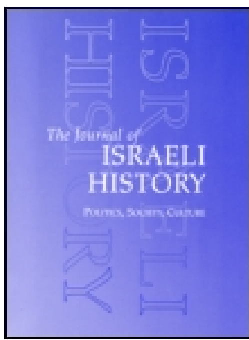

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Journal of Israeli History
Politics, Society, Culture

ISSN: 1353-1042 (Print) 1744-0548 (Online) Journal homepage: http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/fjih20

Nativization and Nationalization: A Comparative Landscape Study of Holocaust Museums in Israel, the US and the UK

Tim Cole

To cite this article: Tim Cole (2004) Nativization and Nationalization: A Comparative Landscape Study of Holocaust Museums in Israel, the US and the UK, Journal of Israeli History, 23:1, 130-145, DOI: 10.1080/1353104042000241965

To link to this article: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1353104042000241965

Published online: 06 Aug 2006.

Submit your article to this journal

Article views: 560

View related articles

Citing articles: 6 View citing articles

Full Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at
http://www.tandfonline.com/action/journalInformation?journalCode=fjih20

Download by: [University of Thessaly] **Date:** 07 June 2016, At: 10:16

Downloaded by [University of Thessaly] at 10:16 07 June 2016

Nativization and Nationalization: A Comparative Landscape Study of Holocaust Museums in Israel, the US and the UK

Tim Cole

There has been much recent interest in what has been dubbed the "nativization" of the Holocaust, a term which, for Isabel Wollaston, describes the reality that "memorials and museums, and discussion of issues relating to the Holocaust, take particular forms and have particular emphases depending upon their national context . . ."[1] A good example of this approach can be seen in James Young's groundbreaking study of Holocaust memorial landscapes in Austria, Germany, Poland, Israel and America. There, Young suggested that the "national memory of what I might call the *Shoah* varies from land to land," and that, "in every nation's memorials and museums, a different Holocaust is remembered, often to conflicting political and religious ends."[2]

Through a comparative landscape study of three — to varying degrees — national Holocaust museums,[3] I want to examine not simply the nativization of the Holocaust, but also its nationalization, within museum space in Israel, the United States and the United Kingdom. I will not focus on the reception of the narratives offered in these museums — an area relatively under-researched by scholars writing on Holocaust representation — nor on the institutional and broader politics underlying the creation of the museums themselves.[4] Rather, I want to examine three Holocaust museums — Yad Vashem in Jerusalem (the present historical museum was opened in 1973, although currently a new museum is in the process of being created), the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) in Washington, DC (first opened in 1993) and the Holocaust Exhibition at the Imperial War Museum (IWM) in London (first opened in 2000) — in terms of two major themes.

First, I want to reflect upon the meanings conferred upon the Holocaust narratives offered in these museums by considering the siting of the museums themselves. These museums do not exist within a spatial vacuum, but in specific sites with their own layers of memory and their own meanings, which influence the memories and meanings given to

The Journal of Israeli History, Vol.23, No.1, Spring 2004, pp.130–145
ISSN 1353-1042 print/ISSN 1744-0548 online
DOI: 10.1080/1353104042000241965 © 2004 Taylor & Francis Ltd

Downloaded by [University of Thessaly] at 10:16 07 June 2016

the event — the Holocaust — being represented. The conferring of meaning in and through site, can be clearly seen in the way in which the same artifact — a World War II-era cattle car — has been variously exhibited at Yad Vashem, USHMM and IWM.

Second, I want to reflect upon the journeys that these museums take the visitor on. In any museum, but particularly in museums offering a historical narrative as Yad Vashem, USHMM and IWM all do, the visitor engages in an act of "organized walking" rather than aimless wandering.[5] A pathway is laid out for the visitor, and in the case of Yad Vashem, USHMM and IWM, an essentially chronological narrative is offered which has a clear sense of a beginning, middle and end. By examining these two elements of museum landscape, I want to suggest that these three museums offer rather different — nativized and nationalized — versions of the Holocaust to their respective audiences. Whether or not those audiences buy into those accounts, is of course another question entirely.

Siting the Holocaust

Yad Vashem

The siting of Yad Vashem is significant at a variety of scales — ranging from the national to the local. At the scale of the nation, the very locating of a Holocaust museum in Israel points towards the links between this historical event and the creation of the state. As James Young argues, Yad Vashem is, "a place where Holocaust history is remembered as culminating in the very time and space now occupied by the memorial complex itself."[6] The location of a Holocaust museum on Israeli soil suggests a dual relationship between the Holocaust and the State of Israel. On the one hand, the Israeli setting offers redemptive closure to the Holocaust. On the other hand, the events portrayed in the Holocaust museum offer a compelling argument for the continuing need for a Jewish state in Israel.

