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American Quarterly, Vol. 46, No. 3. (Sep., 1994), pp. 406-433.

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American Quarterly is currently published by The Johns Hopkins University Press.

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The Boundaries of Memory: The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

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FOR THE PAST FOUR YEARS, I HAVE BEEN ABLE TO FOLLOW THE creation of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum from the "inside." I have sat in on design meetings, had open access to museum archives, and interviewed many of the significant actors in this story, from those responsible for the formation of the President's Commission on the Holocaust in 1978 to those responsible for the formation of the permanent exhibition, which opened in April 1993.

As in many history museums, the permanent exhibition appears as a seamless narrative, presenting a history of the Holocaust through the hidden authority of those who shaped the exhibition. Visitors will, by and large, not think about the exhibition as a "narrated interpretation of one particular view of the past." The public face of the exhibition states that major interpretive dilemmas have been resolved.¹

My purpose is not to speak with the traditional voice of an exhibition critic, who, from an assumed privileged position, argues that a museum could have done "this" or "that" better. If we substitute the word "exhibition" for the word "monument" in James E. Young's introduction to his study of Holocaust memorials, his words aptly express my own purpose:

my critical aim will be to reinvest the [exhibition] with our memory of its coming into being. None of this is intended to fix the [exhibition's] meaning

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American Quarterly, Vol. 46, No. 3 (September 1994) © 1994 American Studies Association

in time, which would effectively embalm it. Instead, I hope to reinvigorate this [exhibition] with the memory of its acquired past, to vivify memory of events by writing into it our memory of the [exhibition's] origins. . . . Instead of enshrining an already enshrined memory, the present study might provide a uniquely instructive glimpse of the [exhibition's] inner life—the tempestuous social, political, and aesthetic forces—normally hidden by [an exhibition's] taciturn exterior.²

Visitors to the museum's permanent exhibition are drawn into a Holocaust narrative that builds in intensity from the moment they are herded into intentionally ugly, dark grey metal elevators in the Hall of Witness. Crowded together in the elevators, they watch an overhead monitor with black and white film of Americans' first encounter with Buchenwald, Mauthausen, and Ohrdruf. On the voice-over, a GI recalls the horror of what he saw:

The patrol leader called in by radio and said that we have come across something that we are not sure what it is. It's a big prison of some kind, and there are people running all over. Sick, dying, starved people. . . . Such a sight as that, you . . . you can't imagine it. You, you just . . . things like that don't happen.

Unloaded on the fourth floor at the beginning of the exhibition, visitors experience a “primer” on the rise and content of the murderous world of National Socialism. This narrative intensifies on the third floor, which takes visitors into the world of ghettos and death camps, and then relents somewhat on the second floor, with thematic exhibits on resistance and rescue, children and killers, liberation and emigration. Then the narrative is picked up once again in a second floor amphitheater where *Testimony*, a film in which survivors share their stories, ends the exhibition.

Interior Space: The Mood of Memory

The design team had to shape the exhibition within the confines of the space that architect James Ingo Freed provided, for building construction preceded the design of the permanent exhibition. Museum designer Ralph Appelbaum and others often felt constrained by these limitations. Believing that “a museum functions from the inside out,” Appelbaum understood that part of the design team's challenge was to make Freed's complex spaces work, to create a “whole environment that supported the interpretive story.” They decided to present, in

Appelbaum's words, "a play in three acts": "Nazi Assault—1933–1939," "Final Solution—1940–1945," and "Last Chapter." The finished exhibition's environment is a complex mix of interpretive space: narrow corridors, open areas, and the transitional space of bridges on the fourth and third floors that lead to tower exhibits (Fig. 1). On the bridges, visitors view the Hall of Witness through glass covered with names of destroyed communities and people. They provide, wrote architectural critic Adrian Dannatt,

a double sigh, of relief from the pressures of history on either side and of sadness at the tale that continues before and after. It is also only from these bridges that the full crookedness and distorted proportions of the main hall below can be understood . . . as a distorted, ruptured, structure, just as the classical foundations of fascist society seen from the overview of history appear as barbarism, insanity, chaos.

The towers, containing volatile exhibits, are places of special intensity, power points in the exhibition.³

Appelbaum and the rest of the design team believed that the interior mood had to be "visceral" enough so that visitors would gain no respite from the narrative. "The permanent exhibition," he remarked, "has a vocabulary much like Freed's building. We built it in glass and steel and stone. There is no wood or plexiglas. We wanted to emphasize that the story was a permanent one."⁴

Appelbaum thought that one reason former exhibition designers had failed to satisfy the Holocaust Memorial Council was their belief that some kind of singular design would make this museum memorable. "We tried to bleach out the idea that a designer's style was important. We used basic abstract concepts of style: contrast, proportion, scale, within a modular matrix."⁵

The feel and rhythm of space and the setting of mood was important. Appelbaum identified different qualities of space that helped to mediate the narrative: constrictive space on the third floor for example, where, as visitors enter the world of the death camps, the space becomes tight and mean, heavy and dark. Indeed, walls were not painted, pipes were left exposed, and (except for fire exits and hidden elevators on the fourth and third floors for people who, for one reason or another have to leave) there is no escape. Slanted glass was used in exhibit cases to draw visitors in.⁶

Just as Freed's architecture of suggestion provides an aesthetically



Figure 1. This narrow wooden bridge leads visitors through the story of ghettoization. On the right, large screens show photographs of life in various ghettos. On the left, visitors walk past a casting of one of the remaining segments of the Warsaw ghetto wall, the door from the hospital in the Lodz ghetto—scene of a brutal deportation—and the gate from the Jewish cemetery in Tarnow, Poland, through which Jews were marched to their execution. Photo courtesy of Jeff Goldberg/Esto. ©

evocative building for a Holocaust narrative, so too does an appropriate interior environment provide the proper setting for taking visitors through the story. "We knew early on," said Appelbaum, "that one of the extraordinary parts of the event was that Europe was in flux and the victims were in flux because the perpetrators were moving rapidly throughout the countries. We realized that if we followed those people under all that pressure as they moved from their normal lives into ghettos, out of ghettos onto trains, from trains to camps, within the pathways of the camps, until finally to the end . . . [i]f visitors could take that same journey, they would understand the story because they will have experienced the story."⁷

Visitors, then, are twice removed from Washington, D.C. Freed's acclaimed building was designed to take visitors out of the city as they negotiated oppressive space and were lifted from the Mall through his architecture of suggestion. For the journey through the world of the Holocaust planned by the design team, this was not enough. Visitors had to be removed from American ground on elevators and introduced to exhibition space that would both house the experience and suggest the spirit with which they should approach it. The mood of exhibit space offered not only aesthetic but moral direction. Visitors were to take this journey with a heart and soul "heavy and dark," like the space itself.

