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PALIMPSESTS: NATIONAL, INTERNATIONAL, AND TRANSNATIONAL SITES OF MEMORY

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In this essay I claim that all sites of memory have both local and national meanings, since they say that something happened here or to the people who live here, in this country, which is worth remembering in public. Only some sites of memory are international, in that they are constructed not solely by locals or residents of a particular region or state, but by groups of people in different countries drawing attention to events they think significant. However, transnational sites are those which were constructed or designated as significant by people from different places or different states, who worked together to represent the past from a transnational perspective. Therefore, the central question of my research is what did memory agents, that is, the people who built or used these sites of memory, want to achieve through them? What were they for? The answers I present are based on war memorials and museums. Reflecting on these sites underscores the ways in which war memorials are palimpsests, in the sense that they have multiple levels of meaning attached to them, corresponding to the collective memory of local, regional, national, international and transnational communities about our violent age.

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All sites of memory are local and national, in that they draw attention to a particular site in a particular place in a state or territory where a significant event or events happened. What Dolores Hayden (1995) calls 'the power of place' arises when people tell stories about a past that unfolded here, in this town and in this country. The question arises whether these local or national sites at one and the same time can also be international or transnational in character. I believe they can. International sites of memory mark events and movements which unfolded in more than one country, for instance the operation of and abolition of the slave trade. Transnational sites are those which were constructed or designated as significant by people from different places or different states, who worked together to achieve transnational goals, for instance the emergence of the European Union or the drafting and adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. What makes a site international is the coming together of associations in more than one country to mark events that were significant in different national contexts. What makes a site transnational is the way it is marked by people who work outside of or beyond nations to achieve transnational objectives. International sites are marked by the efforts of different actors operating in national associations, like the Second International, the League of Nations, or the United Nations. Transnational sites are fashioned by people working in transnational associations, such as *Médecins sans Frontières*, the Roman Catholic Church or the Red Cross. They have national standing, as does the Archbishop of Paris, but their primary allegiance is to a transnational Church or organization or coalition.

I claim therefore that all sites of memory have local and national meanings, since they say that something happened here or to the people who live here, in this country, which is worth remembering in public. Only some sites of memory are international, in that they are constructed not solely by locals or residents of a particular region or state, but by groups of people in different countries drawing attention to events they think significant. And other sites of memory involve other groups, whose identity arises not from national associations but from transnational affiliations.

Diasporic memory, for example, is both international, since it refers to a homeland and to the scattered members of that homeland, and transnational, since it frequently refers to a town or region, from whence people migrated. Some practice transnational memory in *Landsmanschaften*.¹ I discovered that my Russian grandfather came from Brest-Litovsk, on the Polish-Byellorussian border, from a notice the association of emigrants from Brest-Litovsk published in a newspaper in 1924. My family came from that trans-national entity the 'Pale

of settlement', which was both part of the Russian empire, and a Jewish world that spanned many national and imperial borders. After 1945, Germans expelled from many parts of Eastern Europe created their own equivalents of *Landsmanschaften*. Similar organizations existed far from the world of Eastern Europe, e.g., alumni of universities who wanted to recall the fun of being young and relatively free from their own associations based on their shared experience. These groups span the globe, but they do not necessarily perform acts of global memory. In most of these groups there is a core and a periphery, a place of origin, semi-sacred in character, and a place of nostalgia, where those attached to the origin can recall its delights. Here memory dissolves into 'nostalgia', as Svetlana Boym (2001) observed, a warm and cloudy place, like a sauna, where we can conjure up a past that (most of us know) never existed in the first place. Global memory, in my view, is an illusion, a site of fantasy rather than a site of memory.

World heritage sites are not global sites of memory, but rather those designated by a trans-national organization, or by one of its auxiliary bodies, to be worthy of preservation. The work of UNESCO (The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) founded on 16 November 1945 in Paris, was and remains the promotion of peace through education, science, and culture. Being founded and centered in Paris just after the end of the Second World War, UNESCO faced multiple tasks. One was the repair of European culture from the damage inflicted on it by the Nazi occupation of France and the rest of Europe. The great powers then were still proudly imperial, and no one saw this as a contradiction alongside UNESCO's campaign against racism. It was only from the 1960s that it became a crime (or at least an embarrassment) to be an imperial power. Only in 1966 did the British Colonial Office merge with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. Not always, but all too frequently, the term 'Global Culture' (Berger, 1997) means the products of the Atlantic world marketed to everyone else. Nike, the maker of footwear, or the United Colors of Benetton, show us the way the term 'global culture' has been reduced to a marketer's slogan. Those who sell designer clothes are not agents of global memory.