A clear example of the former can be seen in the recently erected Memorial to the Deportees. This memorial sculpture, with its cattle car perched precariously on severed rails, draws its meaning not simply from the authentic wartime cattle car (a gift of the Polish government) but also from its setting overlooking the hills of Jerusalem. This is made explicit in a leaflet explaining that, "Although symbolizing the journey towards annihilation and oblivion, facing as it does the hills of Jerusalem, the memorial also conveys the hope and the gift of life of the State of Israel and Jerusalem, eternal capital of the Jewish People."[7] In short, this cattle car means something very different here than the cattle car (also a gift of the Polish government) which is exhibited in the USHMM. The cattle car in Washington, DC, through

Downloaded by [University of Thessaly] at 10:16 07 June 2016

which the museum visitor walks, is the means by which we transition in the historical exhibition from the ghettos to the concentration and death camps. It is quite literally the way by which we — and we are encouraged to merge our identities with those of the victims, or at least one victim — are taken to Auschwitz. Thus the cattle car is situated within the US museum as representative of deportation. A similar role is given to the cattle car (given by Belgian Railways) on display at the IWM. In both places, the journey the cattle car is taking is to Auschwitz.

In marked contrast, the cattle car at Yad Vashem is ultimately journeying to (and has journeyed to) Israel. There is recognition that it took Jews to the death camps — to the places of "annihilation and oblivion" — but it is seen as journeying beyond those places, to Israel. And that journey is not simply one which is metaphorical, but also one which is physically enacted with the siting of this European cattle car on a rail line jutting out from the Jerusalem hills. By placing it here, the cattle car speaks of emigration as well as deportation, of rebirth as well as destruction, of Jerusalem as well as Auschwitz. There is redemptive closure.

Alongside this reinvesting of the central symbols of the Holocaust with new meaning in this site, Yad Vashem reinvests Israel itself with new significance through its telling of the story of the Holocaust on Israeli soil. As Omer Bartov has suggested,

> the visitor [to Yad Vashem] should come out with the thought that had there been a Jewish state before the Holocaust, genocide would not have occurred; and since genocide did occur there must be a state. But also that just as the state can be traced back to the Holocaust, so too the Holocaust belongs to the state: the millions of victims were potential Israelis. . . . And more: that all Israelis are potential victims in the past, the present, and the future.[8]

Thus the siting of this historical museum and memorial space at the symbolic heart of the Israeli state, ensures that multiple connections are drawn between the event in the European past and the politics and society of the Israeli present.

But there is more to the site itself than simply a plot of Israeli soil. This is not simply any piece of land. Rather, Yad Vashem is sited on the Mount of Remembrance in West Jerusalem, in close proximity to the national cemetery where the father of Zionism, Theodore Herzl, is buried along with Israel's fallen soldiers. This geographical merging of the Holocaust and the War of Independence (in essence the events of the early 1940s in Europe and late 1940s in Israel) which takes place spatially on the Mount of Remembrance is echoed in the ceremonial calendar of Israel. Each year, Holocaust Memorial Day (with its televised opening ceremony at Yad Vashem) is followed a week

Downloaded by [University of Thessaly] at 10:16 07 June 2016

later by Memorial Day (centered on the military cemetery on Mount Herzl) and Independence Day (centered in part on the tomb of Herzl on the summit of Mount Herzl).[9]

The spatial and temporal proximity of Israel's remembrance of the Holocaust and War of Independence was stressed by Israeli Prime Minister, Levi Eshkol, when he spoke at the ceremony held at Yad Vashem on the eve of Holocaust Memorial Day in 1964. He noted the link between the site where he stood and spoke — Yad Vashem — and the sites where Memorial Day and Independence Day would be observed a week or so later:

> The very struggle against the adversary and the victory which followed laid the foundations for the revival of our national independence. Seen in this light, the Jewish fight against the Nazis and the War of Independence were, in fact, a single protracted battle. The geographical proximity between Yad Vashem and Mount Herzl thus express far more than mere physical closeness.[10]

Eskhol's linking of the resistance during the Holocaust with the war for independence — and his making of these two historical events in very different places into essentially a single, continuous history of Jewish resistance — is one of the particularly striking aspects of Yad Vashem. It is made explicit in the inscription on the Pillar of Heroism — one of the many memorials located on the Yad Vashem site — which remembers "those who rebelled in the camps and ghettos, fought in the woods, the underground and with the Allied Forces," alongside those "who braved their way to Eretz Yisrael."[11] Thus the wartime history of Europe and the immediate postwar history of Israel are drawn together within a broader history of Jewish heroism, enacted in the symbolic space of the Mount of Remembrance.

