

## ABSTRACT

Title of dissertation: MONUMENTS AS A NATIONAL PRACTICE:  
THE DILEMMAS OF LIBERAL NATIONALISM

Avital Shein, Doctor of Philosophy, 2007

Dissertation directed by: Professor Ronald Terchek  
Department of Government and Politics

Professor Vladimir Tismaneanu  
Department of Government and Politics

At first glance, the very idea of liberal nationalism appears to be an oxymoron. It is dedicated to universal liberal values but it maintains that a nation, a particularistic entity *par excellence*, is a justifiable, legitimate, and even beneficial entity. Liberal nationalism, in other words, tries to reconcile two seemingly irreconcilable values: national and liberal ones.

However, if one thinks of liberal nationalism as a set of practices, it becomes clear that liberal nationalism is both possible and actual: it exists, and it is articulated in diverse spheres that touch our everyday lives as well as the foundations of liberal polities. In this study, I consider nationalism (and liberal nationalism in particular) to be a set of practices

that continuously create and define the image of the nation, its boundaries, and the meaning of national identity.

This dissertation focuses on one of these national practices: national monuments. I argue that as an example of a national practice in the built environment, they are appropriate grounds for exploring the intersection between space and nationalism and, more specifically, between space and liberal nationalism.

At the heart of my discussion is the assumption that as a national practice, monuments must operate not only in a traditional (e.g., ethnic) national context, but also in a liberal national one. Therefore, I argue that within a liberal national context, monuments would construct an image of a liberal nation—a nation that melds together national and liberal values. To do so, I first examine how monuments construct an image of a nation; specifically, I focus on the politics of memory and death. This, in turn, leads to my discussion of liberal monuments. I explore the ways in which national monuments can be liberal, as well. Overall, the dissertation seeks to show that liberal monuments capture the dilemmas of liberal nationalism, and that they articulate these dilemmas in space.

MONUMENTS AS A NATIONAL PRACTICE:  
THE DILEMMAS OF LIBERAL NATIONALISM

by

Avital Shein

Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the  
University of Maryland, College Park in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
2007

Advisory Committee:

Professor Ronald Terchek, Chair  
Professor Vladimir Tismaneanu, Chair  
Professor C. Fred Alford  
Assistant Professor Jillian Schwedler  
Assistant Professor Angel D. Nieves  
Professor Nancy L. Struna

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## Acknowledgements

While I was writing this dissertation I often felt, like many other graduate students, isolated. But, now that the dissertation is completed and I reflect on the past few years, it is clear to me that I was not alone in working on this project—I had many companions and many who shared in it. I would like to thank them for keeping me company:

I am grateful to Prof. Ronald Terchek for the warmth and dedication he has always shown me. I met Ron on my first day at the University of Maryland and since then, and until the very last lines were written in the dissertation, he has been part of this project. Prof. Vladimir Tismaneanu played a crucial role in my understanding, and growing interest, in nationalism. His encyclopedic memory and his sincere interest in this project were fountains of help throughout the process. None but Prof. Fred Alford could have asked me more straightforward yet incisive questions about my ideas in this project. At my prospectus defense, he recommended I narrow my broader proposal to focus solely on monuments. I am still grateful for that suggestion.

I would like to thank my other committee members, Prof. Jillian Schwedler, Angel Nieves, and Nancy Struna, who accommodated the difficulties of my being in Berkeley, California during the writing stages of this dissertation.

In Berkeley, I was profoundly helped by the ideas of the late Prof. Alan Pred, who introduced me to the world of cultural geography, and Prof. Andrew Shanken, who generously gave me a place where I could talk and learn about monuments and memory within the context of art history and architecture.

Also, I am grateful to my dear friends who doubled as colleagues: Yaelle Amir, Ana Kogl, Jenny Wustenberg, and Chris Huneke. And especially to Saya Kedar, who was never a colleague but whose presence in my life I value precisely for that reason.

To acknowledge or thank my family will inevitably be inadequate. Their contribution to this dissertation began much before my life in graduate school:

My mother, Miriam, who taught (and continues to teach) me how to write in English and who, I believe, often looks at the world as a political theorist might. My father, Luis, who always encouraged my taking an independent path and who taught me to love and value the world of ideas. My sisters, Noa and Michal, who were the best sources of motivation *and* distraction whenever I needed it. My grandparents, Ralph and Hadassah, whose warm and loving home was a place of true calm. My aunt Lisa, who during my years in Maryland gave me a home away from home. My grandparents, Ana and José, whose presence in my life does not diminish. And my aunt Debby, who reminded me of what was important to me. My families far away: the Brodins—Lill, Lars, Tove, and Mats, whose love and support I have always felt and been grateful for. And the Shalevs—Michael, Inbal, Daniel, and Avinoam, each of whom took care to give me words of encouragement throughout.