Colonial and imperial sites of memory are both international and transnational. They originate to express a binary bond, between the settler and the country of origin. Two examples are two statues honoring Cecil Rhodes, the British magnate, and Prime Minister of the Cape province. The first was installed in 1934 prominently at the University of Cape Town² and removed in 2015. The second is on the external wall of Rhodes' college in Oxford, Oriel, and dates back to 1911.³ It will remain in place with an explanatory plaque alongside. Initially these monuments tied London or Oxford to Cape

Town, but the controversy over preserving them in place was transnational, drawing in people from all over the world. The same distinction between the international and the transnational may be seen in the establishment of the Rhodes scholarships in 1902.⁴ Initially a project to bring the sons of white settlers to Britain, it was expanded in 1903 to include German students, nominated by Kaiser Wilhelm II. These scholarships were redirected in 1914 to Canadian and West Indian candidates, and then restored for Germans in 1930. That came to an end in 1939, but once more, in 1970 the Rhodes Trust opened the competition to students from the Federal Republic of Germany. The Rhodes scholarships were imperial in origin but became transnational over time. The same is true for sites of memory in other imperial or colonial settings. I stick to my view that there are four levels on which sites of memory operate. What distinguishes them is the subject position of the memory activists who create or sustain them. We find traces of these four levels of memory work in local and national archives. But we also learn about them through the records of international and transnational movements and associations.

Sometimes, a site of memory attracts all four levels of associational activity. Consider the example of Yad Vashem in Jerusalem, a museum and documentation center on the Holocaust. Here is a Jewish site, transnational in character. It is also an international site, recognizing the Just among the Nations, those people who were not Jewish who risked their lives to save Jewish people during the Holocaust. It is a national site, the place where foreign dignitaries and heads of state go on official visits. And it is a local site, facing the hills of Judea and the coastal plain. St Peter's Church in Rome is similarly a palimpsest. It is local, national, international, and transnational, simultaneously. The tomb of Lenin in the Red Square, in Moscow, near the Kremlin, is a local site, to be sure, but also where national and international Communist leaders paid their respects and where tourists follow in their footsteps to this day. In its early days, after 1917, communism attracted people who believed it was a transnational project; that belief did not last long, but while it lasted, this site was transnational as well. Levels of meaning arise from the collective work of those who create, preserve, appropriate, use, or destroy particular sites of memory.

This four-part typology of sites of memory is useful heuristically, since it helps us see that meanings are multiple, flexible, and so are the narratives people build on them. What matters most is to recognize how porous the boundaries between the local, national, international, and transnational character of the work of those we call memory agents are. They are the ones who tell us what a site of memory means.

MEMORY AGENTS

This focus on memory agents leads to what I have termed a social agency interpretation of sites of memory. The source of this intervention was a sense of discomfort first with the original idea and secondly the subsequent free-floating and at times vague notion of what Pierre Nora's *lieux de mémoire* (site of memory) actually did. For him and the authors of the extraordinary seven-volume series published between 1984 and 1992, what they did was to act as political astronomers, attempting to describe the political and social universe of France after the twin demise of communism and Gaullism. To see the future of France one had to see the past, inscribed in a host of places, traditions, and texts. It was a brilliant success, both as a publishing venture and as an inspiration to hundreds of other scholars, me included. Here was an approach that offered an alternative to two schools of historical thought that appeared in the 1980s to have exhausted their potential. By the 1980s, Marxism as a theory of history and as a theory of action had disintegrated, well before the collapse of the Soviet Union and its satellites. In the same period social scientific history, based on quantification in demography, urban history and economic history had lost its appeal. The scholarly work appearing in these fields was useful, but it did not change our understanding of the past.