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

With its location just off the Mall in the nation's capital, Washington, DC, there can be little doubt that the USHMM is also a museum located in symbolic space. On one level, this was the conscious choice of Washington, DC, the national capital, over New York, which for the Jewish historian Lucy Dawidowicz was the obvious choice, being "the center of the Jewish population in the United States and the cultural crossroads of the modern world."[12] The decision to locate the museum in the nation's capital signaled that the Holocaust was perceived to be in some way a part of American history, and not simply American-Jewish history. This reflected the conclusions of the Presidential Commission, which reported back in 1978 on plans to erect some form of Holocaust memorial in the United States. They saw the Holocaust to be a part of American history because America

had been an indifferent bystander during the 1930s and 1940s, American troops had liberated a number of concentration camps in 1945 and a large number of survivors had emigrated to the United States after the war. And thus the nation's capital was to be an appropriate location for retelling this part of America's history.

However, there is more to the location than simply the national capital. This museum is not just located within the boundaries of Washington, DC. It is located right at the very symbolic heart of Washington, DC. Now in one sense the Mall is museum space. The USHMM is after all located but a short walk from some of Washington's finest and most-visited museums. This museum joins the others within walkable tourist space. It becomes one more stop on a tourist itinerary. But there is more to the Mall than simply tourist space. It is also symbolic space which articulates the founding history of the nation, and thus says something about what America is, and isn't. And it is here that the setting adds a significant layer of meaning to the museum in Washington, DC. For if in a sense the decision to locate the museum in the nation's capital signaled giving the Holocaust an American history (America as bystander, liberator and refuge), the decision to locate the museum on the Mall, at the symbolic heart of the capital, signaled endowing the Holocaust with an exceptional and un-American meaning.

Situated as it is, close to the monuments to America's great presidents — Washington, Jefferson and Lincoln — the USHMM is juxtaposed with that history of the writing of the Constitution and the founding of the nation. It acts as a sort of counterpoint to the values enshrined in these presidents' memory. This was made explicit by chairman of the Museum Council, Miles Lerman, in a fund-raising letter in which he described what the experience of walking around the museum and then emerging again out into the familiar landscape of the Mall would be like. This familiar landscape would — he suggested — be seen afresh, because, "having witnessed the nightmare of evil, the great American monuments to democracy that surround each departing visitor will take on new meaning as will the ideals for which they stand."[13]

As these words suggest, the museum was envisaged to offer the very antithesis of American values and America's founding history. Thus, whilst in one sense this is a national museum telling of America's involvement — or lack of involvement — in the Holocaust, in another sense the entire museum tells an alien narrative, which sits almost intentionally uncomfortably within this symbolic space. Thus the museum tells a story which Americans can relate to because they were bystanders, liberators and ultimately a refuge, but it also tells the most un-American story imaginable. This paradox is one ultimately settled with the means of framing the permanent exhibition, which I will explore in more detail below

Downloaded by [University of Thessaly] at 10:16 07 June 2016

Downloaded by [University of Thessaly] at 10:16 07 June 2016

Imperial War Museum

Something of this duality of meanings can also be seen in the siting of the IWM Holocaust wing. At one level, the location is a consciously "national" one within the nation's capital, London. As the exhibition itself shows, the connections between Britain's national history and the Holocaust are made explicit. In a sense then, like in Washington, DC, the Holocaust is incorporated into the nation's history, within the nation's capital.

However what is most striking in the case of the IWM Holocaust wing is the situating of this exhibition within existing museum space, rather than — as was the case in Washington, DC — the creation of an entirely new and separate museum to house a Holocaust exhibit. The Holocaust exhibition in London therefore draws upon the history and meanings given to the IWM. First founded in 1917, and opened to the public in 1920, the IWM was created to record the events and sacrifice of the Great War. It finally transferred to its present — and third — site in 1936, and with the outbreak of World War II was charged to record British and Commonwealth involvement in all wars since 1914.[14] The museum therefore has a history tied inextricably into British war memory, and thus the siting of the Holocaust exhibit here situates the events of the Holocaust within the events of World War II and the memory of the Holocaust within British war memory.

For many, such situating made good historical sense. Rather than treating the Holocaust as an event detached from its wartime history, the placing of a Holocaust gallery in the IWM situated the Holocaust within its historical context as an event perpetrated during wartime. For Edgar Samuel, writing to the *Jewish Chronicle*, "Holocaust history needs to be taught in the context of European and Second World War history. If there is to be a Holocaust museum in Britain, the Imperial War Museum is the right place for it."[15] This perception that the "right place" for a Holocaust exhibit was within a museum devoted to wartime history was joined by the parallel perception that a museum devoted to wartime history needed to have a Holocaust exhibit. As Ben Helfgott expressed it: "The Imperial War Museum is about war, and they now realize that the Holocaust took place in war, and that it wouldn't be the Imperial War Museum if they did not highlight what were the effects of war."[16]

By placing the exhibition here, in the military museum space of the IWM, the Holocaust is placed within the context of World War II. But it is also clear that the Holocaust is being cited (sited) as the very thing that the Allies were fighting against. For Field Marshall Lord Bramall, chairman of the Museum's Board of Trustees, speaking when he launched the project to build a permanent Holocaust exhibition, it was the discovery of the camps by the Allies that had convinced them that they were fighting a just war "and that Hitler and his most evil regime had to be beaten once and for all."[17] And in the words of