And to Jonas, who was a colleague precisely when I needed him to be. He was not only patient and endlessly encouraging, but being away from my home campus, he provided me with a rich and challenging academic environment. He did not merely listen or simply advise me—he was thinking with me. That he should be the man I love and with whom I share my life, is therefore a very happy coincidence.

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## **Introduction / Layered Geographies**

Walking down the steps of the ceremonial entrance to the National World War II Memorial in Washington, DC, one is immediately struck by the national geographies at play. The memorial weaves physical geographies with imagined geographies. The memorial itself reflects the physical map of the war, with two pavilions rising on either side, one representing the Atlantic front and the other the Pacific front. The pool in the center of the memorial reminds us that the war was not fought at home but across oceans, in places far away. But the mapping also includes the physical boundaries of the United States, quite independent from the battle-lines of the war. Fifty-six pillars encircle the pool, each carrying the name of one state or territory of the United States. One enters the memorial as if entering a three-dimensional political map—one is, in other words, in a symbolic representation of the nation itself.

Standing at the center of memorial one cannot help but see the Washington Monument casting its long shadow nearby as well as the image of a seated Lincoln gazing at us from just beyond the Reflecting Pool. The memorial is posed in dialogue with these two memorials—a fact that is readily acknowledged, if not proudly stated, in the memorial’s brochure under the section “ideals of democracy.” The axis that was once left open, the axis that connects the founder of the nation with the man who reasserted its



principles four score and seven years later, is now shared by a third event: World War II. A new founding moment, not just a new memorial, has been added. The change in the geography of the Mall becomes linked to a change in the imagined geography of how America sees itself: which moments are its founding moments and what defines those moments.

Wandering through the structure, the memorial brings to one's attention national memories, sacrifices, and values. The bas-relief sculptures that line the entrance to the memorial depict fragmented (but apparently highly significant) memories of the war. The scenes are intimate but also are somewhat of a caricature: there is an image of the meeting of U.S. and Russian troops, enlisting in the military following the attack on Pearl Harbor, the active women in the army, and so on. These are scenes of what could be personal memories, but they seem more iconic than personal. The memorial itself operates almost entirely through iconography. Wreaths and eagles abound, and every 100 dead are represented by a golden star. Despite the fragmented scenes at the entrance, memory here seems total. The war was fought, above all else, by a unified nation; in the memorial, any personal memories and stories of the war are eclipsed, if not entirely erased, by the "big picture."

But standing in front of the "Freedom Wall", one knows that people *are* present. The dead are here, their stars filling the wall, and those who remember them are also here: we, the visitors. Amidst the celebration of the victories of the war, the memorial leaves a space open for the commemoration of death and loss. But this is not Maya Lin's Vietnam wall. Here the memory of the dead is not a "gash in the earth," a black granite wall carved into the side of a hill. In this memorial, the dead are not so much mourned as

honored. The text etched on the stone below tells us that their death marks the price of freedom. But, who are the individuals we honor? How many of them peer at us behind each star? This, the memorial does not reveal.

The memorial is fairly terse. Not much text, except the names of the states, the famous battles, and the war front. The only sentence to be read is in front of the stars: “Here we mark the price of freedom.” It seems almost like a slogan. Freedom is the principle message here, reinforced once again by the proximity to Washington and Lincoln. We, who believe in (and die for) freedom, belong here.

Or so it seems. Not all those who care for freedom have a space within these imaginary boundaries. There is no mention of our allies or of the dead of our allies. One is also steadfastly surrounded by a space that mimics the borders of America and that marks the location of the war from an American perspective. Freedom speaks to everyone, but here it seems to be reserved for Americans. The memorial revolves around freedom, a universal value, but paradoxically, it remains quintessentially American. The representation of the political geography of America is met by an imagined geography of those who belong in America and the values they believe in.

\* \* \*

In this dissertation, I explore how monuments, like the National World War II Memorial, operate as a national practice. I am interested in the way ideas about nation and nationhood are situated in our daily lives. To do so, I have chosen to focus on *national* monuments. These are architectural and symbolic tools that speak to us in national terms

about national events, heroes, and values. But how do monuments do this? How does their design, for instance, affect the image we have of our nation? Or, alternatively, what do the activities that monuments inspire tell us about our nation and our relation to it? How, in other words, are monuments a national practice?