Faces: Personalizing the Story

From the stillborn exhibition plans of the 1980s through the content committee's unanimous approval of project director Michael Berenbaum's storyline in 1988, museum planners worried that the millions of individual deaths that made up the Holocaust would be lost in a story of mass death and a fascination with the technique of destruction. The design team was determined to personalize the Holocaust, since it wanted visitors to eschew forever the role of bystander. This, they believed, could best be accomplished through a painful link with the faces of Holocaust victims. Both Radu Ioanid and Arnold Kramer played significant roles in the selection and production of photographic images, the lifeblood of this exhibition. Ioanid came to the United States from Romania, where he had written his doctoral thesis on Romanian fascism. He was hired by the museum as an archivist in oral history and then began to work with photographs after British docu-

mentary filmmaker Martin Smith, who had received an Emmy Award for a segment in PBS's "Vietnam—A Television History" and produced several segments of the "World at War" series, was chosen by museum director Jeshajahu (Shaike) Weinberg as director of the permanent exhibition in 1988. Arnold Kramer was hired in 1986 and eventually became a full-time photographer for the museum.

There was acute sensitivity regarding the historical accuracy of photographs to be used in the exhibition, particularly since one of the oft-cited justifications for the museum's existence was to refute the claims of Holocaust deniers. Smith and Appelbaum believed strongly that the museum should not retouch any photographs. Despite the fact that the photographs acquired by the museum were copies of copies and that scratches, dust, and dirt had been introduced in generations of copies, they argued that if people knew a photograph had been retouched, they would wonder if the image itself had been altered. Kramer successfully argued that by leaving these accretions, the museum was calling attention to the photograph, not the image. "It was an unconvincing badge of honor," Kramer said, "to show 'dirty' photographs." In one case, the museum *did* reconstruct an image, one of a winter scene at Auschwitz, which appears as a large photomural in the museum. Having received three five-by-seven photographs held together with tape, the museum digitized the image to reveal the landscape of Birkenau.⁸

Faces of Holocaust victims in the exhibition are shattering in their power. From the perspective of the killers, visitors encounter the stoic countenance of a Polish Catholic priest facing execution. Polish schoolteachers, moments before their execution, look at visitors in agony, sullen anger, and despair. Photographs taken by Germans of emaciated ghetto dwellers from Warsaw, Lodz, and hundreds of other ghettos are in marked contrast to those taken by Kovno's ghetto resident, Hirsh Kadushin. He was able to convey a gentle and loving glimpse of doomed people. His pictures focus on individual faces—unlike those taken by murderers, which focus on the mass suffering of bodies. There are powerful images of people desperately seeking to flee Europe before the war and of the sorrow, fear, and resignation in the faces of those being deported from countries throughout Europe. And, after visitors walk through the rail car on the third floor, to their right are the extraordinarily painful photographs, taken by a member of the SS in May 1944, of Jews deported from Hungary standing on the ramp

at Auschwitz, most of them destined for immediate murder in the gas chambers. Two brothers, dressed alike in matching coats and caps and with fear etched on their faces, gaze at the camera, into the eyes of visitors. One old woman cradling an infant knew what awaited. Having heard that young women with children were immediately killed, she convinced her daughter to give *her* the baby, and the daughter, unaware of the fate awaiting her mother and child, gained respite from death. This story, told by the young mother's sister in the *Testimony* film, which concludes the exhibition, imbues this face with a ghastly story. The faces of many victims—not all Jews by any means—assault, challenge, accuse, and profoundly sadden visitors throughout the exhibition. Indeed, more than words or artifacts, photographs most powerfully include non-Jews in the exhibition.⁹

After encountering these photographs, I felt immediately the “truth” of Susan Sontag’s oft-cited reflection about photographs of Bergen-Belsen and Dachau. “One’s first encounter with the photographic inventory of ultimate horrors,” she wrote,

is a kind of revelation, the prototypically modern revelation: a negative epiphany. . . . Indeed, it seems plausible to me to divide my life into two parts, before I saw those photographs . . . and after. . . . Some limit had been reached, and not only that of horror: I felt irrevocably grieved, wounded, but a part of my feelings started to tighten; something went dead; something is still crying.¹⁰

One of the distinctive and highly publicized ways that the exhibition seeks to personalize the Holocaust is through its presentation of Dr. Yaffa Eliach’s collection of photographs of the Jews of her childhood shtetl in Lithuania, Ejszyszki. They are displayed in a three-story “tower of faces” exhibit through which visitors move in their journey through the museum’s narrative (Fig. 2). On the fourth and third floors, visitors are surrounded by these faces, which seemingly ascend to the sky in a pyramid-like tower. Jews had lived in Ejszyszki since the early years of the eleventh century. Only twenty-nine of them, including four-year-old Yaffa Sonenson [Eliach], her two brothers, and her father and mother survived the murder of the area’s four thousand Jews by German mobile killing squads and Lithuanian collaborators on September 25 and 26, 1941. During two years of desperate and successful attempts to avoid capture, Eliach’s immediate family survived, with the exception of a baby brother, who was smothered in a hiding place by



Figure 2. Yaffa Eliach calls her collection of photographs the “tower of life.” For the museum, installing her collection on the walls of a towerlike space was a way to personalize the Holocaust and to dramatize the murderous activities of the mobile killing squads in Eastern Europe. For Yaffa Eliach, it was a way to rescue victims from anonymous death, to bring the town back to life. She continues to collect photographs and is writing a history of the town. Photo courtesy of Jeff Goldberg/Esto. ©

Jews fearful that his crying would result in capture. Returning to Ejszyszki in October 1944, after the Russians liberated the area, Eliach's family found that her house had been demolished because "my mother hid her wedding band and earrings when the Germans were collecting all the gold and the furs and the radios and the linen." A Christian family had moved into her grandmother's house, dressed in her grandmother's clothes, used "her furniture, her utensils, everything. They didn't like the idea that they had to move out, and our house became the center for the 29 surviving Jews."¹¹

On October 20, 1944, another baby brother—who had been born to Eliach's mother while in hiding—was murdered as was her mother as they hid from Polish partisans who wanted to finish the work of killing Jews. After the partisans discovered the hiding place, Eliach recalled,

there was my mother with the baby in her arms. She stood up, walked out . . . and I was just in back of her. And she said, "have mercy on my baby. Please kill me first." She didn't ask for her life. She knew exactly what it was all about. At that moment he shot my baby brother . . . and he shot my mother. . . . She fell back on me, my brother and my father. And they sprayed with the . . . machine gun, but she protected us with her body and the bullets went into her body. They shot very low, but her body got all the bullets . . . and I was covered with blood, and they left.

Eliach's father was arrested a few days later by the Russians and sent to Siberia. After his release years later, he lived in Israel. Eliach assumed the identity of an uncle's murdered daughter and escaped with him through Europe to Israel—where she was reunited with her surviving brother—and in 1954 moved to the United States. Eliach had been a member of the commission, and, during its eventful trip to Holocaust sites in 1979, she decided to document the history of the shtetl. "It was clear to me that I had to bring the town back to life. I wanted to rescue this one town from oblivion. I decided to write its history, to remember the people through this act. I was determined that these Jews would not be remembered only as victims."¹²

After the commission's trip, Eliach took a sabbatical from her teaching position at Brooklyn College, began the painstaking work of raising money for her travels, and started to locate emigres from Ejszyszki in Israel, Europe, South America, and the United States. "The search for . . . documents," she wrote,

took me to archaeological excavations in Israel. One . . . where the Wilkanski family buried its Ejszyszki records in order to hide their deportation by the Turks in 1915. The other . . . where in 1946 Peretz Alufi-Kaleko buried photos and documents of his association with the right-wing Zionist movement, Beitar.