The field of memory studies was born in the 1970s and came to dominate not only history but cognate disciplines, in particular literary studies. It was at this time that the topic of post-traumatic stress disorder received the imprimatur of the American Psychiatric Association, and the delayed arrival of Holocaust studies transformed the history of the Second World War. The study of dark memory expanded rapidly now that the technology of audio and video capture and retrieval of survivors' testimony became easily accessible to scholars all over the world. What I call the 'memory boom' of the last decades of the twentieth century, was overdetermined (Winter, 2000). But it drew on a turn among historians and others to study the narratives embedded in objects, monuments, or buildings of a commemorative nature. To be sure, the choice of objects was subjective, but the violent history of the Twentieth Century had more than enough material to launch an intellectual current that is still powerful. That current informed the growing discipline of cultural history, defined as the study of the way men and women find meaning in their past (Winter, 2006).

Nora's seven-volume project was a foundational moment in the arrival of cultural history as a dominant historical discipline (Winter, 1997). It was not an alternative to social

history or to political history, but a way to inform both by introducing an element of reflexivity. That term simply means that what meaning people ascribed to their past mattered centrally to the exercise of political power today and tomorrow. Here was the appeal of Nora's project, and the inspiration for many like it. This body of work both excited and troubled me too, in that, aside from investigating in ingenious ways what we now call political culture, it was unclear to me what have all the spin-off studies inspired by Nora achieved. On the one hand, they helped shift attention from social and political history to cultural history in the late 20th Century and after; on the other, they made cultural history a *pot pourri*,⁵ in which, in effect, anything goes. That is why in the 1990s I focused on a functional interpretation of sites of memory. In part this arose from fruitful exchanges with an astonishing group of social anthropologists at Cambridge, in particular Meyer Fortes (1949), which seemed to me to describe the social and cultural practices of a vast, local, national, international, and transnational community in mourning during and after the First World War. Anthropologists like Caroline Humphrey pointed out too that the Eurocentric nature of Nora's 'les lieux de mémoire' was too narrow, and that to understand commemorative sites in Europe, it was necessary to understand African, Asian, and Latin American forms of remembrance as well (Humphrey & Laidlaw, 1994). Over time that project has come of age, though it has taken time to mature. Currently, anthropologist Heonik Kwon (2008) has shown the way forward. I learned from these anthropologist neighbors how to shape a study of war memorials as quintessential sites of memory.⁶ Drawing too from J. L. Austin's (1962) marvelous study *How to Do Things with Words*, I decided to focus on the performative element in the construction and use of *les lieux de mémoire*. And in doing so, I wanted to show that Nora (1989) was mistaken in one of his fundamental claims. It was not true in the 1980s (and it is not true today) that *milieu de mémoire* (memory space) are ersatz, substitutes for a departed regime of *milieu de mémoire*. If Nora had shifted his gaze beyond the 6th *arrondissement* of Paris, he might have seen that there are *milieu de mémoire* all over the world, local, national, international, and transnational.

The best way to make this point was to adopt a lightly functionalist approach to the subject. The central question of my research (as it was then) is now what the people who built or used these sites of memory did with them. What were they for? A preliminary answer came out of both archival work and numerous visits to local war memorials dotting the countryside in France and Britain. They were evidently places where people mourned. The second part of my argument appeared

once again both through archival research and by using my eyes. These sites were overwhelmingly local. A few were national, and even fewer were imperial, international or transnational in character. Especially before the Second World War, and before television and cheap tourism, most people mourned the dead of the First World War at local sites, alongside their neighbors and friends. There women got into the narrative of war as mourners, given pride of place by everyone else, including veterans. In effect, the evidence was overwhelming that despite the importance of the national ceremonies, local sites were the places where people mourned. I call these people memory agents. They form small groups and engage in public acts of remembrance, and they do so mostly at certain sites within their reach. The work of these memory agents breathes life into these sites of memory and mourning. Working in local archives shows clearly that when those who activate these practices move away, or die, or fall ill, or become preoccupied with other projects, then these sites of memory fade away. All have a half-life; all fall victim to time, to the succession of generations, and to the work of other people who either reappropriate these sites or let them fade away into the landscape. That is the sum and substance of my contribution to the debate over *les lieux de mémoire*.