Robert Crawford, director-general of the museum, it was appropriate that in a museum devoted to showing "the efforts and sacrifice of many people, including those Allied servicemen and women who gave their lives to defeat Nazism," the "Holocaust Exhibition now depicts also the nature of the evil which they helped to defeat."[18]

Thus in a sense, the Holocaust acts as evidence of the justness of the Allied cause in World War II, exhibited throughout the museum. The Holocaust stands as the Hitlerite and Nazi crime, and thus the very antithesis of the Britishness central to this museum devoted to Britain's military record in the twentieth century, and specifically its "finest hour." The Holocaust is established as the crime that Britain fought against, and ultimately defeated as witnessed by the liberation of the camps. Now of course, as in Washington, DC, that sense of the Holocaust as the crime of the Other is tempered with critical self-reflection upon Allied inaction. As a number of historians have noted, the Allies showed a seeming disregard for Jewish fate during World War II.[19] Both the IWM and the USHMM permanent exhibitions relay this critical historiography.[20] However they do this within the broader context of exhibitions framed — in part through location — as representing the crime of the Other, and thus the very antithesis of Britishness and Americanness. Of course, such framing is not limited to location alone, but also through the content of the exhibitions themselves, and the narratives of the Holocaust that they construct for the visitor.

Downloaded by [University of Thessaly] at 10:16 07 June 2016

Journeying through the Holocaust

Yad Vashem

At Yad Vashem, the visitor's approach to the historical museum is framed through a series of encounters with Holocaust heroism. This begins with the non-Jewish heroism of the "righteous Gentiles" who are remembered and celebrated in the avenue of carob trees the visitor walks down (passing a boat used by Danish fisherman to take Jews to neutral Sweden) before entering the Warsaw Ghetto Square where Jewish heroism is remembered and celebrated in a reproduction of Nathan Rapoport's Warsaw Ghetto monument.[21] Such framing of the Holocaust in terms of heroism is entirely intentional, fitting with the early emphasis in Yad Vashem — and Israeli society more widely — upon the Holocaust as a period of heroism as well as martyrdom. From its inception in 1953, Yad Vashem was created as a site of remembering and celebrating Holocaust heroism. Of the nine objectives of this newly created "Memorial Authority for the Holocaust and Heroism," only three were concerned with remembering Jewish destruction, while five focused on remembering Jewish

Downloaded by [University of Thessaly] at 10:16 07 June 2016

"heroism," "fortitude" and "struggle," and one on remembering the actions of "high-minded Gentiles." As I have written elsewhere, at Yad Vashem, "heroism outnumbered destruction two to one."[22]

Once at the doors of the historical museum, a second major framework overlays that initial framework of heroism. Through Naftali Bezem's Memorial Wall which stands at the entrance to the historical exhibition, the concept of rebirth is added to that of heroic resistance. As I have already suggested, this notion of rebirth is suggested by the very siting of this museum in Israel. The redemptive closure offered by Israel is made explicit in Bezem's four sculpted panels entitled "From *Shoah* to Rebirth" (*Me-shoah le-tekumah*). In the first of these, destruction is depicted through, amongst other symbols, the smokestack of the crematoria. In the second, resistance and revolt are depicted, drawing upon the linkage of martyrdom and heroism so central to Israeli tellings of the Holocaust. In the third and fourth panels, immigration to Israel and the rebirth of the nation are depicted, thus creating a sense of redemptive closure to the story that follows, prior to that story being told.

Whilst Jewish resistance is stressed in this opening encounter with the museum, there is clearly the suggestion, implicit in the siting of the museum and explicit in the third and fourth panels of Bezem's work, that resistance in the diaspora was not a sufficient guarantee of safety. This juxtaposition of recognizing and celebrating resistance, and yet also acknowledging its limitations by dint of the fragile nature of the diaspora, is made clear in the opening plaque in the historical museum which signals the uniqueness of the Jewish experience of the Holocaust. In framing the historical exhibit through both notions of heroism and rebirth, this entry text reminds us that Jewish resistance was only a partial victory, necessitating the ultimate victory of the State of Israel:

> This merciless denial of an entire people's right to live is what singles out the fate of the Jews from all other victims of Nazism. The response of the masses of Jews under Nazi domination ranged from the individual's struggle to survive to community-wide attempts to protect Jewish lives, to armed resistance. Nonetheless, an underlying element of the Jewish tragedy was their fundamental powerlessness, as an isolated people bereft of a sovereign state, in the face of the Nazi onslaught.