After more than a decade of work, Eliach gradually acquired material—including more than six thousand photographs—from which to write her history of the town. After receiving a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1986, Eliach and her husband went to Ejszyszki. What she found confirmed her fears that Jews “died a double death,” being both “murdered physically” and having their memory “obliterated in the post-Holocaust era.” Archives often omitted the word “Jew” and “Jewish,” and, in her town, “all traces of Jewish life were systematically eradicated. . . . Jewish cemeteries . . . were demolished. Tombstones were ground up and the streets paved with their gravel.” The main synagogue became a sports complex, and

on the mass graves, where 4,000 Jews from Ejszyszki and its environs are buried, stands a drab, gray monument with a sign that reads, “victims of Fascism, 1941–1944.” None of the younger people knew that these victims were Jews. Today there is not a single Jew among Ejszyszki’s 12,000 residents.¹³

The visit was a profound one. Eliach met the woman who saved her life by hiding her when the killing began. She went to the hospital where her mother had been taken after she was murdered. She stood on the mass graves, where, she recalled, “I felt a shtetl beneath my feet, teeming with life. I was sinking into this place,” and, she said, “only the image of my grandchildren helped me hold on to the present.” (As Yaffa Eliach told me this extraordinary story, her husband David nodded; he added that he had *seen* her “slipping away” as she stood on the grave and how shaken he had been by the event.)

Yaffa Eliach’s maternal grandparents—Yitzhak Uri Katz and his wife, Alte Katz—were the village’s photographers. Katz, trained as a pharmacist, had graduated from City College of New York and had brought photographic equipment from the United States to the town, where, after their marriage, Eliach’s grandparents opened a photographic studio in the second floor above their pharmacy. Eliach remembers watching her grandmother take photographs of the townspeople, and both she and her brother managed to smuggle some of her

grandmother's photographs out of the village before their final escape. She characterized the photographs in the museum's tower as "survivor photos": some were

sent to relatives overseas or taken along by emigrants; others were snatched by looters as souvenirs; a number were deposited for safekeeping with friendly neighbors; many were buried in the ground or stashed in unusual hiding places—like those of my grandmother . . . hidden in the litter of her Siberian cat during the entire war. . . . The tower of survivor photos now has the weightier task of restoring identity and individuality to the otherwise anonymous victims of the Nazis, [of redeeming them from the] conflagration that left behind mere ashes, smoke, and pits filled with bodies.¹⁴

Upon returning from her extraordinary visit to Ejszyszki, Eliach was determined to find a proper memorial location for the photographs. She told not only the museum in Washington about her collection but also the Simon Wiesenthal Center's Museum of Tolerance in Los Angeles and the Museum of Jewish Heritage—A Living Memorial to the Holocaust, in New York. She also contacted the Museum of the Diaspora in Jerusalem and was told "come back in 1997, we're booked until then." Martin Smith, the former director of the permanent exhibition of the Holocaust Museum, knew of Eliach's collection from colleague Raye Farr's interview with her for Smith's television series "The Struggles for Poland." (Farr is currently director of the permanent exhibition.) Smith asked Cindy Miller, the exhibit's project director, to speak with Eliach, and, on March 1, 1989, Miller met with her in Eliach's Brooklyn home. "I sat there for eight hours on Yaffa's couch looking at all this material," Miller said, "and walked away completely stunned. What one saw was the entire vibrancy of a small shtetl." Miller recalled the power of the photographs, the way they communicated the evolving life of the town and the familiar feel of family photographs, "the scalloped edges . . . cut in the shape of hearts to become parts of cards, birthday cards and greeting cards . . . stained edges . . . cut edges . . . edges that had been colored and pasted down. We wanted to preserve that character . . . and we did not want to lose any information by cropping."¹⁵

Miller believed Eliach's collection was important for several reasons: it not only personalized the story of the Holocaust, it also provided a dramatic memorial to the victims of the *Einsatzgruppen*, the mobile killing squads that murdered massive number of Jews. Appelbaum recalled that "there was a very inadequate response . . . in our museum

to the activities of the *Einsatzgruppen* . . . we couldn't quite capture how to handle what happened in the shtetls of Europe as the Germans advanced into the Soviet Union."¹⁶

Smith and Appelbaum had already decided that they needed a way to "punctuate" the story on each floor of the exhibition and asked Freed to cut away some cement flooring in space that was a tower from the outside but, because of solid flooring, was not a towerlike space on the inside. Originally, they planned to put prisoner "mug shots" from Auschwitz in the tower as a way to personalize the story. There were various ideas for framing these in the tower space; Smith and Appelbaum considered an open tower that would allow the elements to weather the space. They thought about it as a chimney—with all the ominous implications chimneys have in this narrative—lined with brick and even wondered whether having blackened fire brick, perhaps charred through a controlled fire, would provide suitable framing for these photographs. The mug shots would be out of sequence, however, as visitors would not yet be in Auschwitz exhibit space. Furthermore, Appelbaum recalled, "it was a very inadequate solution because the people were already victims. They were in striped pajamas at that point."

The function of the photographs for Eliach and for the museum was somewhat different. For Eliach, these photographs brought her town to life. For the museum, they filled a certain conceptual need in the narrative. These slightly different agendas led to an argument over who should appear in the tower photographs: just victims murdered by the Germans, or, in addition, people who had left before the massacre. Eliach insisted—successfully—on the latter, for these people were part of her story as well. (Most of those appearing in the tower were murdered.) Museum director Shaiké Weinberg and project director Michael Berenbaum initially wanted only photographs of those who died, for "dramatic" purposes. They were willing to negotiate, however, for, as Berenbaum said, "I desperately wanted the photographs. I was afraid that had we not been able to use them, the alternative would have been some kind of art work that would have been a disaster."¹⁷

The tower is powerful space because life is present there, in marked contrast to the sense of death in the rest of the museum. The photographs profoundly affect many members of the museum's staff. Raye Farr, director of the permanent exhibition, thinks them important precisely because they convey images of people fully alive, not yet

victims of the Holocaust. Yet, because almost all of them were destined to become victims, Kramer finds them “excruciating.” They are, he said, “the hardest pictures in the exhibit, for you bring a knowledge of the future to these pictures that these people didn’t have. You see them in their innocence, and you know their fate.” For Appelbaum, the very “ordinariness” of these photographs makes them extraordinary in the context of the museum’s narrative. “Weddings, picnics . . . family portraits, it’s grandma this, it’s grandchild that; so rich, so ordinary, it’s the thing that you and I would open in our photograph album to cherish, but in fact it’s something which was all wiped out in a space of hours by . . . these killings.”¹⁸

Visitors greet these ascending faces in two quite different moments in the museum’s narrative. By the time they encounter the townspeople of Ejszyszki on the fourth floor, war has begun, Germans have engaged in large-scale murder of Poles and the handicapped—“the first victims of systematic murder by the Nazis,” the exhibit text reads—and visitors cross to tower spaces across Freed’s glass bridge with the etched names of lost communities. Visitors encounter the photographs of eastern European Jews taken by Roman Vishniac between 1935 and 1939; these are displayed in a tower room that resembles a mini art gallery, a space completely disjointed from the rest of the exhibition space. Visitors then meet “The Ejszyszki Shtetl Collection.” The exhibit text does not reveal the fate of these people but says only that “in 1939, its Jewish population . . . constituted a majority in the town. . . .”