In the dissertation, I extend this idea further: if monuments are part of the discourse of nationalism, I want to understand how would they operate in a particular kind of nationalism—in this case, liberal nationalism. I am especially interested in liberal nationalism because it seems, on the surface, to be a contradiction in terms. Liberal nationalism is dedicated to universal liberal values but it maintains that a nation, a particularistic entity *par excellence*, is a justifiable, legitimate, and even beneficial entity. How would a monument capture these tensions? If it did so, what would this tell us about the tensions that liberal nationalism seems to have at a theoretical level?

To answer these questions, I begin the dissertation with a chapter dedicated to a theoretical analysis of liberal nationalism. I outline the main differences between liberal nationalism and ethnic nationalism, and, in more detail, I examine the ways in which liberal nationalism is indeed *liberal*. The discussion leads into a brief discussion of liberal nationalism versus cosmopolitanism and communitarianism. Throughout, the chapter seeks to highlight the tensions that are inherent in liberal nationalism.

In Chapter 2, I re-examine nationalism but from the perspective of national practices. I show what it means to think of nationalism as a set of practices and I introduce monuments as an example of these. I define the term “national monuments” as I use it in this dissertation and I discuss why monuments can indeed be considered as a national practice. Chapter 2 sets the stage for the next two chapters.

Chapters 3 and 4 discuss *how* monuments operate as a national practice. In Chapter 3, I examine the way in which monuments construct a national memory and thereby define a national community. This chapter emphasizes the way in which monuments deal with the representation of different types of memory, such as vicarious memory or the memory of absence. The discussion foreshadows some of the arguments developed in the last chapter about the possibility of *liberal* national monuments. In Chapter 4, I focus on the way in which death and dying is conceptualized in the nation. In particular, I discuss the idea of sacrifice in the nation—the way in which the death of the individual is transformed into the life of the nation. The chapter centers on the memorialization of the hero and the presence of funerary architecture and customs in national monuments. This chapter, as the one before it, sets the stage for the final, concluding chapter of the dissertation.

The final chapter explores the possibility of liberal, national monuments. Here, I bring back the tensions within liberal nationalism that I explored in Chapter 1, and I relate them to monuments. The chapter begins with a description of the illiberal tendencies of monuments and the obvious challenge this poses to a liberal polity. However, the rest of the chapter is dedicated to showing how monuments, in spite of these tendencies, can fit in a liberal polity. The chapter highlights, with the help of the discussions in Chapters 3 and 4, the ways in which monuments can be more liberal. Overall, the chapter shows not only that liberal monuments do exist and are possible, but that this suggests that liberal nationalism *can*, despite its contradictions, be practiced.

## **Chapter One / Liberal Nationalism**

At first glance, the very idea of liberal nationalism appears to be, using Levinson's language, an oxymoron. (Levinson 1995) Indeed, if one thinks of liberal nationalism primarily as a theory, one cannot escape the inherent tensions which lie at its center. It proposes to meld together particularistic values with universal ones. It simultaneously conceives of the individual as dependent on his culture for self-definition and, at the same time, as an independent and autonomous agent. Liberal nationalism, in other words, tries to reconcile two seemingly irreconcilable values: national and liberal ones.

However, if one thinks of liberal nationalism as a set of practices, it becomes clear that liberal nationalism is both possible and actual: it exists, and it is articulated in diverse spheres that touch our everyday lives as well as the foundations of liberal polities. In this study, I consider nationalism (and liberal nationalism in particular) to be a set of practices that create or sustain an image of the nation. These are practices that construct the image of the nation in a variety of realms such as architecture, politics, education, and art.

Although I discuss national practices (what they are and what they do) in more detail in Chapter 2, it is sufficient to say here that by considering nationalism as a set of practices, my approach implies that nationalism is not limited to being a theory, but rather that it is negotiated on the level of the individual and daily life. Therefore, I argue that to study

nationalism we must look at national practices. These can reveal to us which national ideas are articulated and, not least, *how* they are articulated. My dissertation focuses on one of these national practices: national monuments. As a form of national practice, they participate in the definition, maintenance, and definition of the boundaries of the nation and the meaning of national identity. They reveal to us, as I will show in Chapter 5, that although liberal nationalism may seem to be oxymoronic in theory, it can be and *is* indeed practiced.