The historical museum adopts a roughly chronological approach exhibiting "Anti-Jewish Policy in Germany 1933–1939" and life in "The Ghettos 1939–41," before shifting to examine the implementation of "Mass Murder 1941–1945." However, the climax of the exhibition does not come here, in the section on "Mass Murder," as for example I think it does in Washington, DC and London. Rather, the visitor walks up a sloping tunnel — "symbolizing

Downloaded by [University of Thessaly] at 10:16 07 June 2016

the sewers which served as hiding places and escape routes for Jewish fighters in the Warsaw Ghetto"[23] — from the depths of destruction into a brighter lit exhibition space dealing with "Jewish Resistance 1941–1945." This emphasis upon Jewish resistance and heroism, so central to the framing and content of the present historical museum, is set to continue in the newly created historical museum. As the museum plan puts it, "the new museum will emphasize Jews as subjects rather than as objects in the hands of the Nazis as has been presented until recently."[24]

If the section on "Jewish Resistance 1941–1945" can be seen as the climax of the exhibition, the ending comes with the final section on "Liberation and Aftermath 1945." The exhibition does not suggest that safety came with liberation by Allied troops — as is the case in Washington, DC — but rather highlights, as the text states, "the escape routes to *Eretz* Israel" attractive to "the Jewish survivors of the Holocaust [who] refused in most cases to return to their former homes in lands that had become for them only graveyards." It is Israeli Independence and the symbolic significance of trying Eichmann in Jerusalem that offer closure to the events of the Holocaust.

But, as Young suggests, ultimately the ending of the exhibition comes only once the visitor leaves the exhibition space and reenters Jerusalem. He reflects:

> In fact, as we exit the last room of the exhibition, the hall of names, we pass alongside the Baal Shem Tov's words, gilded in gold lettering, a distillation of this memorial's *raison d'être* in Israel: "Forgetting lengthens the period of exile! In remembrance lies the secret of deliverance." With these words in mind, we walk outside into the blindingly bright light of Jerusalem, the present moment. The memorial message is reinforced further still: "That has all come to this," the museum seems to be saying. "That was the *galut*, where Jews had no refuge, no defense only death and destruction; this is Israel, its people alive."[25]

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

That sense of juxtaposition which Young points to in the case of Yad Vashem — between the Jewish experience then in the diaspora and the Jewish experience now in Israel — is, as I've suggested, mirrored — although in an entirely different way — in Washington, DC. Here the juxtaposition is between a European past (Nazism) and an American past (of the founding fathers) and present (democracy). The Holocaust is constructed as the most un-American of crimes and the very antithesis of American values, and that

Downloaded by [University of Thessaly] at 10:16 07 June 2016

understanding is framed by the visitors' entry to the museum, at least from one of the museum's entrances.

Entering the striking building designed by James Freed to house the exhibition, from the Raoul Wallenberg Place side (closest to the Jefferson and Lincoln Memorials), the visitor reads the well-known words from the Declaration of Independence pledging all citizens the right to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." Alongside these words, are those of George Washington to the Hebrew congregation in Newport, assuring them that "the government of the United States . . . gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance." These words frame what we are about to encounter, which is set up as nothing less than the very antithesis of the values enshrined in these documents penned by the founding fathers celebrated a short walk away. What we will see is a history of "bigotry" and "persecution" and the story of a regime which took away "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" from millions of European Jews. In short, the history of a time and place when American values were turned on their head.

But visitors entering from the 14th Street side (closest to the other museums on the Mall) do not encounter these words from the founding fathers. Instead, they are greeted by the flags of the US army units involved in the liberation of the camps. Their framing of the Holocaust is thus as a part of American history, although with America's role shaped as that of liberator, not of bystander. In essence they encounter the other story — the Holocaust as part of American history, rather than the Holocaust as the antithesis of American history. Now what is striking is that these two different stories and these two different framing devices come together in the elevator which all visitors take up to the museum's fourth floor and the start of the Permanent Exhibition.

In both this elevator and the initial images of the Permanent Exhibition, the Holocaust is framed *both* in terms of an American history of liberation *and* as the most un-American of crimes. As the elevator doors close in the museum lobby, we are taken back to 1945 through images of US troops liberating the camps and the testimony of one US serviceman who tells us:

> 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. And you take to an American, uh, such a sight as that, you . . . you can't imagine it. You, you just . . . things like that don't happen.[26]

He is clearly lost for words, on discovering something quite simply unimaginable for an American mind. Here is evidence of the most un-American of crimes. Here is something that doesn't happen in America, and yet is witnessed by an American.

Downloaded by [University of Thessaly] at 10:16 07 June 2016

And as the elevator doors open, we confront a photograph of a pile of half-burnt corpses at Ohrdruf Concentration Camp. We form the other half of a circle, joining the servicemen caught by the camera on the other half of the pyre, staring with disbelief. Not only do we join them as liberators — co-Americans who encounter the camps. We also join them as witnesses of an alien scene, of the most un-American of crimes. That sense of sheer unbelief when confronted with this different world is echoed in Dwight Eisenhower's words placed close to this opening photograph. But there is more to Eisenhower's words than simply unbelief; there is also a prophetic utterance of the realities of late-twentieth-century American Holocaust denial:

> The things I saw beggar description .... The visual evidence and the verbal testimony of starvation, cruelty and bestiality were ... overpowering .... I made the visit deliberately in order to be in a position to give firsthand evidence of these things if ever, in the future, there develops a tendency to charge these allegations merely to "propaganda."

