Political myth: the political uses of history, tradition and memory

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Chapter 4
Memory Sites
1. Introduction.

My analysis of the Kosovo Myth revealed the close association between collective memory and memory sites. The interrelationship between memory sites and collective memory was demonstrated most starkly through the deliberate destruction of symbolically significant cultural heritage sites during the Bosnian War. The importance of Kosovo, as geographical, historical and metaphysical entity in Serbian collective memory was also discussed. In this chapter I therefore intend to extend the conceptualization of collective memory developed in the previous chapter to include memory sites and the relics associated with them. My focus will be the nature of the interrelationship between a community and its memory sites. The nature of this relationship is best illustrated through an examination of a number of specific examples.

A political myth is associated closely and most often with a site of symbolic historical importance. Such memory sites form stable concrete frames of reference that ‘contain’ the collective memories of a community. Consequently, the concept of collective memory needs to be extended to include the interrelationship between memory sites and collective memory. It is also within the dynamic interrelationship between memory sites and collective memory that political myths are located. Such an interrelationship underlies Pierre Nora’s concept of a Lieux de mémoire or ‘realm of memory’ that is developed from Halbwachs who was the first to focus attention onto the link
between spiritual, celebratory and commemorative memory sites and the formation of collective memory.

Rudy Koshar also points out the legitimating role such sites or site markers perform. “Monuments, landscapes, and symbols figured prominently in collective memory formation because in Halbwachs’s view they provided a concrete image of perdurability that legitimised group identity over time.” Halbwachs notes that, “every collective memory unfolds within a spatial framework ... We can understand how we recapture the past only by understanding how it is, in effect, preserved by our physical surroundings”.

For Halbwachs then, collective memory can only exist by being anchored to a socially specific spatial framework. As such, Nora’s concept of a realm of memory is too all encompassing for my study. Rather, I will focus on specific memory sites which exist within the broader concept of a realm of memory. Halbwachs’s linkage between memory sites and collective memory introduces four characteristics of memory sites that are of importance to my study.

First, memory sites do not simply arise out of lived experience. There must be a conscious ‘will to memorialise’ on the part of a society or group, a conscious construction of meaning that transforms a ‘place of history’ into a

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1 Koshar, R. *Germany’s Transient Pasts: Preservation and National Memory in the Twentieth Century*, op cit, p.6.
2 Halbwachs, M. *The Collective Memory*, op cit, p. 140.
‘place of memory’. Second, memory sites carry the image of relative unchanging stability, of visually bringing representations of the past into the present. Memory sites concentrate time in space; they ‘contain’ the memory of events by fixing them in the seemingly immutable landscape or in ‘timeless’ commemorative monuments. Third, the meaning of a memory site is often contested, sometimes to the point of physical destruction, but more often by widening meaning to incorporate multiple collective memories. Gillis argues that even though “monuments have lost much of their power to commemorate, to forge and sustain a single vision of the past, ... they remain useful as times and places where groups with very different memories of the same events can communicate, appreciate, and negotiate their respective differences”. Fourth, memory sites become stable frames of reference, a site where the collective memory of a group is externalised and given concrete form. These sites become ‘theatres of memory’ not only in the material manifestations of memory such as monuments and shrines, but as sites for reaffirming collective beliefs through rites, rituals and commemorations. Such sites are important therefore, not just for the reaffirming and maintenance of collective memories but for their renewal, reconstruction and revitalisation. ‘Theatres of memory’ will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 6 on commemoration.

Before I discuss those characteristics of memory sites that are of importance to the development of political myth, it is necessary to define how the term monument will be used in my study. Rudy Koshar’s detailed analysis of the

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interrelationship between monuments and memory in Germany’s Transient Pasts: Preservation and National Memory in the Twentieth Century, uses monument in its broadest sense\(^5\) to encompass anything from the built or natural environment that has been invested with historical importance. In my study the more generic term ‘heritage’ is used to describe Koshar’s approach while the term monument is used “in the restricted sense of structures built specifically to recall a personality, concept, or event in the past.”\(^6\) I will focus on a community’s deliberate intention to memorialize the past rather than drawing a fine line between cultural heritage sites and monuments.\(^7\) For example I referred to the destruction of the Mostar Bridge in the chapter on the Kosovo Myth in terms of it being a cultural heritage site. However, the symbolic meaning invested in the bridge by a number of conflicting communities justifies it being referred to as a monument. What is important is not the terminology, but the intention of a community in assigning symbolic significance to any built or natural structure.

2. Monuments and Memory

A community’s commemorative intention is expressed originally by the raising of a monument. “All shared memory requires mediating devices to sustain

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\(^5\) Koshar takes a broad view of a monument to include “the architectural monument, or baudenkmal, which in German usage may include ruins, churches, notable public buildings, urban residential and commercial buildings, vernacular structures such as peasant houses and workers’ settlements, and industrial buildings such as windmills and (more recently) factories. The term has even been extended to entire urban fabrics, as when Germans speak of the ‘city monument’ (stadidenkmal)” Koshar, R. op cit., p.14.

\(^6\) ibid., p. 5.

\(^7\) Koshar argues that, “by focusing primarily on intentional monuments, scholarship has narrowed our view of the variety of spaces in which memory-work is carried out, and the historical study of memory has suffered consequently.” ibid. I would not refute this, but the development of political myth does not require such a detailed analysis of collective memory.
itself," with the public commemorative monument being one such mediating device. The mnemonic power of a monument has been recognised since antiquity, but recent critiques of monuments and traditional institutionalised memory practices argue that monuments effectively bury memory and ossify the past. As Savage comments,

public monuments are important precisely because they do in some measure work to impose a permanent memory on the very landscape within which we order our lives. Inasmuch as the monuments make credible particular collectivities, they must erase others; or more precisely, they erase the very possibility of rival collectivities. Monuments are said therefore to throw up a barrier between past and present, for "memorials can falsely separate past history from existing political realities. Monuments can conveniently allow people to put the past behind them." As Huyssen comments, monuments may eventually “stand simply as figures of forgetting, their meaning and original purpose eroded by the passage of time.”

Society changes around a monument, so that unless the monument is a centre for recurrent ritual performances, its original meaning will eventually change and disappear altogether. The monument, however, still stands and can be reinvested with new meaning. The dynamic interrelationship between

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9 "Monuments have been the subject of particular attention by critics who argue that the traditional memory sites actually discourage engagement with the past and induce forgetting rather than remembering." Gillis, J.R. *Memory and Identity: The History of a Relationship*, op cit, p. 16. See also Huyssen, A. *op cit*, Savage, K. *op cit*, Lewis, B. *Lewis, B. History: Remembered, Recovered, Invented*, op cit, and Mayo, J.M. *War Memorials as Political Landscape: The American Experience and Beyond*, Praeger, New York, 1988.
10 Savage, K. *op cit*, p. 143.
11 Mayo, J.M. *op cit*, p. 249.
12 Huyssen, A. *op cit*, p. 250.
13 Mark Lewis quotes Robert Musil’s observation that “the most striking feature of monuments is that you do not notice them. There is nothing in the world as invisible as monuments. Like a drop of water on an oil-skin, attention runs down them without stopping for a moment ... We cannot say that we do not notice them;
monuments and memory can be shown through examining a number of contrasting examples that highlight different aspects of the nexus between commemorative monuments and collective memory. I have chosen Berlin’s Brandenburg Gate as an example of a monument that does not in itself create memory but evolves into a stable frame of reference that reflects the multiple memories that are represented in contemporary German identity. I have also used the proposed Berlin Holocaust Memorial to illustrate the difficulty of giving symbolic representation to deeply traumatic and still unresolved memories. The Berlin Holocaust Memorial also shows how memory itself can be shaped through the process of designing and building a memorial. I will discuss the destruction of monuments to Lenin and Stalin in the aftermath of the collapse of Communism to draw attention to the symbolic importance that monuments play in defining dominant and subordinate memorials during times of political crisis. Finally, I examine the appropriation of the Warsaw Ghetto Monument by the Polish opposition during the 1980’s, the building of the Gdansk ‘counter-monument’ and the creation of the Vietnam Veterans Monument in Washington to illustrate the way repressed memories can be given symbolic representation. Together these examples will illustrate the dynamic interrelationship between monuments and memory that must be conceptualised as a symbolic political landscape.

Over time, the meaning of most monuments sinks into oblivion, but collective memory reinvests a monument with symbolic significance if that monument is important to the construction of a community’s identity. An

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we should say that they de-notice us, they withdraw from our senses.” Lewis, M. *What is to be Done?*, Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory, Vol. 15, Nos. 1-2 & 3, 1991, p. 3.
example of this process can be clearly seen in the evolving meaning of the Brandenburg Gate. The evolution of meaning has been mediated by potent media images of historical events played out against the looming backdrop of the Brandenburg Gate. Images range from the black and white photographs of fighting around the gate during the Spartacist Uprising of 1919;\textsuperscript{14} newsreel films of Nazi torchlit parades;\textsuperscript{15} the fall of Berlin symbolised by the photographs of Soviet troops raising the red flag on the gate and the famous Boris Iakolev painting of the victorious Marshall Zhukov on a rearing horse trampling on Nazi standards before the Brandenburg Gate;\textsuperscript{16} Cold War images of the Berlin Wall, Checkpoint Charlie and President Kennedy’s emotional visit of June 1963\textsuperscript{17} and finally the dramatic television images of November 1989 capturing the fall of the Berlin Wall.\textsuperscript{18}

Collective memories have not only reinvested the Brandenburg Gate with multiple meanings, but media images have extended this collective memory well beyond its original purpose which was to mark the expanding military power of the early nineteenth century Prussian state. In its 200 year history, Berlin’s Brandenburg Gate “has symbolised at different times Prussian might, united German empire, Nazi megalomania, Germany’s Cold War splits along the Berlin

\begin{itemize}
\item [\textsuperscript{15}] Especially the parade on 30\textsuperscript{th} January 1933 when Hitler was proclaimed Chancellor. \textit{ibid}, p. 362.
\item [\textsuperscript{16}] Golomstock, I. \textit{Totalitarian Art: in the Soviet Union, the Third Reich, Fascist Italy and the People’s Republic of China}, Collins Harvill, London, 1990, Plate 12.
\item [\textsuperscript{17}] Richie, A. \textit{op cit}, pp. 770-773.
\item [\textsuperscript{18}] For a good journalistic account of the atmosphere before the Brandenburg Gate on November 9\textsuperscript{th} 1989 see Simpson, J. \textit{Despatches From The Barricades: An Eye-Witness Account of the Revolutions that Shook the World 1989 - 90}, Hutchinson, London, 1990.
\end{itemize}
Wall and finally its democratic reunification." It was the last point that was emphasised by Chancellor Helmut Kohl when he stated during the bicentennial celebrations that, "after an eventful 200 years, the Brandenburg Gate is a splendid landmark for the unity and freedom of all Germans."

Far from symbolising 'unity and freedom', the Brandenburg Gate had been originally designed as "the entrance to Berlin's via triumphalis" and was crowned by the classical image of the Quadriga chariot driven by Nike, the winged Greek goddess of victory. Nike had actually been designed to represent Irene the goddess of peace but was transformed by the Napoleonic Wars. The first victory parade centred on the Brandenburg Gate was in fact Napoleon’s triumphal entry into defeated Berlin in 1806. Napoleon took the Quadriga back to Paris as war booty but when it was returned to Berlin following Napoleon’s defeat, Irene was transformed into Nike bearing an iron cross and Prussian eagle. Atop the Brandenburg Gate "she presided over the victory parades of the Prussians, the German Empire and the Third Reich." Collective memory of Germany’s militaristic past contested the official restoration of the Quadriga during the 1990’s.