Visitors meet these faces again on the third floor, after they have moved through the most intense part of the exhibition, the world of ghettos, deportations, and death camps. Crossing another of Freed’s bridges, this one etched with first names of Jewish victims of the Holocaust, tower spaces display shoes, pictures of women’s hair, castings of the Mauthausen crematorium, a table from Majdanek—used for removing valuables from bodies—and a truck frame from Majdanek on which bodies were burned. After this, visitors encounter “The End of a Shtetl.” In the same dispassionate text found throughout the exhibition—for Weinberg understood that the power of photographs and artifacts would only be diminished by passionate text—the events were described:

The “Final Solution” began in Eishishok [the Yiddish name of the village] soon after German troops arrived there on June 23, 1941. A Jewish Council

was formed. The Jews' valuables were collected and confiscated. Jewish men and women were abused and humiliated. On September 21, the eve of the Jewish New Year, an SS mobile killing squad entered the town, accompanied by Lithuanian volunteers. Four thousand Jews from Eishishok and its environs were herded into three synagogues and imprisoned there. Three days later, on September 24, the Jews were taken from the synagogues to a horse market on the outskirts of town. The next day, the men were led in groups of 250 to the old Jewish cemetery. There, the SS men ordered them to undress and to stand at the edge of open pits, where they were shot by Lithuanian guards. On September 26, the women and children were shot near the Christian cemetery. Nine hundred years of Jewish life and culture in Eishishok came to an end in two days. Today, no Jews live in Eishishok.

In the identity card project, the museum uses photographs in a different way to convey the personal dimension of the Holocaust. The plan was to have each visitor obtain, upon entrance to the exhibition, a small card with a photo and brief biography of a person corresponding to the visitor's age and sex. On each floor, the biography would be updated. (In the first months after opening, the various update stations were plagued with malfunctions, however. Now, visitors simply pick up a completed card, categorized only by gender, before they enter the elevators.) When Debbie Klingender, of Peter D. Hart's Research Associates, interviewed members of focus groups for their reaction to various proposed museum exhibits well before opening, the identity card was a "smash hit." "They very much liked the idea that they could identify with someone like them in the midst of this horrible story." One focus group member foresaw an unexpected act of defilement emerging out of this popular idea, however. "I can see right outside of the museum 10,000 cards on the ground. . . . They're going to be blowing up and down the street."¹⁹

The identity cards did not always match visitors with people "just like them." In fact, the project served, without much fanfare, to subtly extend the boundaries of memory to connect visitors with often-overlooked victim groups: homosexuals and Jehovah's Witnesses, for example. Dr. Klaus Müller, a historian from the University of Amsterdam, was in charge of preparing identity cards of homosexual victims. For Müller, the work of reconstructing the history of gay victims had contemporary import, for, he said, shame had hindered the work of memory among gay survivors. Still not recognized as Holocaust victims in many European countries, gay and lesbian groups were not allowed to erect a plaque in Dachau, and—with the exception of

Sachsenhausen, Neuengamme, and only a few other places—"resistance to memorialization represents a second form of exclusion, an effacement of memory at the places where gay men and women died."²⁰

For him, the museum was a beginning. Indeed, urged on by the Gay and Lesbian Activist Alliance in the early 1980s, the council had contacted gay activists in Europe and sought artifactual evidence and photographs. Müller himself contributed photographs of gay life in Germany before the war, arrest photographs from Dusseldorf, and Auschwitz mug shots of gays. He hopes to plan a special exhibit on gay victims for the museum and that representation in the permanent exhibition will motivate gays to "take responsibility for this part of [their history]. In the memory of the Gay and Lesbian community, the Holocaust has been a symbol of the most extreme persecution you can imagine, but the actual historical knowledge . . . is very little."²¹

Müller also warned against the use of false analogy, the tendency in the gay community to equate AIDS with the Holocaust, and to inflate the numbers of gay Holocaust victims. "Who do we remember," he asked.

Up to 1 million dead gays and lesbians as claimed by some gay groups and researchers? Gay historians estimate that between 10,000 and 15,000 gay men were forced into the camps, and lesbians were persecuted to a far lesser degree. Although big numbers create big emotions, here they only document a disturbing attitude in our community. Is there something within us we need to satisfy by inventing an even harsher history than history itself has been for us?

Regarding AIDS, he underscored what he perceived as the

crucial differences between the inaction and hostility of American society and politics toward people with AIDS and the intentional systematic Nazi killing machine. From a gay European perspective, I find it startling that anyone would be interested in comparing the two. By doing so it diminishes the power of each event.²²

On April 23, 1993, just after the museum's opening, on the eve of the "March on Washington" by those sympathetic to gay liberation from across the nation, the museum became a site of remembrance for these forgotten victims. Both Müller and Michael Berenbaum spoke to a large gathering in front of the museum. "Until now," said Müller, "it is very difficult to reconstruct the individual stories of the men with the pink triangle. The museum tells some of these stories and breaks thus

with an unholy tradition of silence.” As a part of this break, Müller wrote eight cards of gay victims and one of a lesbian victim for the identity card project. Stretching the boundaries of memory to incorporate this group of Holocaust victims will also stretch, for some visitors, their boundaries of tolerance.²³

The Boundaries of Representation: An Artifact Out of Place

As a result of the agreement between the museum in Washington and the State Museum at Oswiecim (Auschwitz), suitcases, umbrellas, can openers, small mirrors, toothbrushes, clothes brushes, prisoners’ jackets and trousers, shoes, parts of bunkbeds, bowls, tables, twenty Zyklon B cans, four artificial limbs, and nine kilograms of human hair were brought to the museum in Washington. There was no significant objection to the possibility that these artifacts would be on display, with one exception: human hair. The arguments and decision regarding the use of hair in the permanent exhibition dramatically underscore the different voices at work in the creation of the museum.