These words provide us with another framework with which to view the Holocaust. We are not only to share the perspective of the American liberators viewing this un-American crime, but we are also going to be witnesses encountering "firsthand evidence." And the museum offers a wealth of authentic artifacts to convince us of the historicity of this event that the so-called "revisionists" deny.

Another major element of the framing of this exhibition is the issuing to each visitor of gendered identity cards as they enter the elevator that takes them up to the start of the exhibition on the fourth floor. Through these cards, we are being asked not only to see through the eyes of the liberator, but also to identify in some way with the victim. Of the 558 individual victims featured on the cards, the majority are Jews — 364 from Eastern Europe and 115 from Western Europe. But in this national museum, other victims of Nazism are included. We are encouraged also to identify with other victim groups: Polish prisoners (47 cards), Jehovah's Witnesses (20 cards), Homosexuals (9 cards), Gypsies (3 cards) and those killed during the T4 Euthanasia program (2 cards).[27]

This is a museum which, unlike Yad Vashem, focuses much more on victimhood than resistance. We are taken chronologically through "The Nazi Assault — 1933 to 1939" on to the "Final Solution — 1940 to 1945" And it is here that the climax of the exhibition comes. This is not the rise out of the Warsaw ghetto sewers into the light of resistance and heroism, as in Jerusalem, but rather the experience of spiraling down — quite literally given the museum's layout — through ghettoization and deportation into the very heart of destruction. We are taken on a journey through a cattle car and under the gates of

Downloaded by [University of Thessaly] at 10:16 07 June 2016

Auschwitz, before coming face to face with the horror of medical experimentation and the industrialized mass killing of the gas chambers and crematoria at Auschwitz-Birkenau. The climax of this exhibition is destruction, rather than resistance. And this makes sense, given that this exhibition narrates the story of an Other. It does not aim to bridge resistance in the Jewish past and present as Yad Vashem does, but rather reveals an antithetical history of destruction and victimhood on the one hand, and American liberation and refuge on the other.

As already suggested, the story of America as liberator and refuge is tempered with self-critical reflection on American inaction and indifference. Thus the failed Evian Conference of 1938, the turning back of the SS *St. Louis* from US shores and the vexed question of the Allied failure to bomb Auschwitz are all dealt with during the historical narrative dominated by Nazi German persecution of the Jews.[28] As I have argued elsewhere, "these stand as an explicit judgement on past inaction, and an implicit call to America (as self-styled 'policeman of the world') not to stand idly by in the future."[29]

But ultimately we are left with an ending that is hopeful at least in part. The exhibition closes with the showing of a film lasting one hour and 17 minutes and entitled *Testimony*, in which 20 survivors "recount their experiences of loss, suffering, and anguish, as well as rescue, resistance, compassion and hope."[30] Shown in an amphitheater whose walls are clad with Jerusalem stone, thus hinting at Zionist redemption, this ending is intended to be upbeat. These are not only survivors, filmed in their ultimate refuge in the contemporary United States, but they are also survivors whose stories were chosen to reflect the themes of "resistance, rescue, and defiance."[31] They are Americans whose tales of horror are tempered both by our knowledge that they lived to tell the tale and by their words of faith and hope. Their placing at the ending of this exhibition is striking. The survivors are given the last word, reflecting I think the significant changes wrought by the Eichmann trial. This offered up survivor testimony as the voice through which the Holocaust would be told. It was a trial that not only did much to shape the narrative of the Holocaust, but also to shape the dominant means of relaying that narrative.

Imperial War Museum

In London, the survivor's voice is given an even more prominent role. Not only do the survivors have the last word, offering their post-Holocaust reflections on the impact of this event upon their personal lives. They also have the first word, telling us of life before the Nazis. And we hear their voices throughout the IWM exhibition, describing their own experiences of the historical events being relayed to us.[32] As the museum's current director, Suzanne Bardgett, has noted, "their voices are almost constantly within earshot throughout

Downloaded by [University of Thessaly] at 10:16 07 June 2016

the display as they remember being deported to ghettos and camps hundreds of miles from home." The survivors' voices, which accompany us throughout the exhibition, play the same role of "humanizing the narrative" intended by the identity cards we carry with us in Washington, DC.[33] We are thus encouraged to identify with the victim/survivor, although we are also called to reflect upon the roles of bystander, liberator and perpetrator.