Following the destruction of the Quadriga in 1945, the East German Government had rebuilt the statue without the Prussian insignia. Nike had

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20 ibid.
22 For details of the changing imagery of the Quadriga see Murray, I. The Times, July 16, 1999.
23 Richie, A. op cit., p. 92.
24 Murray, I. The Times, July 16, 1999
reverted to Irene. However, in preparation for the bicentennial of the Brandenburg Gate Irene returned as Nike once again holding a standard topped by the Iron Cross and the Prussian eagle. In response to the return of Prussian symbolism and what many saw as a creeping nationalist nostalgia, the Director of the Berlin City Museum stated that, "history should be understood by interpreting monuments, not by destroying them."25 Apart from some disquiet about the reintroduction of Prussian symbolism the current meaning of the Brandenburg Gate has been made quite clear by the ceremonies and celebrations associated with it. The Brandenburg Gate, stranded between East and West by the Berlin Wall became a symbol of divided Berlin. As Chancellor Helmut Kohl had stated, "the German Question will remain open as long as the Brandenburg Gate remains closed."26

Following the collapse of East Germany in October – November 1989 the Brandenburg Gate was ceremonially re-opened on the 22nd December 1989 by Helmut Kohl and East Germany’s last Communist leader, Hans Modrow. As Alexandra Richie comments, "once again the Brandenburg Gate had become the symbol of German destiny."27 As a symbol of a reunited Germany, the Brandenburg Gate was the centre for celebrations marking the 10th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1999. Memory of the event was reinforced and reconstructed by bringing together three key players from the time: former Presidents Bush and Gorbachev and former Chancellor Kohl. The

26 Quoted by Heinrich, M. Reuters News Service, Aug.6, 1999.
27 Richie, A. op cit, p.840.
use of anniversaries\textsuperscript{28} to structure commemorative ceremonies that frame and reframe memory will be developed in Chapter 6 on commemoration. At this point in the development of the concept of collective memory, the Brandenburg Gate is used as an example of the process by which a monument is reinvested with symbolic significance by subsequent generations despite the fact that the original memory that it was built to preserve has all but faded. A monument, such as the Brandenburg Gate, does not in itself create memory, but as a memory site it accrues memories through deliberate historical association and commemorative ritual.

A community’s original commemorative intention is expressed by the way in which memory is given symbolic representation. A public commemorative monument is a symbolic representation of significant events, people, places or ideas that are perceived as being fundamental to the collective memory of a political community. The building or preservation of a monument does not necessarily evoke or construct collective memory, unless what is memorable is given symbolic representation. As Morris states, “memorialising does not simply come to be, nor is it passively coaxed into being. Neither is it the memorable; it is the result of a process that requires the creation of symbols in order to represent memory of the memorable.”\textsuperscript{29} The symbolisation process not only occurs at the

\textsuperscript{28} The 9\textsuperscript{th} November anniversary was also used by the three former leaders to conjure up a darker memory from Germany’s past; the anniversary of ‘Kristallnacht’. See 'Berlin Anniversary Ends With a Bang', \textit{BBC News}, Wed. Nov. 10, 1999, \url{http://news2.this.bbc.co.uk}. The 9\textsuperscript{th} November was also significant to Germany as the anniversary of the abdication of Kaiser Wilhelm II and the proclamation of the first German democratic republic.

time a monument is designed and dedicated, but must be continuous if a commemorative monument is to fulfil its function of memorialisation. Monumental symbols evoke not only memory but require memory to sustain their integrity. In commemorating a relationship between monuments and their audience, Shils notes that

The relationship to them of their audiences of readers and contemplators is not one of use, it is entirely a relationship of interpretation. They are created with the intention that they be interpreted, that their audiences apprehend the symbolic constellations by which they have been constituted.\(^{30}\)

To ensure that audiences do apprehend the symbolic constellations that carry the meaning of what is being memorialised, usually the symbols are renewed and reinforced by the performance of commemorative rituals associated with the monument.

Thus, a direct nexus exists between commemorative monuments and collective memory. For the construction and dedication of "monuments embodied and legitimated the very notion of a common memory, and by extension the notion of the people who possessed and rallied around such a memory."\(^{31}\) Monuments not only engage memory,\(^{32}\) but objectify and ‘fix’ a temporal event or process.\(^{33}\) Monuments can simultaneously address the past, present and future. Not only do monuments act as mnemonic symbols\(^{34}\) to assist the retention and transmission of memories, but “commemorative monuments ‘instruct’ their

\(^{31}\) Savage, K. *op cit*, pp. 130 – 131.
\(^{32}\) See Morris, R. *op cit*, pp. 199 - 200 for a discussion of this process associated with the Vietnam Veterans memorial.
\(^{33}\) See Combs, J. *Celebrations : Rituals of Popular Veneration*, *op cit*, p. 73.
\(^{34}\) See Lewis, M. *What is to be Done*, *op cit*, p. 1.
visitors about what is to be valued in the future as well as in the past." As memory sites, commemorative monuments help frame collective memory in that "they were designed to commemorate; to make succeeding generations remember. They were intended to be traditions to future generations."

Monuments are a recognition of the unreliability of memory, they are an attempt to give concrete form to what is considered significant by one generation and project this into the future; to even impose it upon subsequent generations. The complexities of the process can be most clearly seen in the challenge of representing Holocaust memory.

Huyssen argues that the historical reality of the Holocaust is central to any debate about memory and modernity for, "the Holocaust and its memory still stands as a test case for the humanist and universalist claims of Western civilisation. Issues of remembrance and forgetting touch the core of Western identity, however multi-faceted and diverse it may be." The issue of remembrance and forgetting is even more intense in Germany as the ‘historians debate’ (historikerstreit) about the ‘normalisation’ of the Nazi past indicated. The decision by the Bundestag in June 1999 to proceed with the building of a

36 Shils, E. op cit, p. 72.
37 Huyssen, A. op cit, p. 251.
Holocaust monument in central Berlin close to the Brandenburg Gate\textsuperscript{38} was the culmination of ten years of controversy.

One aspect of the controversy was how the Holocaust was to be represented. James Young makes the point that, "rather than embodying memory, the monument displaces it altogether, supplanting a community's memory-work with its own material form.... Once we assign monumental form to memory, we have to some degree divested ourselves of the obligation to remember."\textsuperscript{39} The 'obligation to remember' however, is the sole purpose of any Holocaust monument. Another aspect of this controversy is that,

Holocaust memorial-work in Germany today remains a tortured, self-reflective, even paralysing preoccupation. Every monument, at every turn, is endlessly scrutinised, explicated, and debated. Artistic, ethical, and historical questions occupy design juries to an extent unknown in other countries.\textsuperscript{40}

The 'paralysing preoccupation' is a reflection of a still traumatised and repressed collective memory where every Holocaust monument is an indictment of the past and a questioning of national identity. A further challenge is that as well as giving concrete representation to an increasingly media mediated memory, Holocaust monuments pose a further question:

how does a state incorporate its crimes against others into its national memorial landscape (for) .... traditionally, state-sponsored memory of a national past aims to affirm the righteousness of a nation's birth, even its divine election. The matrix of a nation's monuments traditionally emplots the story of ennobling events, of triumphs over

\textsuperscript{38} In a piece of historical irony, excavations to prepare the site for the National Holocaust Memorial uncovered Hitler's bunker. The memorial will go ahead on top of it. Hermann, B. 'Berlin Builders Unearth Hitler's Suicide Bunker', Guardian Unlimited Archive, Oct. 16\textsuperscript{th} 1999, http://www.Guardianunlimited.co.uk/archive/


\textsuperscript{40} ibid, p. 269.
barbarism, and recalls the martyrdom of those who gave their lives in the struggle for national existence.\textsuperscript{41}

The Berlin memorial will be an anti-monument; an abstract structure of 3000 tombstone-like pillars which will deliberately eschew the traditional monument as heroic gesture.

Commenting on the monument during its planning stages, Huyssen states that "the success of any monument has to be measured by the extent to which it negotiates the multiple discourses of memory provided by the very electronic media to which the monument as solid matter provides an alternative."\textsuperscript{42} From the government’s point of view, the memorial would officially acknowledge the past to provide closure and enable Germany to enter the twenty-first century unencumbered by guilt. As Wolfgang Thierse, Speaker of the Bundestag clearly stated, "we’re not building this memorial for the Jews or for other victims. We’re building it for us."\textsuperscript{43}

In discussing how nations confront crimes against humanity, Mayo comments that "memorials to war crimes are physical reminders that they cannot easily avoid."\textsuperscript{44} Thierse echoed this observation when he stated in the Bundestag that, "with this memorial there can be no more denial or indifference."\textsuperscript{45} Whether the official position successfully negotiates the multiple discourses that mark Holocaust remembrance remains to be seen. What the example illustrates is the

\textsuperscript{41} ibid, p.270.
\textsuperscript{42} Huyssen, A. \textit{op cit}, p.255.
\textsuperscript{43} BBC News, June 25, 1999, http://news2.this.bbc.co.uk
\textsuperscript{44} Mayo, J.M. \textit{op cit}, p. 221.
\textsuperscript{45} BBC News, June 25, 1999, http://news2.this.bbc.co.uk
direct nexus between commemorative monuments and collective memory because what is significant for collective memory formation is the process of expressing that memory in symbolic form. The debates that accompany such a process are just as important to the forming of a collective memory as the built monument itself.

The direct nexus between commemorative monuments and collective memory is most clearly demonstrated when the meaning of a memory site is directly contested. The degree of contestation is an indication of the level of conflict between dominant and subordinate memories in a community and attests to the power of public statuary to represent that conflict symbolically. Monuments become part of the political landscape, which "inevitably perform the function of simultaneously marking out and policing the public sphere."^46 Mark Lewis argues that such a political landscape can be read 'semantically' and discusses the dismantling of statues of Lenin and Stalin following the 1989 revolutions in Eastern Europe in terms of a "semiotics of public statuary."^47 In this sense, a 'reading' of the political landscape is not only dependent on an interpretation of how a community has symbolically represented significant memories, but on how a community interacts with that symbolic representation. To 'read' the memorialising intentions of a community it is necessary to go beyond what was initially 'fixed' or 'contained' by a monument.

^46 Lewis, Mark. op cit, p. 2.
^47 ibid, p. 3. Lewis quotes Georges Bataille who interprets the political landscape as being inherently repressive. "Great monuments are erected like dikes, opposing the logic and majesty of authority against all disturbing elements. " ibid, p. 6.
A community’s intention can be more accurately understood in its evolving relationship with monuments that are significant to legitimising a collective identity over time. At one extreme a community’s intentions are clearly demonstrated by the physical destruction of monuments as often happens during times of violent or revolutionary change. A less extreme reaction is for a community to appropriate an existing monument and reinvest it with alternate meanings in opposition to the ‘official memory’ represented by the monument. A subordinate community may also demonstrate its memorialising intentions by creating its own memory sites or filling a ‘memory gap’ that has been ignored. In all cases a ‘reading’ of the political landscape gives a clear indication of a community’s memorialising intentions.