The museum’s research brief on human hair notes that, as part of *Aktion Reinhardt*, the property of those murdered was transported from Poland to various Reich agencies in Germany. The appropriation of goods moved inexorably from the confiscation of land, homes, and personal property to the confiscation of remaining goods when people arrived at the camps and to collection of hair, clothes, and, after murder, gold crowns from teeth. “On August 16, 1942, SS Brigadeführer Glücks, chief of the Inspectorate of the Concentration Camps, sent an order regarding ‘utilization of cut hair’ to the commandants of 13 concentration camps . . . all human hair cut . . . [is to be] appropriately utilized.” Hair was to be used, Glücks went on, “for the manufacture of industrial felt and to be spun into yarn. Out of combed and cut hair of women, hair-yarn socks for U-boat crews are to be made, as well as hair-felt stockings for employees of the Reich railways.” Hair was sold for fifty pfennings per kilo to a number of factories. The SS set fire to various barracks filled with goods a few days before the Soviet Army liberated Auschwitz, yet Russian troops still found approximately seven thousand kilos of human hair.²⁴

Smith and Appelbaum were moved by the power of the display of hair in the Auschwitz Museum and decided that it was important to

have a similar display in their museum. "Now to the Germans it's simply an industrial product," Smith said. "There were masses and masses of it. To me it was the one really personal thing. This isn't wood. This isn't metal. This is part and parcel of people. It's hair, and what is hair for most of us? It's our mothers, it's our lovers, it's the things we come close to, a spot we nestle into." The function of an exhibit of hair would be not only to personalize the story but also to demonstrate dramatically that the extermination process, in Appelbaum's words, "didn't conclude with just the death of the victims, but . . . had to include their processing and the auctioning off of the products of their body. . . . If we didn't tell that, we're not really telling the whole story."²⁵

For several years, members of the museum staff and some survivors on the content committee offered strenuous and vocal objections to the planned display of hair. On February 23, 1989, several women staff members wrote:

while we recognize and share with you the concern for a means to convey both dramatically and soberly the enormity of the human tragedy in the death camps, we cannot endorse the use of a wall of human hair, or ashes and bones. These fragments of human life have an innate sanctity, if you will; they are relics of once vital individuals, which do not belong in a museum setting but rather in a memorial setting. You run the very real risk of creating a cabinet of horrible curiosities by choosing to use them . . . and encourage . . . a more ghoulish than emotionally sympathetic response or painful memorial response.²⁶

These staff members offered two major arguments against the planned display of hair: it is by its very nature sacred (its "innate sanctity"), consequently the idea of public display of something so intimate, particularly when connected to so great a horror, registers as an act of defilement. The hair would be contaminated—at least in a museum setting—and the museum would be contaminated through its callous disregard of the hair's sacredness by the willingness to put it on display. It was evident that the location of a Holocaust museum was crucial in the determination of when hair from Holocaust victims registered as either appropriate artifact or pollutant.

If this museum were situated at Auschwitz or Treblinka or Mauthausen; if it were the very site of the atrocities and the place of death of the victims, then the evidence of their degradation, manifest in the remaining hair, bones, and ashes, would have validity. Here, in Washington, DC, that validity does not

carry over. Human remains are not a commodity to be shipped, transported, catalogued, and crafted for dramatic display; we have an obligation—morally—to respect these materials, whose most meaningful placement would be one of ritual burial to which the individuals themselves had been denied. . . . The horror, abuse and true inhumanity of the Nazi perpetrators must be conveyed, but not at the continuing expense of the victims or in an emotionally exploitative format for the museum visitor.²⁷

The objection was not that hair would be on public display but that it would be on public display away from its “home” in the camps. It was “matter” out of place. Others made the same argument. Well before plans for a display of hair arose, council historian Sybil Milton said, “it must be assumed that objects such as hair, bones, and ashes will not be considered as potential accessions. . . . They do not belong in an American setting, where no concentration camps stood and which was not the primary arena for the events now known as the Holocaust.” Yaffa Eliach believed that the hair *and* the shoes “never should have crossed the Atlantic.” The museum should display, she said, “what survivors and liberators brought back, for this material is a statement about what happened, but we should not contaminate the country with the murderers’ loot.”²⁸

The late Alvin Rosenfeld, who had worked at the museum both as director of External Affairs and senior consultant to the “Days of Remembrance” program, added to the litany of objection: “At any standard, the display of human hair and/or ashes and bone is offensive to the memory of the dead.” Such displays would, he believed, “offend, repel and sicken many visitors physically, emotionally and spiritually. Many visitors, myself among them—and I am totally non-religious—will consider such displays sacrilegious, a desecration.” The fact that Michael Berenbaum had been assured that there would be no rabbinical objection—“there are no human cells in hair and there is no religious objection,” he would later report to the content committee—did not assuage Rosenfeld’s fears. “There are other groups of Rabbis who will inevitably disagree—and protest and picket and write letters to newspapers.”²⁹

In addition to objecting on the basis of good taste—expressed in the language of desecration—Rosenfeld argued that “what is acceptable in the abnormal atmosphere of a death camp—the site of the murders—is not acceptable in the antiseptic atmosphere of the Nation’s Capital. It must not be forgotten that we are a National Museum on the National Mall and we must behave accordingly.” Just as Freed’s building was to

be a "good neighbor" to the Auditors Building and the Bureau of Printing and Engraving, so too, in Rosenfeld's view, was the permanent exhibition to be a good neighbor to the tastefully appointed museums on and around the Mall. So, in addition to objections that victims' hair was out of place in a Washington museum and accusations of contamination came the warning that the museum must behave itself. As with other issues—the design team's discussion about the appropriate presentation of horror, for example—there was concern about transgressing boundaries, transgressions that would violate visitor sensibilities and violate the unspoken but deeply felt code of institutional civility operative in the nation's capital.³⁰

None of these arguments, however, proved persuasive in content committee discussions about the hair. On February 13, 1990, the committee discussed whether a privacy wall for the hair might seal off the exhibit from the "casual visitor." Raul Hilberg argued that it was important to display the hair, to illustrate the "ultimate rationality of the destruction process." Berenbaum agreed and said that, while he understood what a sensitive issue this was for some survivors and while it was a story that the museum told with "fear and trembling," the display was crucial to the telling of the "dehumanization of the victim who was drained of all mineral life and treated as a by-product of the process of manufacturing and then recycled into the Nazi war economy." Dr. Helen Fagin, a survivor, objected, saying "we can teach without showing the hair." Survivor Sam Bloch declared that he had no objection to its use, and Joan Ringelheim, research director for the permanent exhibition (and now director of the department of oral history), argued that the use of hair would be one of the only places in the exhibit that would focus on the distinctive treatment of women in the Holocaust. After lengthy discussion, the committee voted, nine to four, in favor of displaying the hair.³¹

Despite the vote, several survivors, Fagin and Dr. Hadassah Rosensaft—who had lost both her husband and young son in Auschwitz-Birkenau—pressed for reconsideration. During the content committee's meeting on October 9, 1991, Fagin made the convincing argument by declaring that any display of hair would show "insensitivity and a violation of feminine identity." She had shifted the attack from debatable arguments regarding taste and appropriate location to the unassailable statement that a display of hair would damage women

survivors' feelings. Out of respect for these feelings, announced content committee chairman and survivor Benjamin Meed, the museum would keep the hair but not display it.³²