Decades ago, I asked my students at Cambridge what they saw at the first roundabout when they took the bus from the railway station into town. They mostly didn't know what I was getting at. But then the penny dropped, when I referred to an interesting, even odd, war memorial at the roundabout of Station Road, which none of them saw. A decade ago, it was removed from the roundabout, and now has faded into the landscape as a sculpture on the side of the road, but not a site of memory. Nobody does anything *there* anymore. *Homo agens* (man as an acting being) rules; memory agents either keep sites of memory alive or by their inaction, they let these sites lose their charge until they fade away (Winter & Sivan, 1999).

How does the appearance of international and transnational sites of memory affect this interpretation? I believe the approach I have just outlined still stands. However, it is necessary to add a dimension to this interpretive framework to which I have given insufficient attention in the past. I want to emphasize more clearly that all sites of memory are palimpsests, which have layers of meaning attached to them from their very beginnings. And this is even more evident when we deal with sites of memory created or adopted or adapted by subaltern or colonial populations, who use their own notation on top or alongside that of the once or still hegemonic power.

SITES AND SIGHT

That there are layered meanings in sites of memory should surprise no one. But in the English language, the synonym of sites and sight brings us to another way of understanding palimpsests. The meaning of war memorials is inscribed not only in iconography but also in what I call the geometry of remembrance (Winter, 2017). By that I mean that over the course of the Twentieth Century, there has been a conversation among artists, architects, public officials, and activists which has led to a change, with major exceptions, in the way sites of memory are configured. My claim is that those who build or adopt transnational and international sites of memory, like those who built local ones, now tend to prefer the horizontal axis to the vertical. Why should this be so? My reasoning is that the horizontal is the axis of mourning and applies to family groups as well as to very large transnational populations. The vertical is the visual grammar of redemption, of hope; the horizontal is the visual grammar of mourning, of loss. Their relationship is dialectical; if you prefer, they are in dialogue with each other. Here we can see a change over time. The vertical, which is the vector of hope, is very frequently the posture of national affirmation. When we survey sites of memory over the course of the Twentieth Century and beyond, we can see a change over time. The later the monument, the more likely it is to be horizontal in design or to have horizontal elements in it. I believe this turn to horizontality is even more striking after the turn of the Twenty-First Century and is likely to remain the dominant pattern of public remembrance at sites of memory in the foreseeable future.

THE LOGIC OF HORIZONTALITY

In this chapter, I want to illustrate the logic of horizontality in three sites of memory which are either international or transnational in character. All are palimpsests, in the sense of having multiple layers of meaning, some iconographic and others geometric in character. The first is *the Historial de la Grande Guerre* in Péronne, Somme, France, which opened in 1992.⁷ The second is the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe in Berlin, designed by Peter Eisenmann and Büro Happold, inaugurated in 2004.⁸ The third is the *Anneau de la mémoire*, a memorial structure built at the largest French battlefield of the First World War at Notre Dame de Lorette further north in France near Arras, designed by Philippe Prost and inaugurated in 2014.⁹

First a word of disclosure. I had the good fortune to be asked to join the team designing the museum and constructing its narrative, both spatial and written. I do not have the

same insider's knowledge about the other two projects discussed here, but I have spent a considerable amount of time at them and admire the thoughtfulness and artistic power of the designers of the memorials in Berlin and Notre Dame de Lorette.