At one extreme is the physical destruction of monuments. A feature of the political and social upheavals that marked the end of communism in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, was the attack on a political landscape dominated by statues of Lenin and Stalin. For Mark Lewis, that these statues became a focus for demonstrations and later for destruction should be seen as an indication of their semiotic power. Rather than these statues being neutral or ‘invisible’, Lewis argues that, “through an act of destruction, the power of the image, the power of public statuary to control and define the public realm may paradoxically be confirmed.”48

48 Lewis, M. op cit. p. 4-5.
The fact that either the statues were removed spontaneously, or were removed by order of new regimes is an indication that their symbolic significance as representations of the 'ancien régime' were well recognised. The statues were not removed just because they represented a symbolic presence of a previous regime but also because the actual images were "hated by many, hated because they ...(were) understood and perceived as synecdoches for equally despised communist regimes."\(^{49}\) Such is the power of public statuary, to represent the individual as a synecdoche for an ideology or in fact an entire political, social, cultural and economic system. The destruction of monuments is therefore an indication of an awareness of the symbolic power of the political landscape to impose a legitimising collective memory on a community over time.

A less extreme community response to destroying a monument is to challenge and subvert the meaning of an existing monument and invest it with new meaning. A memorial is usually designed to be permanent; to perpetuate memory indefinitely. However, as Andreas Huyssen wryly remarks, "the permanence promised by a monument in stone is always built on quicksand."\(^{50}\) The reality is that, for all their apparent physical permanence, the symbolic meaning associated with a monument changes as the collective memory associated with that monument is adjusted to meet the changing needs of a community. The meaning of a monument therefore evolves, a process that can be accelerated when a monument is directly challenged by counter-monuments; is

\(^{49}\) *ibid*, p. 8.

\(^{50}\) Huyssen, A. *op cit*, p. 250.
appropriated by a rival political community for its own needs, or is even dismantled.

An example of how the shifting symbolic meanings of a monument can subvert its original intentions can be seen in Nathan Rapoport's Warsaw Ghetto Monument which was unveiled on the fifth anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising on the 19th April 1948. In his detailed analysis of the monument, James Young shows how the monument failed to 'contain' the official memory of the uprising and instead became a focus for counter-memories. For many Poles the Ghetto Monument was seen as a substitute for the absence of any official memorial of the Warsaw Uprising by the Home Army. As well as becoming an official memory site for visiting heads of state, the Ghetto monument became a focus for expressing counter-memories which challenged the legitimacy of the government itself. The process is well expressed by Young.

Memory is not merely passed down from generation to generation in the Warsaw Ghetto Monument but is necessarily recast in the minds of each new generation at its base. Every official visitor, every tourist, every government ceremony and dissident counter-

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52 This failure to build a monument to the Warsaw Uprising was in line with the Polish Government's suppression of potentially de-legitimating memories of World War II as explained in the introduction to the previous chapter.
53 The official memory site represented by the memorial took on quite a different aspect in Israel. As Huyssen point out, "in Israel, the Holocaust became central to the foundation of the state, both as an endpoint to a disavowed history of Jews as victims and as a starting point of a new national history, self-assertion and resistance. In the Israeli imagination, the Warsaw Ghetto uprising has been invested with the force of a mythic memory of resistance and heroism unfathomable in Germany." Huyssen, A. op cit, p127.
For this reason the entire monument was reproduced in Jerusalem following the Six Day War of 1969. "By uniting past heroism and resistance with present, the monument reciprocally invites Israelis to remember parts of their own war experiences in the image of the Ghetto Uprising ... The soldiers themselves are bused to this square as part of their military education precisely to know themselves in light of past fighting Jews." Young, J.E. op cit, p.97.
ceremony adds one more patina of meaning to the bronze and stone in this square – and by extension, to the events commemorated here.54

Despite the Polish Government’s attempts to disassociate the monument’s symbolic reference to justified resistance during World War II from contemporary resistance offered by Solidarity, the government lost the ‘memorial wars’ in 1988 when the counter-commemorations at the Ghetto Monument on April 19th culminated in the Gdansk shipyard strike six weeks later.

The government also lost the next round of ‘memorial wars’ with Solidarity which made the erection of a monument to workers killed in 1970 a condition for signing the Gdansk Agreements of August 1980. Lech Walesa’s statement in the August ‘Strike Bulletin’ demonstrates how well he understood the symbolic power of a monument that was designed to challenge the legitimacy of the Polish Government.

The monument will be thirty metres high and will be made up of four crosses, with their crosspieces touching, and with anchors attached to the crosses, all arranged in a circle. The figure ‘4’ symbolises the first workers who fell in December 1970 in front of Shipyard’s No. 2 Gate. In Poland’s national symbolism the cross has for a thousand years represented faith and martyrdom, while the anchor has signified hope. In December 1970 this hope was crucified. The flame which is to burn at the base of the crosses signifies life. Let this monument be a reminder to all those who would seek to take these symbols away from us.55

The meaning of the monument was spelt out clearly and permanently at its base.

“This monument has been erected to those who died as a mark of eternal memory, to those who rule as a warning that social conflicts in the homeland must not be solved by force, to our fellow citizens as a sign of hope that evil can be

54 ibid. p.90.
overcome. In both cases memorials were used to give symbolic expression to previously repressed memories. In the absence of a memorial to the Warsaw Uprising staged by the officially discredited Home Army, opposition groups used the Warsaw Ghetto Monument to draw attention to and challenge official memory of Poland’s World War II experience. In the absence of any official memory to workers killed during the 1970 strikes, Solidarity built its own counter-monument. In both cases the ability to give symbolic representation to repressed memories was a direct challenge to the legitimacy of the Polish government.

While the building of the Gdansk monument was a direct challenge to the legitimacy of the Polish government, the building of Washington’s Vietnam Veterans Memorial represents another dimension to the way repressed memories are given symbolic representation. Traditionally the state has been most active in initiating the creation of monuments, but public memorialising may also emerge as a result of a broad cultural process. Rather than a monument being imposed from above, and only reflecting the needs of a specific dominant group, a monument emerging as a result of a wide-ranging cultural discourse may symbolically encapsulate a median point between divergent groups. The constellation of symbols embodied in such a monument would mediate between conflicting interpretations of the past, and in time, frame the emergence of a more inclusive memory. Such a process is exemplified by Maya Lin’s simple but evocative Vietnam Memorial which consciously sought to reconcile the social divisions and divisive memories that had been engendered by the war and its

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aftermath. In the absence of official commemoration, Vietnam veterans commissioned a monument that would transcend the traditional expressions of the patriotic and heroic. Maya Lin’s simple design,

brought the American dead of the Vietnam war back into American history, by placing the memorial between the Lincoln memorial and the Washington monument. She also eliminated all hint of a celebration or affirmation of patriotism, the nobility of arms, or the dignity of dying for a just cause. All we see are names, and our own reflection.

Maya Lin’s use of a “nonheroic form to represent the memorable” negotiated a space between official and private memories. As Blair notes, “the Vietnam Veterans Memorial .... is inclusive; it does not suggest one reading or the other, but embraces even contradictory interpretations .... It does not offer a unitary message but multiple and conflicting ones.” Young makes a similar observation: “Maya Lin’s succinctly abstract Vietnam Veterans Memorial ... commemorates the nation’s ambivalence towards the Vietnam War and its veterans in ways altogether unavailable in figuration.” Most importantly, as Braithwaite states, “the very presence of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial means that the Vietnam veteran has now been 'reintegrated' into American society after 20 years of being ostracised.” By successfully negotiating the multiple memories of the Vietnam war experience, the monument thus becomes a ritual centre for national healing.

57 The special symbolism of this positioning is explained by Mayo. “One wall points to the Washington Monument, a symbol of independence, while the other points to the nearby Lincoln Memorial, a symbol of a reunited Union.” Mayo, J.M. op cit, p. 201.
59 Morris, R. op cit, p. 212.
61 Young, J.E. op cit, p.101.
What I have stressed in the examples used in this section is that the nexus between commemorative monuments and collective memory is a dynamic one. To 'read' a political landscape means more that interpreting the symbolism that was initially 'fixed' or 'contained' by a monument. To 'read' a political landscape means to analyse the interrelationship between a community and its monuments. It is the nature of the interrelationship that determines the degree to which a monument serves as a memory site for a political community. The way the interrelationship is renewed and revitalised through rituals and ceremonies staged in conjunction with monuments will be the subject of Chapter 6 on commemoration. In the next section I will analyse the way in which monuments to national memory and to the national dead seek to encapsulate the values and meaning of a nation through self-conscious self-representation that both celebrates and creates national memory.

3. Monuments to National Memory and the National Dead.

Modern commemorative monuments are most closely associated with the rise of nationalism in the late nineteenth century and the period of nation-building in the Western world to the beginning of the twentieth century. The process continued on a world-wide basis with the creation of 'new' nations during the twentieth century. "The nationalist demand for tangible symbols and traditions that could make the idea of the nation credible"63 found expression in the erection

63 Savage, K. op cit, p. 146.
of monuments that "both expressed and shaped national memory." Events, people, places and ideas of symbolic significance to the creation of these 'imagined communities' were made tangible.

Commemorative monuments give symbolic representation to evolving concepts of the nation and include monuments to victory and national self-aggrandisement as well as memorials to the nation's war dead. The development of a political landscape extolling the common virtues of the nation also demonstrate its continuity over time as well as providing material reference points for acts of allegiance. National self-representation of continuity often takes the form of linking the creation of the nation or the development of national unity with an event or person from the nation's distant and mythologised past. A common form of representation for many western nations is to express the link symbolically through neo-classical design.

While the use of neoclassical design to link a mythological past with the present is a common feature of national self-representation, the purposes of such monuments and the political uses that are made of them can be very different. For example, representations of George Washington, Hermann and Vincingetorix all link the emergence of a new nation with a Roman past, but each invokes a distinct national memory. The statue of George Washington, commissioned by Thomas Jefferson gave representation to the ideals of the new republic, borrowing from a classical collective memory rather than a British or colonial one;

64 Burke, P. *History as Social Memory*, op cit. p. 101.
We do not see Washington as victorious general. He is presented as a new Cincinnatus. Washington was a Virginia planter, summoned to lead the patriot armies. Cincinnatus, a legendary Roman hero, was called from farming life to become dictator of the Republic in 458 B.C. and save the Roman army. He defeated the enemy, resigned his powers after only sixteen days, and returned home to his farm, thus becoming the very archetype of Roman-Yankee civic integrity.\textsuperscript{65}

The symbolism of the actual statue reinforces this neo-classical presentation of Washington as Cincinnatus. As Robert Hughes explains;

Washington leans on a bundle of rods, the Roman fasces – each rod a state, their union connoting strength. His sword is sheathed. His plough is the symbol of agrarian virtue, and implies the planting of a new political order. The final, almost subliminal touch is a missing button on the right lapel of Washington’s coat, which lets you know that the great man is capable of a certain negligence in \textit{tenue} and is not a stickler for protocol – democracy in dress, as it were.\textsuperscript{66}

After his death in 1799 the problem of representing Washington as democratic citizen while at the same time giving him due as founding father raised the problem of how to commemorate him. The solution was not a giant statue but the now famous Washington Monument in the form of an earlier monumental form, the obelisk.