At a design meeting on December 9, 1991, Shaiké Weinberg held out a slim hope that perhaps a "single strand of hair" might be used. Concerned that without the hair the third floor tower rooms would not build to the "crescendo" desired, Weinberg assigned Kramer to go to Auschwitz and photograph the display of hair, in the hopes that some of the impact could be communicated. (Weinberg later added that he wanted the exhibit to communicate the effect of a "sea of hair.") Within a few weeks, at a design meeting on January 8, 1992, all hope for any use of hair was gone, yet the design team decided that the exhibit should have room for the hair, should one day there be a decision to include it.³³

While no longer working at the museum when the decision was made, Martin Smith was disappointed. "I absolutely believe that it should be in the museum and on display. . . . I think what the hair does is to actually bring you to a different layer of truth. But it's not going to be there and this is part and parcel of the whole problem of a museum about this subject, being in Washington, D.C., and being on the mall. In the end you mustn't upset too much. And I don't think one can ever upset people too much about this."³⁴

Discussions regarding the hair issue were emotional and occasionally bitter. Shaiké Weinberg decided that it was more important to have the continuing support of the survivors than to continue to fight about this issue. The decision not to display human hair illustrates the clash between the different voices that shaped the museum, the commemorative and the educational.

In this particular case, the commemorative voice, the privileged voice of the survivor, won out. For, as Raul Hilberg once reminded me, one of the "rules" of Holocaust speech was that any survivor, no matter how inarticulate, is superior to the greatest Holocaust historian who did not share in the experience. In the exhibit, in front of Kramer's color photograph of women's hair is an open area that represents the boundaries of commemorative space owed to the survivors. Someday, perhaps, the hair will fill this space. Until then, it remains in storage outside of Washington, in limbo, in place neither in Auschwitz nor in Washington, D.C.

Redemption and Resolution? Endings

The late Terrence Des Pres, Professor of English at Colgate University and author of *The Survivor: Anatomy of Life in the Death Camps*, wrote of the Holocaust that “the predicament of aftermath defines us, and not merely as individuals but as creatures of an age that has never been able to assimilate the implications of the event we call the Holocaust.” One of the most difficult interpretive challenges for the museum’s design team was to construct a proper ending to the exhibition. Should visitors be sent away with a greater appreciation of Des Pres’s “predicament of aftermath”? Or was there some way to offer a more intellectually and emotionally satisfying ending to the story, an ending that would make use of the comforting language of “lessons” to be learned and employ the comforting rhetoric of insulation that declared that in spite of the horrors visitors had viewed, the spirit was ultimately triumphant. Just as James Freed was forced to reduce the size and set back the Hall of Remembrance and alter his plans for its bricked-up windows so that the building would not contaminate the Mall with a message of despair, so too the design team faced pressure to soften the impact of the powerful story told in their exhibition.³⁵

Part of the problem lay in the structure of narrative itself. Hayden White argued that narrative demands resolution, demands that “real events be assessed as to their significance as elements of a moral drama.” From the earliest plans for a permanent exhibition, the issue of appropriate ending was contested. Many—particularly survivors—believed that, like Israeli Holocaust museums, this museum should emphasize resistance and rescue and the creation of the state of Israel. Death would precede rebirth. Consequently, the Holocaust could be “resolved” as a horrible prelude to its redemption through the birth of Israel. “It is,” wrote James E. Young,

almost as if violent events—perceived as aberrations or ruptures in the cultural continuum—demand their retelling, their narration, back into traditions and structures they would otherwise defy. For upon entering narrative, violent events necessarily reenter the continuum, are totalized by it, and thus seem to lose their “violent” quality.

Others objected to any triumphalistic, redemptive ending and argued that the ending could reflect both the continuation of life and the sober realization that the “predicament of aftermath” would remain.³⁶

In the two years before the museum's opening, pressure on the staff to create a "happy ending" increased. Lay leaders, particularly Albert Abramson, believed that the ending needed to convey hope in order to satisfy the American public. There was a short-lived plan to have Israeli and American flags placed at the end of the exhibit. In the spring of 1989, the content committee discussed the wisdom of having visitors sign a presidential statement about genocide and be offered a copy when they left. There was also discussion of the installation of television sets with "real time" film of contemporary genocidal events.

There was an attempt by German government officials to moderate portrayal of Germany in the museum. In 1986, Wiesel had established the U.S.–German Committee on Learning and Remembrance with Peter Petersen, a member of the West German Bundestag. Aside from Wiesel, there was little enthusiasm for this among council members, and his resignation in December 1986 ended this connection. In February 1988, however, long-time council member Miles Lerman—who survived the war as a partisan and is now chairman of the council—met informally with Petersen and reported that Petersen had wondered whether the story of the "new" Germany would be told. In a follow-up letter to Lerman, Petersen wrote,

the Holocaust is part of your history, it is also part of our history, the darkest part any people can carry. If we Germans face the truth . . . then obviously that truth will have to have formed the basis of the Federal Republic. We would like to have a chance to show how this has been translated into our constitution, our laws, our relationship to Israel, the attempts of restitution. . . . In another way Israel . . . is also a result of the Holocaust, and here we could imagine that the story of the Federal Republic and the story of Israel should have a part in a Holocaust museum, not in an attempt to cover up anything, but as an encouragement for people and nations to learn from this past and become free for the future.

Shaike Weinberg briefly considered the idea of including in the exhibition a photograph of the former mayor of West Berlin Willy Brandt kneeling in contrition at the Warsaw Ghetto Monument, but there was strong opposition and the content committee decided not to proceed.³⁷

Appelbaum and Smith worried about ending with an overemphasis on resistance and rescue and about making it appear that the Holocaust was a necessary precursor to the birth of Israel. Smith wanted an ending that would intentionally *not* bring closure to the narrative. Ending with

resistance and rescue would, he said, "come dangerously close to a falsehood." He argued for recorded voices of survivors, an "eternal flame of memory which would be . . . people talking totally at random so that you would be left with something which was forever changing." His idea was not adopted; instead, as visitors conclude their walk through exhibits on the second floor, many stop at the *Testimony* film to watch short segments of video interviews done with survivors. The space in which the film is shown is in stark contrast to the dark space of the rest of the exhibition. It is softer, with walls of dark golden Jerusalem stone.³⁸

The interviews were constructed around themes of resistance, rescue, and defiance, and yet the result is more complex: a sober and moving one-hour seventeen minute film, which does not in any way "resolve" the Holocaust through language of spiritual triumph. And while not the random form that Smith preferred, the voices in the episodic film help remind visitors that the individual reality of the Holocaust was much more chaotic than the museum's coherent narrative. In the midst of various accounts of resistance, rescue, near-rescue, theological certainty and theological doubt, and tortured memories of all kinds, one voice in the film seemed to me to provide a fitting expression of unresolved closure. Survivor Gerda Wiessman recalled that she found the body of a friend who had died shortly after Allied armies arrived at their camp. She recalled that earlier, for a wager of strawberries and cream, "I said we would be liberated, she said we would not." In a moment of powerful silence, Wiessman looked at the interviewer, and it was clear that she had lost the wager. No survivor of the Holocaust could ever be completely liberated.

