Bialowieza* and the picturesque villages of the forest fringe are tempered by memories of the regional violence – the earth blood-soaked and the sky choked in plumes of ash. 'Landscapes', he concludes, 'are culture before they are nature; constructs of the imagination – projected onto wood and water and rock' (p 61).

Running through an allée of elms one morning, I thought of the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe. It was early spring in Manitoba, and the trees were only beginning to flesh out. A tiny cluster of fledgling leaves clung to the dark limbs overhead. Each twinkled like a verdant little star. After a long, cold winter, the awakening of the world seems nothing short of a miracle. I thought of the grey gorges of the memorial and the stelae creeping across the uneven ground. I thought of despair, of the oppressiveness of the massive blocks and the sensation of feeling lost and overwhelmed within the space. Quigley (2005) was there and she describes moving through the stones:

Walking down one of these passages is disorientating, and scary; you can't see who is approaching you, nor who is behind. The tilting ground and lack of vision offers some small idea of the Jewish experience from WWII: your past snatched away, your future insecure, little hope of escape (para 7).



I recall Schama (1995) and his portrait of the ancient forest: ‘The woods became instead their colony of death, a place of mass executions dispatched close to the roadside perimeter of the dark forest; a dirty business of hasty entries and exits’ (p 71). In this reflection, the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe acquires a new identity. I characterise it as a forest of wild nature, raped of greenery, and of the human beings who once brought it to speech. The intertwining of humanity and landscape is ruptured. ‘We must describe Nature’, posits Merleau-Ponty (1968) in the working notes he wrote just before his death, ‘as the other side of man (as flesh)’ (p 274). Here, instead, is death by landscape; I recognise the memorial as the other side of the other, a *terror incognitus*, where the living inhabit a necropolis in which only the dead should dwell. Something wicked has been set loose upon the lived world. A deathscape has been divined from darkness and placed squarely in the public realm, rupturing the taken-for-granted stability of the everyday landscape. As Cosgrove (2005) observes, ‘Terrorism’s incoherence cuts deep across those late twentieth-century debates about the cultural politics of commemoration; the sickening poetics of its violence acknowledge no identity in its victims’ (p 97). Perhaps this is what provokes the greatest horror here – the loss of identity. The dead are nameless sentinels set in an endless grey purgatory. As visitors, we fear that we, too, could lose our individuality amongst the endless standing stelae. Never remember. Never forget. The memorialised dead are beyond memory – absent now, set in an endless void. The dead have now ‘assumed the form of the landscape itself. A metaphor had become a reality; an absence had become a presence’ (Schama, 1995, p 25).

‘There are few settings which conjure up this equivocating feeling of the Sublime more than the places of the dead’, observes Worpole (2003, p 17). Living within, tending and attending to places of death and disaster in landscape might bring solace and adaptation to loss or, alternatively, *attending to* deathscapes may awaken terror, recognition of the magnitude of evil and the ferocity of wild nature. It would seem to me that, although we can will away our primitive self, a deep connection with the natural world remains affixed within our psyche. Experiences of the sublime transcend the everyday; they are unforgettable. The Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe aims to disturb, to induce an embodied response, to hoist upon each visitor the burden of remembrance. This is why the sublime is such a powerful tool in commemorative culture. But when we emerge from the darkened corridors, when the cacophony of the city stills the ringing in our ears, do we experience relief? Are we granted respite from the burden of memory? Tumarkin (2005) reminds us that catharsis can be the post-traumatic effect of experiencing the sublime, ‘The cathartic experience that traumascapes can trigger is a release from the burden of the traumatic past, but also of the anxious and uncertain present, from the burden of political correctness, the burden of knowledge and ignorance, of innocence and guilt’ (p 53).

So, once again, we find ourselves in a paradoxical position. If the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe succeeds as a monument because of its capacity to induce a sublime experience, and if the after-effect of that experience is purifying, does it succeed as a memorial? Young (1993) suggests the monument can remove us from the burden of memory, from the ‘obligation to remember’ (p 5). A monument is self-referential, an aesthetic object. A memorial is

phenomenological, experiential and potentially transcendent; the memorial is mutable, its discursive values evolve. Does the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe exist as a monument or a memorial? Does it inspire us to become agents of memory, keepers of the stone? If experienced as sublime, the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe has the capacity to disseminate discomfort, to disturb, to incite discord. 'Discord', Dewey (1934) reminds us, 'is the occasion that induces reflection ... The artist ... cultivates them, not for their own sake but because of their potentialities, bringing to living consciousness an experience that is unified and total' (p 15). However, this consciousness can only be individually awoken within the memorial experience. The agency of remembrance remains the responsibility of each of us.

The human capacity to execute acts of violation is realised all too often in contemporary life. Nature's acts of violence are equally cataclysmic and seemingly expanding in scale. The earth where these events occur is contaminated by violence and death. And we still erect memorials so we can commemorate the dead, ease the soul of witnesses, acknowledge the grief of survivors and repair the tears in the flesh of the world.

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