German self-representation through classical images had no such qualms about the heroic size of its statuary. The ideal of German unity was personified in the Cheruscan chieftan Arminius (Hermann) who was joined by other Germanic tribes in 9 AD to defeat and end Roman expansion at the Battle of Teutoburg Forest. The \textit{Walhalla} Monument (1830 – 42), designed as “a ‘sacred monument’ for the worshiping of German unity .... (and) as a setting for national

\textsuperscript{66} \textit{ibid}, p. 124-125.
pilgrimages"\textsuperscript{67} invoked this national memory by combining heroic statuary with Teutonic mythology within the structure of a classical Greek temple.\textsuperscript{68} Also focusing on the Battle of the Teutoburg Forest was the \textit{Hermannsdenkmal}, a monumental statue of Hermann standing on a massive pedestal with sword upraised, ready to defend the fatherland. Situated on a hill in the Teutoburg Forest, the monument is still an important national symbol as George Mosse points out. "There can be no doubt of the effectiveness of the \textit{Hermannsdenkmal}. Even today, when many of the other monuments such as the \textit{Walhalla} are almost forgotten, it is still a centre of pilgrimage."\textsuperscript{69}

French self-representation of a similar encounter with the Romans is more ambiguous because their ancestors, the Gauls, were defeated. In constructing a collective memory of the origins of French unity, the tribal leader, Vercingetorix was invoked. Vercingetorix had led a failed insurrection of the Gauls against the Romans in 52 B.C., but numerous monuments raised to him during the nineteenth and early twentieth century depicted him more as a defiant and victorious general than a vanquished tribal chieftain. In French national memory Vercingetorix was defeated by superior force, but in resisting Caesar he saved the honour of the

\textsuperscript{67} Mosse, G.L. \textit{The Nationalisation of the Masses: Political Symbolism and Mass Movements in Germany from the Napoleonic Wars Through the Third Reich}, Howard Fertig, New York, 1975, p. 55.

\textsuperscript{68} "The eaves were decorated by figures which on the Southern side represented the German states gathered around a victorious Germania, while on the northern side Hermann the Cheruscan (a Germanic Tribe) fought the Battle of the Teutoburger Forest against the Roman Legions. Inside the monument itself were two large halls, decorated on wall and ceiling with Germanic gods and the symbols of their worship. Within the temple a Teutonic note predominated in the form of a Greek model combined with German symbols. The gods looked down on the statues of famous and patriotic Germans – the heroes who had entered Walhalla. Mosse, G.L. \textit{op cit}, p. 54 see also Hobsbawn, E. \textit{Mass-Producing Traditions: Europe, 1870 - 1914}, Hobsbawn, E. & Ranger, T. [Eds. ] \textit{The Invention of Tradition}, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1984, pp. 273-276.

\textsuperscript{69} Mosse, G.L. \textit{op cit}, p. 60.
nation. In announcing extensive state-sponsored excavations on Mont Beuvray where Vercingetorix had been proclaimed leader of the rebellion, President Mitterrand stated, “Mount Beuvray is worthy of a major excavation .... I say that it was here, at Beuvray, on this very spot, that our history began.”

In invoking the Gaul’s heroic resistance to the Romans, Mitterrand was also ‘reclaiming’ the memory of Vercingetorix from the Vichy regime that had linked Pétain to Vercingetorix and the so-called first ordeal of France.

Marshall Pétain invoked ...(the Gauls) at the monument to Vercingetorix in Gergovie in order to justify France’s surrender to the Germans, which he compared to the defeat of the ancient Gauls at the hands of the Romans – a defeat that had turned undisciplined barbarians into civilised subjects of the new Roman order.

What Mitterrand had demonstrated was the malleability of a national memory that could be recycled to serve different political needs.

What is common to each of these examples is that the national memory being evoked has only the most tenuous links with the historical reality of each nation. In constructing a memory of origins each nation seeks symbolic representation from the known classical world. Classical representation not only aligns national memory with the origins of western civilisation but also establishes a visual link between the classical world and the founding of a modern United States, Germany or France. Classical iconography is also a feature of monuments built to commemorate national victories. The victory column and the commemorative arch are borrowed from the classical world to create national

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memory sites within the symbolic core of the city. Many of the victory columns erected during the nineteenth century, such as the Column of the Place Vendôme (1806-10) commemorating Napoleon's victories, the Column of July, erected on the site of the Bastille to commemorate the 1830 revolution, and Nelson's Column in Dublin (1808-9) and London (1843) to commemorate Nelson's naval victories were direct copies of the Roman victory columns of Trajan and Marcus Aurelius. 73

More copied are the great Roman commemorative arches. Apart from the Colosseum, Michael Grant claims that, "the monumental or commemorative arch ... has had a greater influence on Europe than any of Rome's other architectural gifts."74 Monumental arches are usually surmounted by a representation of Victory (Nike)75 driving a four horse chariot and are designed for processions to march through. They are associated with processional ways, usually located within the symbolic core of the city. The specific meaning of each arch is indicated by a series of bas-reliefs depicting military exploits which together make up a commemorative narrative. The most famous surviving Roman arches that were to make such a lasting impression were the arch of Titus commemorating the crushing of the Jewish Revolt and the destruction of

72 Demoule, j.-P. op cit, p. 183.
73 See Grant, M. The Roman Forum, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1970. The subsequent history of these columns also provides a good example of how commemorative monuments can be appropriated by rival political communities and so change their meaning. For example, the Catholic Church appropriated both Trajan's and Marcus Aurelius' columns. The statue of the Emperor Trajan was replaced by that of St. Peter and the statue of Marcus Aurelius was replaced by that of St. Paul. The statue of Napoleon on the top of the Column of the Place Vendôme was destroyed in 1871 by the Communards and replaced by a statue of liberty. Nelson's Pillar in Dublin had always been a controversial reminder of British imperialism and was finally blown up and destroyed by a republican group in 1966.
74 Grant, M. op cit, p. 163.
Jerusalem (AD 70)\textsuperscript{76}, the arch of Septimius Severus celebrating his victories over the Parthians and the great arch of Constantine.

The Arc de Triomphe commemorating the victories of Napoleon and now the ritual centre of Paris was modelled on the triumphal arch of Septimius Severus. In turn, Hitler used the Arc de Triomphe to plan his own enormous triumphal arch\textsuperscript{77} as part of his comprehensive plan to recreate the centre of Berlin on a grand scale.\textsuperscript{78} Saddam Hussein’s Victory Monument in Baghdad is essentially a triumphal arch with giant arms holding up two swords that rise 140ft over Victory Square. Just as other national monuments invoked earlier memories of past triumphs, the Victory Monument also symbolised the victory of the Arab-Muslim army over Iran in the battle of Qadisiyya in 637AD.\textsuperscript{79}

Such national monuments, while closely associated with war, are not war memorials in the modern sense of the term. From classical times until today, war

\textsuperscript{75} For a detailed discussion on Nike and her depiction on monuments, see Warner, M. Monuments & Maidens: The Allegory of the Female Form. Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1985.

\textsuperscript{76} Another example of the Catholic Church’s appropriation of a Roman monument was the use made of the Arch of Titus. The bas-reliefs depict the destruction of Jerusalem and the sacking of the Temple with soldiers bearing off sacred Jewish objects. See Grant, M. \textit{op cit}, p. 162 - 169. The arch was incorporated into the ceremonial processions during a papal installation. “... In the processions that accompanied papal installations a Jew was required to stand beside the arch in order to swear an oath of loyalty to the Pope and present him with a copy of the Pentateuch. It was not until Pius IX (1846) that the custom was discontinued.” \textit{ibid}, p.169.

\textsuperscript{77} At 550ft wide, 392ft deep and 386ft high, Hitler’s arch was designed to dwarf Napoleon’s Arc de Triomphe. See Speer, A. Inside The Third Reich. Winston, R. & C. Trans., \textit{op cit}, p. 135.

\textsuperscript{78} See Richie, A \textit{op cit}, pp. 469-474 for a detailed account of these plans.

\textsuperscript{79} Samir al-Khalil explains this symbolism in detail. “The swords that Saddam Hussein is holding up are meant to represent the defeat of the Persian Sassanian empire by the invading Arab-Muslim army in the battle of Qadisiyya in AD 637, a defeat which paved the way for the Islamicisation of Iran. The Iraq-Iran was from the start was always referred to by Ba’thi propaganda as \textit{Qadisiyya Saddam}, meaning the Iraq President’s new (or own) Qadisiyya. The holy (for Arabs) and aggressive (for Iranians) implications of calling it such was not lost on the region. The swords are those of Sa’ad ibn-abi-Waqqas, the commander of the Muslim army that defeated the Persians and an honoured companion of the prophet Muhammad himself. By analogy, therefore, Saddam Hussein is at the very least the Sa’ad ibn-abi-Waqqas of the 1980’s.” \textit{al-}
memorials have been used to proclaim victory and celebrate the military prowess of the hero-leader but the concept of raising a monument in memory of the dead is relatively recent. The experience of World War I did not easily lend itself to Nationalistic-type monuments. As Gillis notes, the industrialisation of modern warfare had consigned individual heroism to oblivion. Even the victors commemorated sacrifice rather than triumph; and, in Germany, where defeat and revolution were perceived as a total breach with the past, the dead came to stand for all that was worthy in the German past and redeeming in its future. The problems associated with commemorating Verdun are an example of this process. Antoine Prost’s analysis of the monuments at Verdun is instructive of the way collective memories are formed, reformed and eventually crystallise around significant sites of memory. Prost poses the question: “Verdun became a central site of the national identity, but of what nation?” The initial ‘official’ national patriotic memory of a monument to victory was transformed by the building of the vast ossuary in the ruins of the fort of Douaumont into a memorial that more closely reflected veteran memories. Prost shows how “the veterans’ memory won


The following lines from Euripides’ Andromache are an indication that right from the inception of war memorials, the question of who or what was being commemorated was a potential source of conflict.

When the public sets a war memorial up
Do those who really sweated get the credit?
Oh no! Some general wangles the prestige!
Who, brandishing his one spear among thousands,
Did one man’s work, but gets a world of praise.


There are exceptions to this generalisation. For example, the stele raised to the Athenian dead at Marathon was a genuine war memorial, whereas, the commemoration of Athens’ victory over the Persians by creating a memory site within the polls itself with the building of the Parthenon, falls within the form of the more common ‘nationalist’ commemorative monument. See A detailed analysis of the symbolism of the Parthenon and its sculptures can be found in Castriota, D. Myth, Ethos and Actuality: Official Art in Fifth-Century B.C. Athens, The University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, 1992.

Gillis, J.R. Memory and Identity: The History of a Relationship, op cit, p. 12.

Memory Sites 271 out” against more self-aggrandising national memories so that this particular memory site became synonymous with France’s experiences of World War I.

Verdun was a defensive victory: the German advance was turned back. In a broader sense, the memory of Verdun thus coincides with the memory of World War I as a whole: it was a war brought on by German aggression, and waging it was legitimate because France was merely defending its own soil .... With Verdun the nation affirmed itself but not at the expense of anyone else. The nineteenth century tendency towards triumphal monumentality was therefore tempered by the realities of soldiers’ memories. Prost states that as a memory site, “Verdun came to symbolise a breach of the limits of the human condition .... That the price of victory may surpass all measure.” However, there was still a need to memorialise the national dead away from the battlefield and in the symbolic core of the city.