This chapter begins with a theoretical analysis of nationalism. Through a discussion of the theoretical aspects of liberalism, it aims to highlight the inherent tensions within liberal nationalism. Here I discuss how liberal nationalism relates both to nationalism and liberalism. With respect to nationalism, liberal nationalism aims to distance itself from the exclusionary, oppressive, and authoritarian manifestations that have been associated with nationalism, especially as witnessed during the last century. However, it maintains that these profoundly illiberal tendencies are not intrinsic to nationalism, and instead it proposes that there is a “good” nationalism—a liberal one. But, as liberal as liberal nationalism proposes to be, it also keeps a distance from liberalism. As opposed to the liberal view of the individual, liberal nationalism sees the individual as having attachments, e.g., national loyalty, that are constitutive in the political sphere. These attachments are seen as beneficial rather than detrimental to liberal polities. Therefore, liberal nationalism must constantly mediate between values that seem to come to a head: universalistic-liberal values and particularistic-national values. This constant mediation is inherent to liberal nationalism.

## **I. Nationalism and modernity**

Traditionally, nationalism has been regarded as a political tool of the state. From the early writings on nationalism there has been a strong correlation between the discourse of nationalism and the nation-state. Elie Kedourie, for example, argues that to speak of nations necessarily implies that we are speaking of nation-states: nationalism defines a particular set of relations between the individual and the state. The individual's relation to the state is based on his right not only to demarcate his differences from others, whether these are natural or not, but also to make "these differences [his] first political principle." (Kedourie 1993) To give our differences primary political significance means that we expect our political structure, i.e., the state, to embody, or rather protect, these differences. Therefore, Kedourie argues that "a society of nations must be composed of nation-states, and any state which is not a nation-state has its title and its existence perpetually challenged." (Kedourie 1993, 73)

What is important about Kedourie's theory of nationalism is that it emphasizes the politicization of the national identity. Similarly, Ernest Gellner links national and political identity by examining the role of literacy in the development of nation-states. (Gellner 1983) Whereas Kedourie focuses on the way national identity becomes a primary political identity for the individual, Gellner is more interested in the way that state (or administrative) boundaries lead to the creation, or definition, of a national identity. Rather than looking at how an individual comes to feel part of a nation, Gellner looks into the changes in certain social conditions which lead to the link between a culture, a nation, and a specific political structure.

According to Gellner, modernity brought with it the need for “standardized, homogenous, centrally sustained high cultures.” (Gellner 1983, 55) Specifically, Gellner has in mind the need for a broad educational system, whereby citizens are trained to become “clerks” in the great machinery of the state. The main medium of this educational system is, according to Gellner, the medium of language. A unified language becomes crucial because “if the educational machinery is [to be] effective, its products will be, within reason, substitutable for each other, but less readily substitutable for those produced by other and rival machines.” (Gellner 1983) What occurs, then, is that the language that one speaks, or more importantly, the language in which one was educated, will determine one’s political identity. Political loyalties will be “centered on political units whose boundaries are defined by the language of an educational system.” (Gellner 1983)

However, the rise of the nation-state is not the only link between nationalism and modernity. Many theorists of nationalism have argued that the loss of religious credibility in modernity created a vacuum that was easily filled by nationalist sentiments. Nationalism seemed to return to individuals a lost sense of the sacred by moving “the central locus of the sacred ... from the religious sphere to the political sphere.” (Milosz 1992) Anthony Smith explicitly likens nationalism to “a ‘surrogate’ religion,” arguing that it helped “overcome the sense of futility engendered by the removal of any vision of an existence after death, by linking individuals to persisting communities whose generations form indissoluble links in a chain of memories and identities.” (Smith 1986) And, in the same vein, Kedourie argues that “the break-down of ... the religious community in modernity ... [led to] a growing need for a community which can take the



place of these structures.” Nationalism became, in many ways, a new civil religion. It replaced the old locus of divine authority with that of the nation and nationhood.

As a civil religion, nationalism made the image of the nation sacred. Its sanctity was strengthened by the creation of national myths. These myths offered, similar to religion, promises of salvation. (Tismaneanu 1998) The myth of immortality, for instance, ties the life of the individual with that of the nation. As I explore in Chapter 4, the memorialization of the national hero plays the role of a promise of immortality in the nation. The hero and those for whose sake he fought or in whose name he stands, i.e., the nation, are guaranteed eternal remembrance. The life span of an individual expands from the here-and-now to the eternal life of the nation. Rogers Smith also emphasizes the stories of peoplehood that define a national community. These are stories that help create a sense that one’s nation is unique and special, and they help the members of the nation “feel proud and confident about who they are and about their futures, both as individuals and as a national community.” (Smith 1997, 38) Furthermore, Smith argues that this often takes the form of an “‘ethnic myth’ of common descent” because after the loss of divine authority in modernity, “the most straightforward way to make a membership seem natural is to portray it as an expression of actual physical kinship or shared ancestry.” (Smith 2003, 66)