But the beginning of the exhibition at the IWM is not just framed through the voice of the survivors recounting their experiences of "Life before the Nazis." Ultimately the exhibition is framed as we enter the main museum and walk through the entrance hall with its display of military hardware. As we come to the permanent exhibition itself, we are shown imagery of World War II and see Adolf Hitler's words informing us that "War is the origin of all things." And then we encounter the Holocaust, which the exhibition text introduces for us as an event within the broader history of war:

> Under the cover of the Second World War, for the sake of their "New Order", the Nazis sought to destroy all the Jews of Europe; for the first time in history, industrial methods were used for the mass extermination of a whole people, 6 million were murdered, including 1,500,000 children. This event is called the Holocaust.

Thus we do not encounter the Holocaust specifically as the liberator as is the case in Washington, DC. We are on the other side, but we are on the side of the combatant, fighting a just war against the enemy willing to perpetrate such war crimes. The Holocaust is integrated — *ex post facto* — into Britain's "finest hour."

In an essentially historical narrative, the nature of these war crimes unfolds, interspersed with the ambivalent contemporary reactions as the news of them "reaches Britain." Much more is made of native collaboration than in Washington, DC, and in perhaps the most striking room in the entire exhibition a lone typewriter represents the bureaucratic nature of this crime which involved such a massive array of state organizations and personnel in Nazi Germany, whose names are displayed "Hilberg-style" on the walls.[34] As with Washington, and unlike Jerusalem, it is destruction which is the climax of this exhibition — the bureaucratized and industrialized mass killings at Auschwitz-Birkenau, displayed in a large-scale model of the gas chambers and crematoria which mirrors in some ways the model on display in Washington, DC.

Auschwitz is again present at the close of the exhibition, although this time it is contemporary Auschwitz. On one screen, we see images of the contemporary remains at Auschwitz-Birkenau, while on another screen "our 'survivor-witnesses' deliver their thoughts on how the experience of surviving the Holocaust has affected them and what lessons it has for the world at

Downloaded by [University of Thessaly] at 10:16 07 June 2016

large."[35] Their multiple voices (there are 18 of them) offer multiple responses to the Holocaust: "People get carried away by isms," "I feel very privileged to live in a free country," etc. However this multiplicity of lessons is overlaid with what is presented as the authoritative curatorial lesson which the Holocaust is deemed to offer — Edmund Burke's dictum that "for evil to triumph it is only necessary for good men to do nothing." Given the location of this exhibition within the context of a museum dedicated to British warfare, these words come as a reassurance that we were the "good men" who did something in 1939–45, as well as a warning to continue being "good men." Presumably "good men" may find themselves fighting just wars, which is the theme central to the whole of the IWM.

Nativization and Nationalization

In these essentially national museums, it would seem that something more than simply the nativization of the Holocaust has taken place. These are not only national museums, but in some senses at least, nationalist museums. They are museums where the Holocaust is exhibited as the radical Other and the very antithesis of the contemporary nation state.[36] There is a degree of self-critical reflection, in particular on the question of being an inactive bystander at the USHMM and IWM. But that sense of self-critical reflection in these two museums is joined with a less self-critical nationalist discourse, which might even be seen to be celebratory. However, there is surely something deeply ironic about the Holocaust of all historical events being utilized as a tool of nationalism. Even more: there is also something disturbing about such instrumentalization of this particular past.

NOTES

1 Isabel Wollaston, "A War against Memory? Nativizing the Holocaust," in John K. Roth and Elisabeth Maxwell-Meynard (eds.), *Remembering for the Future: The Holocaust in an Age of Genocides* (Houndmills, UK, 2001), Vol. 3, p. 507. For examples of studies of "nativization," see, in the case of the United States, Peter Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life* (Boston, 1999); and Hilene Flanzbaum (ed.), *The Americanization of the Holocaust* (Baltimore, 1999).

2 James E. Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (New Haven, 1993), pp. viii–ix. And as Young makes clear, these differences can be — and are — within nations as well as between nations (p. xi).

3 In the case of Yad Vashem and USHMM, these national museums are explicitly state-sponsored. The IWM Holocaust Exhibition is supported by the UK national lottery "Heritage Lottery Fund."

4 On the politics behind Yad Vashem, see Tom Segev, *The Seventh Million: The Israelis and the Holocaust*, trans. Haim Watzman (New York, 1994), pp. 421–45; on the US museum, see Edward T. Linenthal, *Preserving Memory: The Struggle to Create America's Holocaust Museum* (New York, 1995); on IWM, see Steven Cooke, "'Your Story Too?' The New Holocaust Exhibition at the Imperial War Museum," in Roth and Maxwell (eds.), *Remembering for the Future*, Vol. 3, pp. 590–606.