While producing memory sites on an unprecedented scale there was need for the combatant nations of World War I to create a symbolic site that would both memorialise the dead and serve as a national shrine. The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier “was the only way that memory of this terrible period of time could be materialised in a single place.” The symbolic significance of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier was established through elaborate pomp and ceremony with which an unknown soldier was buried and then reinforced with regular ritual performances of remembrance. George Mosse refers to these shrines as “a place

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84 ibid.
85 ibid. p. 400.
86 ibid. pp. 397-400.
of national worship;"\textsuperscript{89} while Ken Inglis describes the Australian Tomb of the Unknown Soldier as the “ritual centre of the nation, receiving obligatory wreaths from every visiting head of state.”\textsuperscript{90} Ritual wreath laying not only reaffirms the ‘rightness’ of the sacrifice made on behalf of the nation, but adds international recognition to this sacrifice. National memory can also be refocussed through the elaborate staging of a televised state funeral, such as the reburial of an unknown defender of Moscow on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the battle\textsuperscript{91} or the reburial of the unknown soldier at the Australian War Memorial on 11\textsuperscript{th} November 1993.\textsuperscript{92}

George Mosse also points out that the symbolic positioning of such tombs with their Eternal Flames reinforces their role as places of national worship. For example, Paris’ Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at the Arc de Triomphe associates the war dead with France’s glory in war,\textsuperscript{93} while in Rome “the tomb itself was part of the Victor Emmanuel Monument erected in 1910 to celebrate Italian unity. Thus the triumph of the nation and the war dead were linked.”\textsuperscript{94} Triumphalism and sacrifice re-occurred most noticeably in the Soviet Union following World War II where memorials were “designed to keep alive the memory of the war: of the suffering, the heroism, the community spirit and the eventual triumph of the

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\textsuperscript{88} Gillis, J.R. \textit{Memory and Identity: The History of a Relationship}, op cit, p. 11.
\textsuperscript{90} Inglis, K.S. \textit{op cit}, p. 459.
\textsuperscript{91} See Lane, C \textit{op cit}, p. 144.
\textsuperscript{92} See Inglis, K. \textit{op cit}, p. 453.
\textsuperscript{93} This was a monument to France’s glory in war, and at the time the Unknown Soldier was buried in 1920, it was said that the fallen had picked up the laurel wreath dropped by Napoleon at Waterloo. Mosse, G L. \textit{op cit}, p.94.
\textsuperscript{94} \textit{ibid}, p.96
Soviet people and of the social system that inspired them to, and sustained them in, their battle."^{95}

The Holocaust however, fitted no national format of commemoration and remembrance and the question of how to assign monumental form to Holocaust memory is still an open question. As Huyssen argues;

the Holocaust monument does not stand in the tradition of the monument as heroic celebration and figure of triumph. Even in the case of the monument to the Warsaw Ghetto uprising we face a memorial to suffering, an indictment of crimes against humanity. Held against the tradition of the legitimising, identity-nurturing monument, the Holocaust monument would have to be thought of as inherently a counter-monument. Yet the traditional critique of the monument as a burying of a memory and an ossifying of the past has often been voiced against the Holocaust monument as well. Holocaust monuments have been accused of topolatry, especially those constructed at the sites of extermination. They have been reproached for betraying memory.^{96}

It is for the reasons outlined by Huyssen that commemoration of the victims of the Holocaust is taken out of national commemoration for those killed during World War II. The Holocaust is portrayed as transcending national memory while at the same time marking the limits of traditional symbolic representation. In opting for a highly abstract form of representation, the previously discussed Berlin Holocaust memorial deliberately eschews all forms of traditional memorialising, but at the same time runs the risk of rendering memory of the Holocaust so obscure as to drain it of meaning.

I have argued that national memory is both expressed and shaped by the political landscape. In ‘reading’ the landscape at least two characteristics of

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^{95} Lane, C. *op cit.*, p. 146.
^{96} Huyssen, A. *op cit.*, p257-58.
national monuments should be noted. First, the 'national idea' is given credibility and continuity through the symbolic representation of national origins. More often than not such representation employs classical motifs or classical iconography that 'extends' national memory into a mythical but exemplary world.
Second, the 'national idea' is extolled as worthy of its citizens dying through the linking of monuments to national triumphs or national unity with shrines to the nation's dead. Of all memory sites, monuments to the nation's dead are the most evocative and the most potent in the creation of national memories. Of all memory sites it is these monuments that 'contain' the political myth of the nation.

4. Primal Memories

An indication of the importance a community places on memory sites is that these sites have no economic value and yet are usually maintained and restored at state expense. This is especially true of archaeological ruins that are retrospectively invested with symbolic significance for a community. Michael Kammen points out that most nations are committed to the concept of preserving monuments and historic sites, although the degree to which it is achieved is dependant on a complex mixture of cultural, social, political and economic factors. Despite different approaches to conservation, a common factor is that preservation is not directly linked to an economic return. In his study of American war memorials, J. Mayo finds that, "memorials are an unassailable investment in

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97 In commenting on the economic costs of preservation, Kammen notes that "this costs a lot of money, obviously, yet countries such as the United States, Great Britain, France, and those in the Scandinavian region have decided that the investment is worthwhile even in a time of shrinking resources. Nations that are younger and have precarious economies would like to do much more in the way of historic preservation but
which no economic return is expected."
Edward Shils makes a similar observation, "monuments are like ruins in that their survival is wholly independent of utility and is fairly often independent of aesthetic value. .... Monuments were never intended for use."  

Monuments might never have been intended for use in a utilitarian way, but no nation spends valuable resources on their construction and maintenance if they are of no use. Their use is the value they have and value exists in the symbolic sphere. The preservation of historical sites, particularly archaeological ruins, falls into the same category of symbolic value. Except where ruins are on a grand enough scale to attract tourists, there can be no rational economic arguments for their preservation and maintenance. Ruins may have little economic value, but their symbolic value to a community warrants expenditure on their upkeep, generally under the supervision of a government department of antiquities, monuments or heritage. 

The symbolic value of archaeological sites is that they 'contain' the primal memory of a community or nation. An archaeological site authenticates and legitimises such a 'memory' and gives substance to a political myth of origin. 

find it very difficult because of military and political as well as economic constraints." Kammen, M. Mystic Chords of Memory : The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture, op cit, p. 695 - 696.
98 Mayo, J.M. op cit, p. xv.
99 Shils, E. op cit, p. 72.
100 David Lowenthal states that ruins strike an emotional chord, quite independent of their symbolic value. "Ruins and tombstones, lichen and moss, decayed and eroded artefacts evoked associations between the observer's own impending demise and the transience of life, the failure of memory, the futility of fame, the irretrievability of the past." Lowenthal, D. The Past is a Foreign Country, op cit, p. 375. See also Shils, E. op cit, p. 70.
Alain Schnapp argues that the conscious use of archaeological sites and artifacts to authenticate constructed traditions is as old as the ancient Egyptians and is just as prevalent today. As Schnapp comments, “excavation is necessary not only to reveal the abode of memory, but also – and above all – to activate it.” An explicit statement of such intent can be found in the 1992 European Convention on the Protection of Archaeological Heritage (Revised) which stated that “the aim of this ... Convention is to protect the archaeological heritage as a source of the European collective memory.” It is doubtful that a common European collective memory could be reconstructed from the archaeological heritage, but this is precisely the aim of numerous travelling exhibitions promoting Celtic cultural heritage. Sites invested with historical significance are important to collective memory formation for they bring visually ‘concrete’ representations of the past into the present. Such sites create a sense of continuity which are especially important to the creation of national identities.

The preservation of such sites is therefore important to maintaining a sense of national continuity. State intervention to protect and conserve archaeological sites arose “in connection with the heightened sense of nationality and from the legitimacy which the sense of nationality claims on grounds of antiquity.” The identification of the nation with historic remains that pre-date

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102 ibid, p. 18.
105 Shils, E. op cit, p. 69.
the creation of the nation itself or even extend back into antiquity, potentially
gives added authenticity to the legitimacy claims of the modern nation. Kristian
Kristiansen argues that the growing political significance of archaeology at the
close of the twentieth century rests on the need of national and ethnic groups to
establish a sense of historical continuity because a political community’s
ability to appropriate archaeological sites and artifacts provides them with “a
symbolic resource to establish authenticity and continuity.” Archaeological
sites validate claims of national or ethnic primacy and provide for the popular
imagination tangible connections to an identity rooted in the awe-inspiring past.
Places and objects can be made into powerful evocative symbols that serve to
authenticate constructed traditions. It is the potential to ‘authenticate
constructed traditions’; to provide material evidence of national narratives, that
gives archaeology its potential significance. As Michael Dietler observes, “given
that the state is the major owner of the means of production for archaeological
research, it is hardly surprising that the pattern of support for archaeological
excavation and museum displays has been conditioned by national mythologies of
identity.”

The political use of archaeology to authenticate constructed traditions is
well documented for authoritarian regimes such as Nazi Germany and the

106 See Kristiansen, K. “The Strength of the Past and its Great Might”; An Essay on the Use of the Past”,
107 Dietler, M. op cit, p. 585.
108 ibid, p. 597.
109 ibid.
110 For example see McCann for the way archaeological sites were used to legitimise German expansion
and to support myths of German racial superiority. McCann, W.J. ‘Volk und Germanenstum’: the
Soviet Union, but the politicisation of archaeology is also apparent in a wide variety of cultures including Israel, the Transcaucasian region, France, the United States, and in creating a sense of continuity for the European Union itself. As Dietler points out in relation to Europe:

An exploration of the relationship between archaeology and the construction of identity in modern communities is of considerable importance in Europe today, where attempts to establish a new supranational community are matched by a resurgence of xenophobic nationalism; where tensions based on emotionally charged appeals to ethnic heritage are currently erupting in violence in many areas; where the bonds holding many national polities together are fragmenting and reforming around smaller ethnic identities; and where archaeology has been conscripted frequently to establish and validate cultural borders and ancestry, often in the service of dangerous nationalist mythologies.

Dietler's comments were made in relation to a travelling exhibition of Celtic artifacts, but equally they would be appropriate to the way both Macedonia and Greece appropriated archaeology to legitimise claims to Macedonian identity.

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112 The Israeli government's use of the ancient fortress of Masada as an essential component of its founding myth will be analysed in some depth at the opening of chapter 6 on commemoration.


114 For a detailed discussion of how Napoleon III, Marshall Pétain and President Mitterrand used archaeological excavations of key Gallic sites such as Alésia and Mont Beuvray to impose a particular view of French national identity, see Pomian, K. op cit, and Demoule, J.-P., op cit.

115 See David Lowenthal for a discussion of how archaeological interpretations of Narragansett Indian remains are used "to legitimate the Narragansett as an autonomous group in the twentieth century and 'reproduce social relations in the past as a mirror of social relations in the present'" Lowenthal, D. The Timeless Past: Some Anglo-American Historical Preconceptions' op cit, p. 1268.