The permanent exhibition was constructed as both religious experience and intellectual argument. From the time visitors enter Freed's building, they are subject to strategies of displacement inherent not only in the building's architecture but also in the mood of exhibition space. While the museum's location adjacent to Washington's Mall enshrines Holocaust memory at the center of American commemorative space, architecture and exhibit remove visitors from American space. Large artifacts are intended to allow museum visitors to "touch" the physical reality of the Holocaust: to smell the pungent odors of victims' shoes, to stand next to an Auschwitz fencepost, to walk through a German rail car of the type used to transport people to their deaths. These visceral experiences are designed to reduce the distance

between European Holocaust sites and an outpost of Holocaust memory in Washington, D.C. Photographs help visitors realize that Holocaust victims were ordinary people before they were Holocaust victims. They reduce the space between the living and the dead.

The Holocaust is to be “inflicted” on the museum visitor as the narrative seeks to arouse empathy for victims, inform visitors about wartime America’s role as both bystander and liberator, and ask visitors to ponder the power of a murderous ideology that produced those capable of implementing official mass extermination. No longer occupying American space, visitors undergo an initiatory passage through a Holocaust narrative designed, in part, to help them appreciate the virtues and frailty of American democracy and designed to instill an attitude of civic responsibility. They are to emerge from the exhibit “born again,” chastened citizens, alert to the stirrings of genocidal possibilities in their own society and elsewhere.

The exhibit is also a place where the longstanding argument about the appropriate relationship between Jewish and “other” victims is addressed. While there is only brief mention of the Armenian genocide, the exhibition at least allows the possibility of reading the Holocaust as an event linked to previous—and future—genocides. There is an unresolved tension in the exhibit’s presentation of the relationship between Jewish and non-Jewish victims. The inclusion of various “others” broadens the definition of the Holocaust beyond six million Jews but maintains a careful hierarchy of victimization by locating Jewish victims at the center of the Holocaust, with others situated in relation to the Jewish center. Depending on one’s perspective, the exhibit can be read as a major step toward inclusion of various victims—an expansion of the boundaries of Holocaust memory—or still too exclusive, with non-Jewish victims defined only in their relationship to Jews.

In these and so many other ways, the boundaries of Holocaust memory have been stretched, constricted, and otherwise contested in the history of this project. Decisions about the permanent exhibition were part of a whole series of sensitive negotiations among and between people representing different interests. Survivors, representatives of non-Jewish groups, museum staff, the “lay leadership” of the council, and various advisors, usually academic historians, all had a role and stake in the shape of memory present in the museum’s location, building, and exhibition.

NOTES

1. Faith Ruffin, "The Exhibition as Form: An Elegant Metaphor," *Museum News* 64 (Oct. 1985): 59. On exhibitions as "arguments," see Neil Harris, *Cultural Excursions: Marketing Appetites and Cultural Tastes in Modern America* (Chicago, 1990), 95.

2. James E. Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (New Haven, 1993), 14.

3. Adrian Dannatt, "Bearing Witness," *Building Design* (2 July 1993): 10–11.

4. Ralph Appelbaum, interview with author, 9 Aug. 1993. During a design meeting on June 20, 1991, for example, Appelbaum strongly objected to a suggestion that a railing on the third floor be enlarged so that people could sit down. This, he said, would change the nature of the exhibit, even were the seating area made purposefully uncomfortable. Another suggestion that some sort of cushioning be provided on this railing met with strenuous objections from most of those present (author's notes).

5. Appelbaum interview. Suggestions for an overall exhibition narrative and specific artifacts and design were made by members of the President's Commission on the Holocaust—prior to their first meeting in February 1979—and their successor body, the United States Holocaust Memorial Council. These bodies struggled with these issues throughout the early and mid-1980s. Numerous detailed plans for an exhibition failed to meet with approval of the council.

6. Ann Farrington, coordinator of the permanent exhibition, interview with author, 28 July 1993.

7. "For the Living," WETA-TV (PBS) transcript, roll 128, t-27, 3–4.

8. Arnold Kramer, interview with author, 8 Feb. 1994.

9. Early discussions, during the work of the President's Commission on the Holocaust in the late 1970s, began to probe the boundaries of the Holocaust regarding representation of "non-Jewish" victims. This would be one of the most vexing issues the museum would face, and the unresolved, perhaps unresolvable, tensions would persist beyond the museum's opening. In his comments at the commission's meeting in February 1979, for example, historian Raul Hilberg, who was willing to characterize the Holocaust as "unique," also pointed out that it was not "without its precedents and not without its implications. . . . It would not be a fulfillment of the overall task to ignore the fates of other people, be they Armenians, or be they, during the events, the Soviet prisoners of war that died during captivity, or . . . other victims. . . ." Hilberg wanted to stretch the boundaries of memory back to include the Armenians, victims of Turkish genocide in 1915, and he wanted to stretch the boundaries outward to include others murdered by the Nazis. Others cautioned that the unique situation of the Jews in the Holocaust—"never before had one people denied another people the fundamental right to live," argued historian Lucy Dawidowicz—made it crucial to maintain the Jewish core of the Holocaust, although others could perhaps be allowed to penetrate the outer edge of the boundaries in a carefully managed hierarchy of victims. No other issue—particularly with regard to Armenians and Gypsies—would so engage the attention of those responsible for the creation of the permanent exhibition.

In the President's Commission on the Holocaust, *Report to the President* (Washington, D.C., 1979), Elie Wiesel—who served as chairman of the commission and chairman of the council until December 1986—sought to solve the problem aphoristically by declaring that while "not all victims were Jews, *all* Jews were victims, destined for annihilation solely because they were born Jewish." In his concluding remarks at the commission's meeting on April 24, 1979, Wiesel argued that

the universality of the Holocaust lies in its uniqueness. If I speak as a Jew about Jews, of course, I speak about others as well. If I were to stop speaking about Jews, I would betray both the others and my own people. I simply do not believe in denials. . . . I understand the motivations. They are good; they are honest. There is so much pain. . . . I was terribly moved by our Armenian friends [who had spoken at the meeting about the importance of their being included in this story]. I cannot tell you how much. I understand therefore, the initial impulse to extend and to elaborate and to enlarge. . . . What I am afraid of is if you go too far, we will do neither you . . . nor ourselves any good.

For Wiesel, memory was a key corrective, "once you remember, you remember everybody. Memory is not something that shrinks but something that enriches." And yet, while he affirmed the integrity of inclusive memory, he worried about the seductive power of memory. Like other survivors, he worried about the "slippery slope" of inclusion. Survivors, he said, were used to speaking of six million Jewish victims.

Then some friends . . . began reminding us, "true, but after all, there were others as well." It's true, there were others as well. So they said 11 million, 6 [million] of whom are Jews. If this goes on, the next step will be 11, including 6, and in a couple of years, they won't even speak of the 6. They will speak only of 11 million. See the progression? 6 million plus 5, then 11 including 6, and then only 11.