Downloaded by [University of Thessaly] at 10:16 07 June 2016

5 Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics* (London, 1995), p. 6.
6 Young, *The Texture of Memory*, p. 244.
7 Yad Vashem, *The Memorial to the Deportations* (undated pamphlet).
8 Omer Bartov, *Murder in Our Midst: The Holocaust, Industrial Killing, and Representation* (New York, 1996), p. 178.
9 See Don Handelman, *Models and Mirrors: Towards an Anthropology of Public Events* (Cambridge, 1990) pp. 191–233, and Young, *Texture of Memory*, pp. 263–81.
10 Cited in Handelman, *Models and Mirrors*, p. 201.
11 Reuven Dafni (ed.), *Yad Vashem: The Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority, Jerusalem*, 5th edn. (Jerusalem, 1990), p. 26.
12 Cited in Linenthal, *Preserving Memory*, p. 57.
13 Cited in Alvin H. Rosenfeld, "The Americanization of the Holocaust," in idem (ed.), *Thinking about the Holocaust: After Half a Century* (Bloomington, 1997), p. 127.
14 Gaynor Kavanagh, "Museum as Memorial: The Origins of the Imperial War Museum," *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 23, No. 1 (1988), pp. 77–97; and Sue Malvern, "War, Memory and Museums: Art and Artefact in the Imperial War Museum," *History Workshop Journal*, Vol. 49 (2002), pp. 177–203.
15 Cited in Cooke, "Your Story Too?" p. 598.
16 Cited in ibid. Although, as Cooke points out, there was also criticism of siting a Holocaust exhibition in a museum whose very name contained a reference to imperialism.
17 Cited in Imperial War Museum, *Report* (Winter 1996/97), p. 1.
18 Robert Crawford, "Foreword," in Imperial War Museum, *The Holocaust: The Holocaust Exhibition at the Imperial War Museum* (London, 2000).
19 See, for example, Tony Kushner, "The Meaning of Auschwitz: Anglo-American Responses to the Hungarian Jewish Tragedy," in David Cesarani (ed.), *Genocide and Rescue: The Holocaust in Hungary 1944* (Oxford, 1997), pp. 159–78; Bernard Wasserstein, *Britain and the Jews of Europe, 1939–1945* (Oxford, 1979); Louise London, *Whitehall and the Jews: British Immigration Policy, Jewish Refugees, and the Holocaust, 1933–1948* (Cambridge, 2000). For a counter-view, see William D. Rubinstein, *The Myth of Rescue: Why the Democracies Could Not Have Saved More Jews from the Nazis* (London, 1997).
20 Suzanne Bardgett, "The British Perspective on the Holocaust," in Imperial War Museum, *The Holocaust: A Major Permanent Exhibition for the New Millennium* (London, undated manuscript), pp. 6–7; cf. Tony Kushner, "The Holocaust and the Museum World in Britain: A Study of Ethnography," *Immigrants and Minorities*, Vol. 21, Nos. 1–2 (2002), p. 27.
21 In the newly planned Yad Vashem, visitors will exit a newly created Visitors' Center which will "create the appropriate atmosphere at the start of the visit," "either directly to the museum, or to the Avenue of the Righteous Among the Nations which will lead to the memorial square at the entrance of the Hall of Remembrance." See Yad Vashem, *Yad Vashem 2001 — Masterplan: The New Museum Complex and the Visitors' Center* (undated booklet), p. 19.
22 Tim Cole, *Selling the Holocaust: From Auschwitz to Schindler: How History is Bought, Packaged and Sold* (New York, 1999), p. 122.
23 Dafni, *Yad Vashem*, p. 8.
24 Yad Vashem, *Yad Vashem 2001*, p. 21.
25 Young, *Texture of Memory*, p. 253.
26 Cited in Linenthal, *Preserving Memory*, p. 167.
27 For further discussion on the use of identity cards, see Cole, *Selling the Holocaust*, pp. 161–4; and Andrea Liss, *Trespassing through Shadows: Memory, Photography and the Holocaust* (Minneapolis, 1998), pp. 13–26.
28 See Linenthal, *Preserving Memory*, pp. 217–24 for a discussion of the question of Allied bombings of Auschwitz. This section of the permanent exhibition has been revised.
29 Cole, *Selling the Holocaust*, p. 151.
30 Jeshajahu Weinberg and Rina Elieli, *The Holocaust Museum in Washington* (New York, 1995), p. 148.
31 See Linenthal's discussion in *Preserving Memory*, pp. 253–4.

32 Cf. USHMM, where the only other use of survivors' voices is in the "Voices from Auschwitz" section, set back from the main exhibition route.
33 Suzanne Bardgett, "The Holocaust Exhibition at the Imperial War Museum," http://www.iwm.org.uk/lambeth/pdf files/hol_bardgett.pdf, p. 3.
34 The display is reminiscent of the charts in Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews* (Chicago, 1961)
35 Bardgett, "The Holocaust Exhibition."
36 Although, as I have noted, at Yad Vashem, heroism does provide a link between Jewish resistance during the Holocaust and the more recent history of the Israeli state.

Downloaded by [University of Thessaly] at 10:16 07 June 2016