116 Dietler, M. op cit, p. 584-85.

117 The explicit purpose of this exhibit was outlined in the preface to the exhibition handbook. "It was conceived with a mind to the great impending process of the unification of western Europe, a process that pointed eloquently to the truly unique aspect of Celtic civilisation, namely its being the first historically documented civilisation on a European scale .... We felt, and still feel, that linking that past to this present was in no way forced, but indeed essential, and could effectively call us back to our common roots." Dietler, M. op cit, p 596.
The political uses of archaeology are most clearly illustrated in the conflict between Greece and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia over the name ‘Macedonia’ itself and particularly over the adoption by the Macedonian government of the Star of Vergina as its national symbol. In adopting the Star of Vergina, the Macedonian government was shoring up its legitimacy by constructing a national identity that laid claim to the heritage of Alexander the Great. The prominence of the Star of Vergina, the symbol of the ancient Macedonian royal family, amongst the artifacts unearthed at Vergina by Manolis Andronicos gave the new Macedonian government “a symbol empowered by archaeology”. However the Greek government used the same excavations at Vergina, in present-day Greece, to dispute the very notion of a Macedonian identity.

Ironically, artifacts and a romanticised history also played a prominent part in the creation of a Greek identity following the war of liberation from the Ottoman Empire (1821-29). David Lowenthal argued that modern Greece was, “born of Western Europe’s philhellenic attachment to classical antiquity ....(and that) the Greeks were made to embrace a romanticised version of their classical identity”. Yannis Hamilakis and Eleana Yalouri also argue that, “antiquities acquired the status of symbolic capital and authoritative resource in the early

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119 Brown, K.S. op cit, p. 785.
years of the modern Greek state, due to the prominent position of classical antiquity in the ideology of the European educated middle classes. The present Greek government employed the same tactics in its conflict with Macedonia over the use of archaeological symbolism. The Greek government exploited the symbolic capital generated by Andronicos' finds through international exhibitions and by elevating the Vergina excavations to the status of a sacred site. As Anastasia Karakasidou comments,

Andronikos and his work came to the service of Greek national ideology and its political struggles. His funeral itself provided a ritual forum through which his discoveries could be ceremonially elevated to the status of near national canon by those who indulge in the ideological appropriation of historical knowledge.

While the use of artifacts by both Macedonia and Greece to authenticate the ideological appropriation of historical knowledge is a dramatic example, it is not unique. Archaeological sites, artifacts and sites of historical significance are legally protected in all nations by national laws and by a complex web of international conventions. The link between these 'sites of memory' and national identity is enshrined in national and international law.

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122 For a detailed discussion of 'The Search for Alexander' exhibitions see Green, P. Ch.10, Classical Bearings: Interpreting Ancient History and Culture, Thames and Hudson, G.D.R., 1989.
124 The conventions covering the protection of cultural property in time of war are: the 1899 and 1907 Conventions on the Laws of War; the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict and the 1972 Convention for the Protection of the World Cultural and National Heritage. Other important international conventions for the protection of cultural monuments include the European Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage (Revised 1992); 1972 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property; 1985 European Convention on Offences Relating to Cultural Property; 1995 Unidroit Convention on Stolen or Illegally Exported Cultural Objects. Full texts on all these conventions can be found on The electronic publication of the MULTILATERALS PROJECT, Fletcher School of Law & Diplomacy -- http://www.tufts.edu/fletcher/multilaterals.html
The need to protect archaeological sites and cultural property through national and international law is an indication of just how important such sites and artifacts are perceived to be in legitimating national identity. Their recognised importance stems from the fact that archaeological sites can be used to anchor the beginning of a nation’s collective memory, while the protection of artifacts affirms the generally accepted view that cultural heritage is represented by material objects. The first point is that archaeological sites have political significance for national myth-making because they represent the beginning and “it is this primal position that gives prehistoric facts their ideological power.”

In drawing a contrast between monuments built to commemorate a specific event and an archaeological site, Jean-Paul Demoule comments that,

prehistoric sites are in a sense the degree zero of national memory: they are pure, empty forms that can be filled with whatever concepts, emotions, or symbols we like. Perhaps it is this very emptiness that makes them so precious for historians, for in dealing with them individuals and social groups must rely exclusively on their own resources.

The elevation of the prehistoric cave of Lascaux into a “generic symbol of France’s lost prehistoric memory” is an example. The inauguration of the Bicentennial commemorations of the French Revolution in the depths of Lascaux in 1989 and President Mitterrand’s speech in marking the fiftieth anniversary of its discovery in 1990 means that memory of Lascaux is now situated in “the heart of France which, though originally not ‘French’ in any sense, has become the very symbol of France’s immemorial national memory.” As Demoule states:

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126 *ibid*, p. 188 – 189.
127 *ibid*, p. 165.
The ceremony thus transformed a chance discovery into a matter of national moment: it signified that Lascaux was important not because it existed but because it had been rediscovered, thus allowing ‘man to regain his memory’, to glimpse ‘a sign of what lies beyond our memory’ in an ‘intact theatre’ of prehistoric times. The President’s speech thus ‘marked’ the site once again: it was another treasure to be added to France’s national heritage.\(^{129}\)

An archaeological site thus is assigned political significance through the extension of memory back to supposed origins. In this case the construction of an archaeo-narrative\(^{130}\) creates a deeper sense of continuity for the French nation.

The second point is that the predominantly western identification of cultural heritage with national identity basically has been accepted; hence the international laws dealing with the restitution and return of cultural property. As David Lowenthal notes, “attachments to national heritage have everywhere intensified efforts to keep it in place or to secure its return. Originally a focus of nineteenth-century European nationalism, antiquities are now prime symbols of collective identity all over the world.”\(^{131}\)

Joan Gero and Dolores Root argue that artifacts are more than just prime symbols or icons of collective identity for they are used to legitimise specific western notions of heritage and identity. In a strongly worded article on the role of the National Geographic magazine, Gero and Root argue that Western archaeology is anything but a neutral scientific endeavour for, “constructions of

\(^{129}\) Demoule, J.-P. op cit, p. 189.

\(^{130}\) This term is used by Margaret Ronayne to describe the way archaeology has been used as part of the discursive formation of nations. Ronayne, M. ‘Archaeological Dilemmas? Ethics, Materialities and Pasts’. Rethinking History, Vol. 2, No. 3, 1998, pp. 321-329.

\(^{131}\) Lowenthal, D. ‘Identity, Heritage, and History’ op cit, p. 45.
the past are mediated by present social contexts and serve a political function in legitimating our social and material conditions of existence. What concerns Gero and Root is that Western paradigms of archaeology completely dominate the way the prehistoric past is envisaged. They state that,

As a product of Western logic controlled by Western practice, archaeology reduces the cultural distance between past and present by reifying a commoditised view of the world and the values that support that view. Archaeology as an enterprise legitimises the hegemony of Western culture and Western imperialism and imposes a congruent view onto the past.

David Lowenthal concurs and further argues that the values underpinning Western archaeology have led to the belief that possession of historical artifacts is a necessary accoutrement to national and cultural identity.

The Western emphasis on material tokens of antiquity as symbols of heritage has been all but universally adopted. International legislation, conservation agencies, and the art and antiquities markets reinforce the primacy of Western views on artefact protection, architectural preservation, and the worth and function of ancient relics. The practice has led to the current emphasis on “material relics as icons of group identity.” Recognition of the importance of such icons of group identity made them targets for destruction in the cultural wars fought over memory in Bosnia.

I have argued that archaeological sites become important memory sites if they are invested with symbolic significance. Like commemorative monuments, it is not the site itself that is significant, other than in a purely scientific way, but the political meaning that is attached to the site and its artifacts. Archaeological sites

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133 ibid.
134 Lowenthal, D. 'Conclusion: Archaeologists and Others' op cit, P. 302.
can be used to validate claims of national or ethnic primacy because they are said to 'contain' the primary memory of a nation or a group. Archaeological sites authenticate founding myths by providing material evidence of historical continuity. Thus, archaeological sites and artifacts have the capacity to legitimise the collective memory of a community.

5 Relics and Memory

Closely related to artifacts as carriers of collective memory are relics. This is most clearly seen in the political uses made of relics to reawaken and reconstruct Serbian collective memory. The most important icons of group identity are 'sacred relics'; the remains of national heroes. Relics possess high symbolic capital and their possession is a powerful source of legitimation for individuals or groups. The symbolic value of relics has been recognised since the time of Kimon, the Athenian general who legitimated his leadership by bringing back to Athens the bones of Theseus, Athens' legendary founder.\textsuperscript{136} Possession of the mortal remains of a national hero authenticates and legitimises memory by establishing a sense of continuity with the nation's past. Of more importance to understanding the symbolic capital of relics is the emotional quasi-religious link that is established across generations. It is not so much the relics themselves that create such a link, but the way these relics are represented and the context into which they are placed.
I have already analysed in some depth the way relics are used to form, construct and reconstruct memory in Serbia. I will now extend this discussion to include and examination of the recent ceremonial reburials of Imre Nagy in Hungary, Frederick the Great in Germany and Tsar Nicholas in Russia to indicate that the Serbian example is not peculiarly Balkan in origin. Common to all three burials was the theme of reconciliation and national unity but the different contexts for each reburial evoked different memories in each community. In each reburial the relics were the principal props, the emotional focus for each ceremony, but it was the performance itself that shaped subsequent memories. The public presentation of memory through ritual and ceremony is the subject of Chapter 6, but relics will be dealt with in this chapter because they ‘contain’ the memory of a community in the same way that historical or cultural artifacts do.

The reburial of Imre Nagy on the thirty-first anniversary of his execution provided one of the catalysts for the sweeping changes that overtook Hungary during 1989. Memory of the executed Prime Minister and the events of the 1956 uprising had been officially suppressed, but opposition activists organised by the Committee for Historical Justice evoked Nagy’s memory during a simple ceremony at his unmarked grave on the thirtieth anniversary of his execution. The subsequent demonstrations were broken up by police, but the need to officially rehabilitate Nagy’s memory had already been recognised by the Hungarian Socialist Workers’ Party. The legitimacy of the Party was being undermined by

memory of the events of 1956 and what Timothy Ash described as “the special perfidy of Nagy’s execution.”

In allowing Nagy to be exhumed and given a ceremonial reburial, and by re-evaluating 1956 as a ‘popular uprising’ rather than a ‘counter-revolution’, the Party was seeking to realign itself with the collective memory of the Hungarian people. The staging of the ceremony took place in Budapest’s Heroes Square, a symbolically significant site that was draped in black for the occasion. Six coffins were set up for Nagy and his four executed colleagues. The empty sixth coffin symbolised three hundred other insurgents who had been executed following the 1956 uprising. Besides the coffins containing the ‘sacred relics’, memory of 1956 was symbolically represented by “huge red, green and white flags, but each with a hole in the middle, a reminder of how the insurgents of 1956 cut out the hammer and sickle from their flags.” Memory of the ideals of 1956 was reinforced by numerous speakers who used the nine hour televised ceremony to attack the ruling Party and the Soviet Union. Miklos Vasarhelyi, who had been Nagy’s press spokesman and adviser in 1956 and the last survivor of the Nagy show trial, declared to the crowd that, “the message of Imre Nagy is more relevant today than ever .... Let us revive the spiritual legacy of the martyrs of the

137 Ash, T. G. We The People : The Revolution of 89, Granta Books, Cambridge, 1990, p. 47. “(Nagy) and his closest associates were lured out of their refuge in the Yugoslav embassy by a solemn written undertaking from Janos Kadar only to be carried off by Soviet security forces, deported to Romania, returned to Hungary, kept in solitary confinement, subjected to a gross parody of a trial, and then hanged.” ibid.
138 ibid, p. 49.
1956 revolution and put an end to a painful period." The spirit of 1956 was also linked to the memory of the 1848 revolution when the 200,000 strong crowd joined hands and intoned the words of the nineteenth century national poet Sandor Petofi: "no more shall we be slaves." The 'presence' of Imre Nagy at the centre of this moving and emotional ceremony also freed repressed memories of 1956. No longer representing the dominant memories of Hungarian society the legitimacy of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party crumbled. On October 7th 1989 it dissolved itself with the new Hungarian Republic appropriately proclaimed on the 23rd October, the thirty-third anniversary of the outbreak of the 1956 revolution.