The first question is this: are these three sites of memory international or transnational? The answer is both: they are both international and transnational at the same time. *The Historial* is the first museum of the Great War designed as an international site of memory. That is, the standpoint, and artefacts relating to the three great powers whose soldiers fought at this site from 1 July 1916 to 10 December 1916, are French, British, and German, without preference for the home country. Indeed, the vitrines or showcases are organized on three levels, and when I tried to calm down an outraged French official, I got him to see that putting the German story and objects first, was simply a matter of alphabetical order: *L'Allemagne, La France, Le Royaume-Uni*. The fact that the museum was then entirely funded by French local authorities did not change the order. And now that the museum and its research center have received state funding instead of regional funding, nothing has changed. The museum took the catchment area of its narrative as the unified and discrete story of the three million soldiers from the armies of France, Germany, and Britain, the Empire and Dominions who fought there. But unlike many war museums that remain entirely about 'our side', *the Historial* crossed the boundary between the soldiers who fought on different sides of the same battle. Since the Treaty of Westphalia, most battles were international, but their representation in painting, prose, poetry, and exhibition spaces was either national or imperial or both. That was true of all First World War museums before *the Historial* came on the scene. Now we have been joined by the In Flanders Fields Museum in Ypres, which also has an international character, telling a Belgian, French, German, and British story, and doing so in a state that has ceded cultural affairs, including museums, to the regions, in this case, Flanders.¹⁰ What joined the *Historial* together with the *In Flanders Fields Museum* was the view that all the soldiers who fought in either sector were equally victims of a war the world had never seen before – industrialized war among the world's greatest industrialized powers. The distance between the international and the transnational is slight, but it does reflect different emphases. Both the *Historial* and the *In Flanders Fields Museum* are transnational, in that they honor men who came from over 70 different countries and dependencies to fight in northern France or Flanders. The lucky ones went home again. To make this point, in 2018 British installation artist Val Corwin inaugurated an installation of chairs

donated by ordinary people from 70 different countries. These chairs are empty and will remain in Ypres.

Emptiness is the dominant motif of the Monument to the Murdered Jews of Europe in Berlin. The victims of this crime were killed because they were members of a race, by definition, a transnational category. Until 1948, Jewish identity had no national focus. The Holocaust was a transnational crime, the murder of people for the crime of being who they were, wherever they lived. It was also an international crime, with criminals from many nations participating in their own way and on their own ground. As in many other cases, the Shoah defies easy classification.

The central feature of the three sites of memory discussed here is that the story they tell is both international and transnational. The First World War was an imperial and national war which, especially after the Russian Revolution of 1917, mutated into a new kind of war, one more like a continental civil war, in which most victims were civilians. This civilianization of war occurred then and there; it was not born then, since there were many events which pointed in this direction before 1917. But wars which attacked civilians directly and incessantly marked the period after the Armistice of 1918 in new ways. In 1914–1917 war was waged between armies. After 1918 war fragmented, shattered, mutated. The revolutionary and counter-revolutionary wars fought from 1917 on, wars which determined the fate of the Russian Revolution and the shape of the Twentieth Century, occurred in what we now call the shatter zones of empire, where no authority reigned and where new claimants challenged other claimants for the right to establish national sovereignty over Lithuania, Galicia, or Finland. And these post-1918 national wars were marked by the direct targeting of civilians – either Jews in the old Pale of Settlement or Muslim Turks first, and then Greek Christians in Anatolia. Yes, national boundaries were fixed in this era of transnational warfare, but in addition, the creation of transnational enemies – including the Jews – became a part and parcel of the counter-revolutionary struggle. That is how the Nazis concocted at that moment the fantasy of the Judeo-Bolshevik conspiracy as a central part of their ideology. Not long after Mustafa Kemal Atatürk stood at the port of Izmir (Smyrna having been burned to the ground in 1922), Hitler launched his beer-hall putsch. The Nazis did not invent the claim that a religious group could not be part of a nation: it was Lord Curzon and his colleagues at Lausanne in 1923, who made 'compulsory population exchange' the rhetorical fig leaf covering the ethnic cleansing of Christians from Turkey and Muslims from Greece (Winter, 2022, pp. 1–20).

There is one further dimension of the transnationality of sites of remembrance which followed the Second World War. In part because of the Holocaust, and in part because of atomic weapons, war has lost much of its legitimacy as a form of politics, in Clausewitz's sense of the term. This is not true everywhere, but in many parts of the world, it is impossible to mobilize a population to go to war for the nation's honor, or to uphold treaties, or even to protect the vulnerable from predatory states. That is why George W. Bush and Tony Blair had to lie about weapons of mass destruction; without an existential threat – clear and present – war was a choice most people in most parts of the world reject today. That is why the world of remembrance has brought together the military and the civilian victims of war into an alliance of the dead and the survivors against the deadliness of modern war. All three of the international or transnational sites of memory I describe share this common outlook: alongside the names of those who have died in modern wars, what we need to remember, the designers of these sites implicitly say, is that war itself is our enemy. In this context, transnational and international sites of memory tend to transmit pacifist messages perhaps more clearly than do local or national sites.