The boundaries of memory were stretched during the formation of both the commission and council. Wiesel was indeed committed to representation of non-Jewish victims in the museum, on certain terms. For him, as for most survivors and many others on the commission and council, there was an inviolate Jewish core of the Holocaust that had to be recognized while arguing for the "appropriate" inclusion of others. Gypsies, homosexuals, Russian POWs, Poles and other Eastern Europeans, the mentally retarded and incapacitated, for example, would all be in the story but not at the center. For those insisting on the unique situation of the Jews in the Holocaust, universalization of the story—inevitable given the fact that this was to be an American museum—was a double-edged sword. Yes, knowledge of the Holocaust would be widespread. Yes, many, not just Jews, would be located in the story. But, such permeable boundaries also raised the possibility of dilution, effacement of the Jewish core, and—given Wiesel's slippery slope argument—the potential of a more sophisticated manner of murdering the victims once and for all through the construction of Holocaust memory without Jews in it. In his concluding remarks at the commission's April 24 meeting, Wiesel said, "If I were to tell you that I have an answer how to solve . . . how to combine these terms, I would lie. I do not know how."

10. Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York, 1977), 20.

11. Yaffa Eliach, interview with author, 17 Mar. 1993; "For the Living," roll 91, t-4, 35–36.

12. "For the Living," roll 91, t-4, 38; Eliach interview.

13. Eliach interview; Yaffa Eliach, "The Ejszyszki Tower: The Tower of Faces," *Jewish Studies Network* 5 (spring 1991): 1–2.

14. Eliach, "Ejszyszki Tower," 3–4.

15. "For the Living," roll 83, t-5, 34, 42–43.

16. "For the Living," roll 130, t-29, 1.

17. Michael Berenbaum, interview with author, 27 July 1993.

18. Appelbaum interview, 21 Apr. 1993; "For the Living," roll 130, t-9, 3.

19. Debbie Klingender, interview with author, 25 July 1992; Peter D. Hart, Research Associates, Inc., "Materials from Focus Groups Conducted for the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum." I thank Debbie Klingender and Naomi Paiss, director of

communications at the Holocaust Memorial Council, for their willingness to share relevant materials with me.

20. Klaus Müller, interview with author, 23 Apr. 1993.

21. Müller quoted in Ara van Herfum, "The Forgotten Victims," *The Washington Blade*, 23 Apr. 1993, 71. The earliest evidence I have found with regard to gay request for inclusion in the nation's official Holocaust memory system is in a letter from the Gay Activists Alliance to President Carter on January 31, 1980. Criticizing the work of the commission, which "chose to remain absolutely silent concerning the thousands of human beings exterminated in Hitler's death camps because of their sexual orientation," the alliance asked that the museum include "appropriate exhibits relating to the Nazi campaign against homosexuals," that there be an educational focus on "anti-gay genocide," that "openly gay [men] and lesbians be appointed to the Citizens Committee on Conscience," that there be specific remembrance of gays in Days of Remembrance proclamations, and that fund-raising "include an outreach to gay men and lesbians." Appendix to United States Holocaust Memorial Council meeting transcript, 28 May 1980, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum files (HMMF).

22. Klaus Müller, "The Holocaust ≠ AIDS" *The Advocate*, 4 May 1993, 5.

23. Gay victims are represented throughout the exhibition. In a display on "book burning," the text reads that among books burned were "Magnus Hirschfeld's writings on homosexuality." In the exhibit "Enemies of the State," the text notes that homosexuals were persecuted because of their "sexual orientation," and, on the third floor, the text of the exhibit "Who Shall Live and Who Shall Die" reads "about 10,000 homosexuals, most of them German and Austrian, were imprisoned in the camps. They often received the hardest work assignments, as a result of which more than half did not survive. Many homosexuals were also sentenced and interned under other categories." There are also mug shots of gay victims on the third floor. In the second floor exhibit, "Return to Life," the text reads, "under the Allied military government, some homosexuals in Germany were forced to serve out their terms of imprisonment, regardless of the time they had spent in concentration camps. The law used by the Nazis to imprison homosexuals remained in effect until 1969." Former museum historian David Luebke had suggested in a design meeting on March 9, 1992, that this last exhibit could deal with various survivors, not just Jews. Shaiké Weinberg responded that there were no artifacts to build a story around but was willing to alter the text (Design meeting notes, 9 Mar. 1992, HMMF).

24. Information in this paragraph from Linda Hunt, "Human Hair Research Brief," 9 Mar. 1990, HMMF. The massive display of human hair, which takes up a whole wall in one of the brick barracks in the Auschwitz Museum, is a most powerful display.

25. "For the Living," roll 129, t-8, 4-5; and Martin Smith and Ralph Appelbaum, interview with author, 16 Jan. 1993.

26. Staff memo, 23 Feb. 1989, HMMF.

27. *Ibid.*

28. Sybil Milton, "Recommendations for Archival Accessions and Collection Development of a Holocaust Museum," 1986, 9-10, HMMF. Eliach interview. Hadassah Rosensaft—a member of the council and the content committee and survivor of Birkenau and Bergen-Belsen, whose husband, young son, parents, and only sister were murdered in the gas chambers—also went beyond hair in her objections. During a content committee meeting on May 2, 1989, she objected to using a casting of the Mauthausen dissection table, any part of a crematoria, even the doors. "The tools of death," she said, "should remain in the place of the crime, not [be] enshrined in our museum."

29. Rosenfeld memo to Smith and Appelbaum, 16 Feb. 1990, HMMF. As a foreign correspondent for the *New York Post*, the *New York Herald Tribune*, NBC News, and the *Washington Post*, Rosenfeld had covered Israel's war for independence, the trial of Adolf Eichmann, and the Six-Day War.

30. Alvin Rosenfeld memo, 16 Feb. 1989. Martin Smith was less concerned about the "good manners" of the museum. In an undated memo in response to Rosenfeld, he said, "I would rather be condemned by the media than pretty up the event."

31. Content committee minutes, 13 Feb. 1990, HMMF.

32. Content committee minutes, 10 Oct. 1991, HMMF.

33. Design meeting notes, 9 Dec. 1991, HMMF.

34. "For the Living," roll 129, t-8, 4-5; and Martin Smith, interview with author, 16 Jan. 1992. Likewise, Appelbaum believed that the hair was so "visceral" that "people who are compelled to tell the truth in this museum, couldn't make that final last step" ("For the Living," 5).

35. Terrence Des Pres, "The Dreaming Back," *Centerpoint* 4 (fall 1980): 14. I tell the story of the alteration of Freed's building in my forthcoming history of the making of the museum, *Preserving Memory*.

36. James E. Young, *Writing and Rewriting the Holocaust: Narrative and the Consequences of Interpretation* (Bloomington, Ind., 1988), 15.

37. Content committee minutes, 24 May 1989, HMMF; Lerman memo, 8 Feb. 1988; Petersen to Lerman, 6 June 1988, HMMF.

38. Smith interview, 16 Jan. 1993; "For the Living," roll 129, t-28, 2.