While possession of the 'sacred relics' of Nagy had enabled the Hungarian opposition to regain control over Hungarian collective memory, possession of the equally 'sacred relics' of Frederick the Great posed problems for the newly unified German government of Chancellor Helmut Kohl. Conflicting memories accompanied the reburial of Frederick the Great in Potsdam on the 205th anniversary of his death in August 1991. While ostensibly a private family affair, the ceremony was televised and attended by Chancellor Kohl, a guard of honour from the Bundeswehr and a military band. The remains of Frederick the Great had been removed from Potsdam during World War II in the face of the Red Army advance and had been temporarily reburied at the family estate at Burg Hohenzollern. The proposal for a ceremonial return of Frederick to Potsdam

141 Quoted by Ash, T. G op cit, p. 51.
142 See MacDonogh, G. Financial Times (Reuters), 5 Oct., 1996.
following German reunification provoked a fierce debate about the propriety of such an event.

The problem was not with the 'historical' Frederick the Great, but the way memory of Frederick had been appropriated by the Nazis. The Nazis had used Frederick's image in their election campaigns in Prussia during the early 1930's and made countless propaganda films linking Frederick's achievements with those of the Nazi Party. Hitler had closely associated himself with Frederick and "extolled him as the apotheosis of Teutonic will," As well as reading and rereading Thomas Carlyle's biography of Frederick the Great, Hitler had a solitary painting of Frederick hung over his bed in the Berlin bunker. In addition to Frederick's Nazi association many Germans were uneasy about the ceremonial reburial because Frederick was also a symbol of discredited Prussian militarism.

The ceremony coincided with a revival of interest in the suppressed Prussian heritage, which had begun during the 1980's. As Werner Knopp, President of the Prussian Cultural foundation in Berlin stated, "as a state, Prussia is dead. The allies merely filled out the death certificate. But what remains alive is the memory of Prussia." However, it was this 'memory of Prussia' that concerned many Germans who saw the ceremonial reburial as an attempt to

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145 Giles MacDonogh noted that an exhibition in West Germany (1981) which celebrated the positive elements of the Prussian tradition created a more favourable environment for Prussian values while in East Germany Frederick the Great was officially rehabilitated. Staunton, D. Observer, United Kingdom (Reuters), 28 Aug., 1996.
146 Quoted by Staunton, D. ibid. My italics.
rehabilitate the Prussian royal family and reintroduce Prussian nationalist traditions. The actual ceremony was not so much a metaphor for Germany’s growing assertiveness as an attempt to realign the memory of Frederick the Great with the new unified Germany. Frederick’s memory had been distorted by the Nazis and suppressed during the Cold War. Chancellor Kohl stated that “the ceremony demonstrated that Germany was now united.”^147

Rather than a relapse into a nostalgic Prussian past, “government organisers of the reburial said it was intended partly to reacquaint Germans with an ambiguous chapter of their history repressed during decades of national division.”^148 As such, the ceremonial reburial must be seen within the context of the ‘historians debate’ about how Germany should represent its past. While the pomp and ceremony of the reburial suggested an attempt at representing a more unified historical and cultural awareness^149 the controversy surrounding the ceremony suggested that such unity still had not been achieved. In commenting on the reburial, John Eisenhammer noted that, “this is a state which still has not found an unselfconscious way of evoking its history; a nation that has proved unable to come to terms with symbols of Germaness other than the Deutschmark; a people that are still restlessly searching for harmony.”^150 The rehabilitation of Frederick the Great’s memory through his ceremonial reburial needs to be seen as part of the process of reconstructing German national memory following reunification.

The Soviet Union’s most ‘sacred relic’, the embalmed body of Lenin, had been well integrated into Soviet political culture\textsuperscript{151} but the collapse of the Soviet Union and the unearthing of another set of rival ‘sacred relics’, the Romanov family, in 1991, highlighted the contested memories that clustered around these relics. The reburial of Tsar Nicholas and his family in July 1998 on the eightieth anniversary of their execution, evoked conflicting memories in Russia. The finding and identification of the Tsar’s bones in 1991 coincided with the collapse of the Soviet Union and a resurgence of nostalgic yearning for the Romanovs. The nostalgic revival culminated in the staging of a ceremonial reburial in St Petersburg in the style of Tsar Peter the Great.\textsuperscript{152} During the funeral oration, Russian President Boris Yeltsin, declared that the reburial was a “symbolic moment of national repentance and unity”\textsuperscript{153} and that “burying the victims of the Yekaterinburg tragedy is an act of humane justice, a symbol of unification in Russia and redemption of common guilt.”\textsuperscript{154}

However, as an act of national reconciliation, Yeltsin’s gesture failed. The attempt to rehabilitate the memory of the Tsar was rejected by the Communists, not only because they were in opposition to Yeltsin, but because the Tsar was still

\textsuperscript{150} Eisenhammer, J. Guardian (Reuters), 17 Aug. 1991.
\textsuperscript{151} The political uses of Lenin’s Mausoleum and Red Square as ceremonial sites will be discussed in Chapter 6 on Commemoration.
\textsuperscript{152} See Trifonov, K. ‘Tsar bones Arrive, Yeltsin to Attend Burial’, Reuters, St Petersburg, 16 July 1998, \url{http://dailynews.yahoo.com/headlines/world... 98716}
\textsuperscript{154} Quoted by Fletcher, P. ‘Russia Buries Last Tsar’, Reuters, St Petersburg, 17 July, 1998, \url{http://www.yahoo.com/headlines/980717}. It is ironic that Yeltsin should mention Yekaterinburg for it was he who destroyed the house in Yekaterinburg (1977) where the Tsar was shot to stop it becoming a memory site for nostalgic monarchists.
a central icon in their founding myth. "'Bloody Nicholas' is the crucial figure of their mythology – founded as that is on the 'Bloody Sunday' massacre of 1905, the Lena massacre of 1912, and the slaughter of the First World War, which led inevitably to the victory of the Revolution."\textsuperscript{155} The attempted reconciliation also failed because Russian society was not yet ready for it. As Orlando Figes observed in an essay \textit{Burying the Bones}:

\begin{quote}
This is a country where the scars of history are still too open to be healed. History is an obstacle to national unity .... There are times when every nation needs to think a little less about its history. Dwelling on the past can stop a people moving on. In St Petersburg, I saw that in some ways the Russian people needed to forget about their revolution. How are they to become united and prosperous as a nation unless they forget their divisions of the past? It is their history that has crippled them. Russia in this way is like Ireland.\textsuperscript{156}
\end{quote}

The 'divisions of the past' were in fact accentuated by numerous monarchist groups. For example, in a press release titled, 'The Romanov's Live ... In Cyberspace! ', the Alexander Palace Association and the International Romanov Society announced an internet vigil to mark the "80\textsuperscript{th} anniversary of the savage murder of the Tsar's family and attendants."\textsuperscript{157} The same tone was repeated in a live television commentary that presented the Tsar, his wife and daughters as being innocent victims. In an insightful analysis of the television coverage, Orlando Figes noted that:

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\textsuperscript{155} Figes, O. \textit{op cit}, p. 100.
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\textsuperscript{156} \textit{ibid}, pp. 106-110. Figes also acknowledges the importance of Russians coming to grips with their history. "Understanding history, looking at it more objectively and accepting it as past, is surely the solution ... (because) ignorance and gullibility play into the hands of demagogues. Zhirinovsky, Lebed and Zyuganov – they all have their own pernicious myths of Russian history." \textit{ibid}, pp. 106-110. However, Figes is pessimistic that this would happen in the near future. "The immediate prospects are not encouraging. The Russians are fed up with their history. They are tired of the revelations that made Glasnost so exciting, when nearly every day some new fact about their rulers appeared in the newspapers and on television." \textit{ibid}, p. 110.
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What might have been a day of national mourning for all the victims of the Terror had been hijacked by television as a purely monarchist event, with all the nation's grief focussed on the royal coffins, Diana-style. Television pictures from the ceremony were intercut with photographs of the Tsar and his family on happy picnics and boating trips in some summer before the First World War. A Chopin prelude played in the background, and the commentator told us (as if he knew): "What a wonderful family it was! How beautiful and graceful were the Grand Duchesses! All so soon to be senselessly destroyed."

By focusing on the family and totally ignoring Nicholas' historical role in the events leading up to the Revolution, the media drained the Revolution of its political and historical dimensions and replaced it with sentimental nostalgia. Media coverage of such an event reveals the capacity that modern media has to reconstruct collective memory.

What each of these examples demonstrates is that it is not so much the possession of sacred relics in the form of the bones of national heroes that is important, but the meaning that is attached to these bones. Relics attain their high symbolic value through elaborate ritual and ceremony. In this sense the ceremony itself becomes a source of memory that reframes those memories that were originally 'contained' by the relics. Of more importance to reframing memory is the mediating role played by the media. Each of the reburial ceremonies was televised as carefully choreographed state spectacles. The potential for collective memory formation therefore extends well beyond the actual participants of the ceremony. It is the potential to manipulate the formation of collective memory through media management that gives such ceremonies their symbolic capital.

However, these three examples show that there are limits to the conscious

158 Figes, op cit, p. 106.
creation of collective memories. Where the relics are closely aligned with existing collective memories the ceremonies have the potential to authenticate and deepen memories, as happened in Hungary. However, where relics are not aligned with existing collective memories and their symbolic value is contested, then ceremonies run the risk of descending into historical kitsch, as happened in Germany and to a greater extent in Russia.

6. Museums as Memory Sites

The destruction of museums and libraries in Sarajevo was not an act of 'senseless vandalism', but a conscious and deliberate attempt to destroy the collective memories of a multicultural society. What this example highlights is the important role museums continue to play in shaping and preserving the collective memories of a community. For this reason I treat museums as memory sites.

As 'realms of memory', Nora depicts museums, archives and monuments as "boundary stones of another age, illusions of eternity."159 His definition more closely defines modernist perceptions of the traditional museum as a static institution standing apart from modern society, than the museum as an active constituent of modern society in both defining and re-defining collective memory and national identity. Huyssen disputes the perception of the museum in

159 Nora, P. 'Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire', op cit, p.12.
opposition to modernist culture and interprets the growing popularity of the museum to the process of modernity itself. Huysen states that,

the museum is a direct effect of modernisation rather than somehow standing on its edge or even outside it. It is not the sense of secure traditions that marks the beginnings of the museum, but rather their loss combined with a multi-layered desire for (re)construction. A traditional society without a secular teleological concept of history does not need a museum, but modernity is unthinkable without its museal project.\textsuperscript{161}

To an extent the museum compensates for the loss of stability which is inherent in modernity. Huysen argues that both the monument and museum offer a sense of permanence that information technology cannot provide.