THE HISTORIAL DE LA GRANDE GUERRE

The idea of horizontality dominated the design of the interior of *the Historial de la Grande Guerre*, which opened in 1992. My colleagues and I who helped design the museum and its narrative were not at all happy with the verticality of the Imperial War Museum in London, with its rockets and aircraft soaring to the heavens. Instead, we wanted to convey the idea that in the Great War most people lived underground in order to survive and put up with rats and lice and other physical hardships precisely because, in Ford Madox Ford's (2011) words, a man can't stand up in these trenches. Not if he wants to live another day. The horizontal represented the only way to shield the body from the revolutionary effects of artillery fire, which killed roughly 80 percent of all those who died in the war. Only by emphasizing the vulnerability of the body, flattening itself to or below the horizon did soldiers have a chance of survival. This point was missed in *the Imperial War Museum* and in other war museums, which minimized the horrors of the daily life of soldiers in 1914 – 1918.

In addition, the horizontal, we believed, would force viewers to look down when contemplating war, either at the dead, or at the underground world which soldiers created to survive. Our working group came up with the design of *fosses* (shallow pits) for representations of the front, and *vitrines* (show-

cases) for representations of civilian life, with *bornes videos* (video terminals) in between. Horizontality and a stylized representation of the soldiers' kit in the trenches then became the central motif of the museum's design.

The second feature of *the Historial* linked to horizontality is silence. Here is a matter of principal which I managed to persuade my colleagues to adopt. Silence is the language of mourning, and therefore silence is the right 'accompaniment' to a horizontal museum (Ben-Ze'ev et al., 2010).

MEMORIAL TO THE MURDERED JEWS OF EUROPE, BERLIN

A second instance of the use of the horizontal perspective is Peter Eisenman's *Monument to the Murdered Jews of Europe* near the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin.¹¹ The monument is an ensemble of 2,711 concrete rectangular shapes of varying heights, many above human height, others below. The result, not entirely anticipated by the architect, was to create a space of disappearance. Here is Eisenman's own sense of the effect of his design, from an interview on 9 May 2005:

Just yesterday, I watched people walk into it for the first time and it is amazing how these heads disappear – like going under water. Primo Levi talks about a similar idea in his book about Auschwitz. He writes that the prisoners were no longer alive, but they weren't dead either. Rather, they seemed to descend into a personal hell. I was suddenly reminded of that passage while watching these heads disappear into the monument. You don't often see people disappear into something that appears to be flat. That was amazing, seeing them disappear.
(Hawley & Tenberg, 2005).

Like a concrete maze, Eisenman's monument suggests a nightmare, in which tombstones change size, and some grow to become huge rectangular blocks, imprisoning those who wander among them. From above, the field of stone looks like waves in a sea. Another way of capturing the effect his design produces is that it likens entry into the time and space of the Holocaust to a black hole, which absorbs all light or energy in its orbit. Here too we are deep into the language of loss, descent, entrapment, and horror.

The way this monument is shaped creates a landscape of disorientation, discomfort, and at times, panic. But not everyone who has been there feels these negative emotions. The monument has no border, and thus children skateboard over and through this space. Its abstract title says little about which murdered Jews it commemorates and who were the murderers. True, there is a visitors' center in one corner, but that underground space is not part of the monument visitors see. And

yet, part of Eisenman's achievement is that his work captures the uncanny character of the crime. It tells us that the Holocaust happened, and that Berlin is the place to remember it, since here was where the orders went out to kill every Jew in Europe. And yet that matter-of-factness is just the beginning of a story which still seems strange, unnatural, otherworldly.