One reason for the newfound strength of the museum and the monument in the public sphere may have something to do with the fact that both offer something that television denies: the material quality of the object. The permanence of the monument and the museum object, formerly criticised as deadening reification, takes on a different role in a culture dominated by the fleeting image on the screen and the immateriality of communications\textsuperscript{162}. For Huysen, “the popularity of the museum is ... a major symptom of the crisis of the Western faith in modernisation as panacea.”\textsuperscript{163} Thus, a museum serves as both ‘boundary stone of another age’ as well to hold up a mirror to contemporary society.

What has changed with the modern museum is not so much its traditional role of constructing cultural legitimacy through education and commemoration, but the way such cultural legitimacy is communicated. Besides using multi-media to supplement material artifacts, museum exhibitions are also commercial

\textsuperscript{160} Kammen notes that by 1996 there were a total of 8200 museums in the United States of which over half were history museums of historic sites Kammen, M. In the Past Lane : Historical Perspectives on American Culture, \textit{op cit}, p. 151.
\textsuperscript{161} Huysen, A. \textit{op cit}, p.15.
\textsuperscript{162} \textit{ibid}, p.255.
\textsuperscript{163} \textit{ibid}, p.34.
exercises that "are managed and advertised as major spectacles with calculable benefits for sponsors, organisers, and city budgets."\(^{164}\) Such exhibitions belong to the realm of mass entertainment with museums offering simulated experiences in what Huyssen describes as "spectacular *mis-en-scène* and operatic exuberance".\(^{165}\) It is not my intention to develop a critique of exhibit aesthetics other than to emphasise that displays of 'operatic exuberance' do not represent a subversion of the traditional role of the museum, but rather a re-presentation of that role.

The traditional role of the museum in the nineteenth century and for most of the twentieth century, has been to collect, catalogue and conserve the material record\(^{166}\) of human endeavour, especially those aspects that reflect the distinctive cultural legacy of a nation. Museums give an institutional context, a national commemorative space for representing those aspects of the past that frame and reinforce a desired national identity. Chancellor Helmut Kohl's attempts to define West Germany against the East through the House of German History in Bonn, and with reunification, the re-presentation of German history with the construction of the German Historical Museum in Berlin, fits the traditional pattern of a national museum presenting a desired national identity.\(^{167}\)

\(^{167}\) A history of the museum and the concepts governing its exhibitions can be found on its extensive website, http://www.dhm.de
However, as Hans Mommsen states, the museum is "an artificial fossil of the nation-state mentality of the nineteenth century. It is supposed to realise what the German unity movements since the wars of liberation have not achieved: a representative national image of history."\textsuperscript{168} The government, through the museum, consciously constructs a national memory, or in Mommsen's words "they intend to deliver belatedly to the Germans, as it were, their 'national identity.'"\textsuperscript{169} Desired national identity is also linked to the status of national museum collections. Many of the great national museums of Europe are also the repositories of war trophies causing Huyssen to describe "the museum from Napoleon to Hitler as a beneficiary of imperialist theft and nationalist self-aggrandisement."\textsuperscript{170} For example, in examining the development of The Louvre, Jean-Paul Demoule comments that

The republic's military victories soon added to the museum's collections and changed its character. Following the example of Roman generals occupying Greece, France's victorious generals gazed with noble desire on the art collections of the countries they conquered. The Louvre, as the nation's new central repository, seemed the obvious place to store the spoils of war.\textsuperscript{171}

Over time these spoils of war or commerce became so integrated into what is considered 'national heritage' that even high level government attempts to recover 'national treasures' such as the Elgin Marbles\textsuperscript{172} from the British

\textsuperscript{169} ibid.
\textsuperscript{170} Huyssen, A. op cit, p.16.
\textsuperscript{171} Demoule, J.-P.,op cit,,p. 279.
\textsuperscript{172} Lord Elgin's statement that he had "collect(ed) these remains of antiquity for the benefit of my country" quoted by Etienne, R. & F. The Search for Ancient Greece. Thames and Hudson, London, 1992, p. 137, were echoed in 1979 by Frank Brommer in response to pressure from the Greek Government for their return. "The sculptures were able to radiate a far stronger cultural influence from London than they could have done from Athens." ibid, p. 139. Attempts to have the Elgin Marbles returned to Greece still continue. See Guardian Weekly, Vol. 161, No.8, 19-25\textsuperscript{th} August, 1999.
Museums meet with emotional resistance. Traditional museums showcase the spoils of empire to the whole nation but they do not serve as sites for integrating the competing memories of a national community, rather they are ‘shrines’ to elite memory. Museums are the institutional bastions of tradition, presenting and articulating a selectively organised past that both produces and re-affirms the symbolic order. In this sense the museum “provided the master maps for the construction of cultural legitimacy.”\(^\text{173}\) The curatorial practice of representing these ‘master maps’ creates an historical narrative.

As Geoffrey White states, “historical narrative, with its moral employment of the past, is a particularly useful device for infusing national identity with social and emotional significance.”\(^\text{174}\) Within such a context the placing of “historic icons in national spaces evoke and validate culturally patterned narratives.”\(^\text{175}\) It should also be noted that what defines cultural legitimacy is not always what is presented for display, but what is excluded and marginalised. White states that,

> the very presence (or absence) of certain objects in the context of a national museum works to select and define events as historic, significant, and deserving of collective recognition. By moving through an exhibit and pausing to view and interpret objects put on display in an avowedly national space, individuals participate in small rituals of national identification, whether to embrace, resist, or simply ponder.\(^\text{176}\)

The ‘small rituals of national identification’ have the potential to frame and structure collective memory. The material representation of an ‘official’ collective memory as represented in a public space, is therefore open to the

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\(^{175}\) \textit{ibid.} p.23.

\(^{176}\) \textit{ibid.}
counter-representation of alternative collective memories. In such a situation the museum becomes a site of contestation where the 'master maps' of the elite or dominant group are challenged by those whose collective memories have been marginalised or excluded.

Where multiple memories can be accommodated within the one commemorative space, representation of a shared past is reflected in exhibit narratives. For example, the self-conscious role of the modern museum in framing a specific collective memory is discussed by Benjamin Brower in his analysis of the Musée Mémorial which was opened in the French city of Caen in 1988. The museum did not see its role as preserving the material artifacts of the World War II, but as a site to preserve the democratic ideals that inspired the D-Day Normandy Landings. The museum's official mission reflects such a purpose.

The memorial exists to defend the cause of Peace. Its ambition is to fight for the advancement of the rights of man and to collaborate in lessening world tensions ... the Memorial invites visitors to reflect on the scourge of War; and on ways of acting to restore or maintain Peace.\textsuperscript{177}

To achieve this end the museum attempted to integrate the multiple but divisive memories of war including defeat, occupation, collaboration and resistance. Where multiple memories cannot be accommodated, counter-memories are suppressed. For example, Geoffrey White shows how ambivalent memories about the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki could not be accommodated within the Enola Gay\textsuperscript{178} exhibit with which the Smithsonian Institute planned to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the end of World War II in 1995. The public

controversy surrounding the proposed exhibit caused its cancellation. ‘Official’ commemorative memory suppressed the multiple memories that had developed in response to the bombings. The Smithsonian was therefore coerced into fulfilling its traditional role of re-affirming cultural legitimacy.

The opposite situation occurred in Germany where an exhibit titled ‘War of Extermination: Crimes of the Wehrmacht 1941 to 1944’, challenged both ‘official’ commemorative memory of the fiftieth anniversary of the end of World War II as well as collective memories that had long been suppressed. The sense of closure that many Germans hoped would mark the 50th anniversary of its May 8th defeat was countered by the exhibition.179 Seen by half a million visitors by mid 1998, “it has undoubtedly been the contemporary history exhibition in the Federal Republic: the longest-lasting and most visited.”180 The exhibition challenged the Wehrmacht’s sanitised version of its role in war crimes. Van Voorst noted that the exhibition’s design reflected its underlying theme.

Viewed from above the display on 8ft high curved steel panels forms a Knights Cross – the Wehrmacht’s highest decoration for bravery. The arrangement is a bleak irony, for the walls are a shrine of shame striated with hundreds of black-and-white photos of Wehrmacht troops shooting Jews, hanging partisans, hurling murdered civilian women and children into graves.181

The exhibition also challenged the founding myth of the Federal Republic that Heer summed up as, “the German people, seduced and then terrorised by Hitler, had not known about the Nazi crimes yet was bitterly punished for them by the

178 The plane that dropped the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima.
181 Van Voorst, op cit.
bombing, the expulsions and the division of the country." The intense reaction that has attended this exhibition should be seen in the context of what is known as the 'historikerstreit', the historian's battle over the 'normalisation' of the past by relativising the Nazi period.

Museums play just as important a role in framing the collective memories of a community as monuments and archaeological sites. National museums consciously construct national memory by presenting historical narratives that create and reinforce a desired national identity. By providing a national commemorative space, museums also give validity to cultural, historical and material artifacts. Museums are thus important memory sites. Just as monuments, archaeological sites and 'sacred relics' 'contain' the collective memories of a community, museums are also conscious of their role to form, present and preserve that memory. However, what museums present is a selectively organised past that either faithfully reflects the dominant memories of a community or challenges those memories on behalf of subordinate memories. It is therefore the interrelationship between museum and memory that is important to developing a concept of collective memory. The dynamics of this interrelationship is also important when museum presentations are used to 'authenticate' political myths. Museums can thus act as important carriers of political myths.

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183 For a comprehensive reading of this 'battle' see Knowlton, J & Cates, T (Trans.) *op cit.*
7. Conclusion

This chapter has focused on extending the concept of collective memory to include the complex interrelationship between collective memory and memory sites. My contention is that, as symbolically significant sites, artifacts and relics are deeply embedded within the structure of political myths, the importance memory sites play in authenticating and giving political myths a commemorative focus, cannot be overestimated. I analysed four basic characteristics of memory sites as being important to collective memory formation. I first argued that memory sites represent the conscious will of a community to give these sites symbolic significance; to transform them from 'places of history' into a 'places of memory.' What is important for any analysis of a memory site are the memorializing intentions of a community. My second point was that memory sites represent images of stability by visually bringing representations of the past into the present. In this sense memory sites are said to 'contain' the memory of symbolically significant events. I further argued that the original meaning invested in a memory site is not fixed but evolves in step with the changing patterns of dominant and subordinate memories within a community. My final point was that memory sites are used by a community as 'theatres of memory'; as sites for reaffirming collective beliefs through rites, rituals and commemoration.

What was stressed with each of these characteristics was that even though a memory site could be 'read' as part of the political landscape, it was the symbolic meaning associated with a memory site that was of most importance.
The symbolic meaning of a memory site changes as the collective memories associated with that site are adjusted to meet the changing needs of a community. It is therefore the interrelationship between a community and its memory sites that determines the degree to which specific sites maintain their significance to legitimating a collective memory over time. That this interrelationship between a community and its memory sites is a dynamic one was demonstrated through numerous examples associated with different types of sites. I therefore extended the conceptualisation of collective memory through an analysis of the nature of the interrelationship between a community and its memory sites.