L'ANNEAU DE LA MÉMOIRE

In 2014, 22 years after the opening of *the Historial de la Grande Guerre*, a second project was completed in northern France. It was a monument rather than a museum, though it bears striking similarities in one important respect to *the Historial*. It is resolutely horizontal in form and both transnational and pacifist in character. The *Ring of Memory* is a huge elliptical structure set alongside one of the largest military cemeteries in France at Notre Dame de Lorette, near the city of Arras and the Canadian memorial at Vimy. The monument is a 328-meter cast concrete ring, bearing 525 copper-toned panels. On each plaque written in specially designed calligraphy are the names of approximately 1,000 soldiers who died in Artois and Flanders in the First World War. These names are arranged alphabetically without reference to nationality. Once again, this is a local site, not far from Arras, which left lasting traces on a region. It is also a national site, the largest French war cemetery in the country. But what Philippe Prost added to these levels of meaning brought out the synergism between the international and the transnational in the creation of a site of memory. The 'Ring of Memory' was inaugurated on 11 November 2014, by President François Hollande, whose family fled this region in 1914, and whose grandfather served in the war.¹²

Here is a regional site of memory. Financial support for commemoration is part of the effort regional authorities are making to redefine their profile and to present their 'heritage' to tourists and schoolchildren alike. Here was the site of global war, drawing in military units and munitions from all over the world (Prost, 2015). In addition, this part of the Western front extended into Belgium, passing through the city of Ypres, virtually destroyed during the war. The Flemish government, autonomous on questions of culture under Belgium's divided political structure, has been a very active player in commemorative politics with an emphatic pacifist tone to their interventions.

A secondary element in the public profile of the project was its entirely transnational character. To list names without nationalities describes its European and humanist character in a crystalline way, highlighted by the development of an

original typeface and process for engraving 580,000 names on the 580 large rectangular plates placed in the ellipse. Of these names, roughly half served in British forces.¹³ Given the fact that many of the names are those of non-Europeans who served in European armies, honoring all those who died in precisely the same understated way is a political statement at a time of rising xenophobia and tension over immigration, in particular Muslim immigration, to France and Belgium, as well as to the rest of Europe. Treating the names of German men as indistinguishable from the names of all the others follows the same Europeanization of the history of the war, understood as a common catastrophe, that we saw in the Historial.

Designer Philippe Prost acknowledges that the horizontal axis was the organizing principle of the project from the start. Adjacent to a vertical Catholic Basilica, and a vertical stone lantern and beacon to the 'glory of the dead', Prost's ring unfolds in an entirely different spatial universe. His elliptical structure was placed so as to be below the line of the horizon. The rhythm of the 500 copper-toned sheets of names recalls, he stated, the elegant rhythms of the Campo Santo cemetery in Pisa. In this project, the names and only the names are what matters. Here his work echoes the precedent set by the Imperial (now Commonwealth) War Graves Commission but diverges in using a metal rather than a concrete surface on which to etch the names of the dead. Like one of the rings of Saturn, Prost's 'Ring of Memory' is perched on a slope, with a section unanchored to the ground. His purpose, he said, was in part to suggest the fragility of memory and of peace.

A Twenty-First Century addition to the practice of using the horizontal as the defining spatial element in commemorative projects, Philippe Prost's 'Ring of Memory' both continues what is now a clear line in the practice of remembrance, and breaks new ground in its silent, spatial dialogue with older, vertical monuments and religious buildings near it.

CONCLUSION

I began this article with a plea for us to attend to the multivocality of sites of memory. The three instances I have chosen describe suffering and loss of life which transcended national boundaries. They speak of a whole continent, and its imperial holdings, and not solely of particular states. They imagine a community of victims of war which extended (and in some respects still extends) all over the world. And they did so through framing the iconography of loss through a particular geometry of remembrance. Their horizontality is the way they frame their message. And yet we should not be too extreme in separating the local, the national, and the regional, from the trans-

national. They form a continuum of commemorative referen- ces, one on top of the other, a palimpsest of memories that linger to this day. The polyvalent character of these sites and their lives as palimpsests are also there in front of us, if only we had the eyes to see them.

NOTES

¹ On origins: A *landsmanshaft* [Yiddish: לאַנדסמאַנשאַפֿט, plural: *landsmanschaften* לאַנדסמאַנשאַפֿטען] is an immigrant benevolent organization, formed by ex-residents of the same locality or town (לאַנדסמאַן *landsmann*, plural: לאַנדסלײַט *landsleit*). These aid organizations were established to deal with social, economic, and cultural problems, and provided a social framework for mutual assistance. For additional information see official website of The Global Home for Jewish Genealogy Jewish Gen: <https://www.jewishgen.org/infofiles/landshaf.html>

² See the official website of the University of Cape Town, Iyuniver- sithi Yasekapa, Universiteit van Kaapstad: <https://www.uct.ac.za/>, and Contested Histories website: <https://contestedhistories.org/resources/case-studies/cecil-john-rhodes-statue-at-the-university-of-cape-town-in-cape-town/>

³ See the Oriel College, University of Oxford official website: <https://www.oriel.ox.ac.uk/cecil-john-rhodes-1853-1902>, and <https://www.oriel.ox.ac.uk/about-college/college-history/contextualisation-rhodes-legacy>

⁴ For additional information on Rhodes Trust and Scholarship history and current activities see Rhodes Trust official website: <https://www.rhodeshouse.ox.ac.uk/scholarships/the-rhodes-scholarship/>

⁵ According to Merriam-Webster's dictionary, the meaning of *pot pourri* refers to a miscellaneous collection, see: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/potpourri>

⁶ Without them I never would have written *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (Winter, 2014), nor would I have seen the need to break through the European frontier in this field.

⁷ Further on referred to as *the Historial*. For more information see museum's official website: <https://www.historial.fr/en/>

⁸ For more information see the official city website: <https://www.berlin.de/en/attractions-and-sights/3560249-3104052-memorial-to-the-murdered-jews-of-europe.en.html>

⁹ For more information see the memorial's official website: <https://memorial1418.com/anneau-de-la-memoire/>

¹⁰ For more information see museum's official website: <https://www.inflandersfields.be/en>

¹¹ On the site and the controversy of the design, see: Young, J. E. (1999); Åhr, J. (2008); and Marcuse, H. R. (2010).

¹² '14-18: en inaugurant "l'anneau de la Mémoire", Hollande se confie sur son grand-père', MY TF1 News, 11 Nov. 2014. <http://lci.tf1.fr/france/societe/centenaire-de-14-18-hollande-veut-faire-passer-un-message->

d-espoir-8517229.html?xtmc=notre%20dame%20de%20lorette%20%27anneau%20de%20memoire&xtcr=2

¹³ See 14-18: *Inauguration of the Memory Ring on the official website of the Ministère De La Culture*: <https://www.culture.gouv.fr/Actualites/14-18-Inauguration-de-l-Anneau-de-la-memoire>.

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Palimpsesti: Nacionalna, međunarodna i transnacionalna mjesta sjećanja

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U ovom eseju tvrdim da sva mjesta sjećanja imaju i lokalno i nacionalno značenje, jer govore da se nešto vrijedno javnoga sjećanja dogodilo ovdje ili ljudima koji žive ovdje, u ovoj zemlji. Samo su neka mjesta sjećanja međunarodna, jer ih ne grade samo mještani ili stanovnici određene regije ili države nego skupine ljudi u raznim zemljama, skrećući pozornost na događaje koje smatraju važnima. Međutim, transnacionalna su mjesta ona koja su izgradili ili označili kao važna ljudi iz raznih mjesta ili država, radeći zajedno na predstavljanju prošlosti iz transnacionalnoga vidokruga. Stoga je središnje pitanje mojeg istraživanja što su nositelji sjećanja, odnosno ljudi koji su izgradili ili rabili ta mjesta sjećanja, htjeli njima postići. Čemu su služila? Odgovori koje iznosim temelje se na ratnim spomenicima i muzejima.

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Razmišljanje o ovim mjestima naglašava načine na koje se ratni spomenici mogu smatrati palimpsestima, u smislu da im se pridružuju višestruke razine značenja koje odgovaraju kolektivnom sjećanju lokalnih, regionalnih, nacionalnih, međunarodnih i transnacionalnih zajednica o dobu nasilja u kojem živimo.

Ključne riječi: nacionalna, međunarodna i transnacionalna mjesta sjećanja, ratni spomenici



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