The ethnic myth is at the center of ethnic nationalism. Leah Greenfeld defines ethnic nationalism as the case in which ethnicity, and hence belonging to a specific nation, “is believed to be inherent—one can neither acquire it if one does not have it, nor change it if one does; it has nothing to do with individual will, but constitutes a genetic characteristic.” (Greenfeld 1992, 11) This view of the nation and national belonging is a

*primordialist* view. Ethnicity, and in general differences between groups, is seen as not only unique but as having roots in the primordial past. The nation, therefore, claims to be “so ‘natural’ as to require no definition other than self-assertion.” (Hobsbawm & Ranger 1983, 14) Ethnic nationalism has grown, in most instances, to be an illiberal nationalism, one that is known for its exclusion and persecution of minorities, at times culminating in genocide. This is particularly true of the Nazi case and more recently we have seen the bloodshed caused by the ethnic nationalisms in the Balkans. The historical events marked by ethnic nationalism have led to a rejection of nationalism as inherently dangerous both to individuals and to a healthy political life.

It is precisely in light of this critique of *ethnic* nationalism that *liberal* nationalism has found its voice. Liberal nationalism joins the rejection of ethnic nationalism as dangerous to our political, and possibly also cultural, life. But rather than reject nationalism altogether, it proposes a third way: there is a “good” nationalism (a *liberal* nationalism)—one that can both guard against the dangers of ethnic nationalism and, at the same time, provide a sense of belonging and loyalty, and offer protection of one’s cultural community. In short, liberal nationalism offers an argument for the legitimacy and justification of the nation and national belonging in a world shaped by the horrors of virulent nationalism.

## **II. What is liberal nationalism?**

One of the first distinctions to be made between ethnic and liberal nationalism is that, whereas ethnic nationalism claims that the nation is natural, liberal nationalism claims that the nation is a social construction. Gellner argues that nationalism does not, as

nationalists claim, awaken the nation from a long slumber, but rather that nationalism “invents nations where they do not exist.” (Gellner 1964, 168) A nation is invented by creating myths about the origin of the nation, its defining characteristics, and its destiny. Though the myths need “some pre-existing differentiating marks to work on,” they are nonetheless manipulated by “social engineering which [is] often deliberate.” (Gellner 1964, 168, Hobsbawm & Ranger 1983, 13) This has led thinkers like Ernest Renan to claim that “to forget and—I will venture to say—to get one’s history wrong are essential factors in the making of a nation.” (Renan 1994) The nation is a social construction also in the sense that it is an *imagined* community. Benedict Anderson argues that a nation is imagined because “the members of even the smallest nations will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives an image of their community.” (Anderson 1991, 6) This means that members of the nation are tied through a common imagination of the nation and their membership in it. It is this shared imagination of the nation that constitutes the heart of nationalism.

In liberal nationalism there is a conscious acknowledgment of the nation as a social construction (something that is missing from ethnic nationalist discourse). But the idea that nations are socially constructed does not mean that nations do not *actually* exist. Rather, “at most what can be denied is that they exist (and have existed) in the terms claimed by nationalists.”<sup>1</sup> (Archard 2000, 161) The myths that surround the nation should be understood as necessary tools in creating and sustaining a sense of belonging—a sense that for liberal nationalism is beneficial rather than destructive. Therefore, David Miller

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<sup>1</sup> David Archard goes on to say: “No one should dispute that groups of human beings are bound together, and distinguished from others, by a real sense of common nationality. That is indisputable, even if the basis of the sentiment can be shown to be dubious.”

points to two important purposes of national myths: First, “they provide reassurance that the national community of which one now forms part is solidly based in history, that it embodies a real continuity between generations.” And second, “they perform a moralizing role, by holding up before us the virtues of our ancestors and encouraging us to live up to them.” (Miller 1995, 36) For liberal nationalism, the social construction of nations does not amount to a dismissal of nationalism at large. Rather, it pushes its scholars to ask a different set of questions, such as the way in which nationhood is institutionalized, the power of nationhood as an identity category, the resonance of this category in social movements, etc. (Brubaker 1996, 16)

The distinction between viewing the nation as either natural or an invention can also be interpreted “as a tug of war between reason and passion.” (Gellner 1964, 146) Because ethnic nationalism requires no other justification for its indigenous roots than the fact that they are *ours*, the politics in such a nationalism becomes a “fight for principle,” rather than an “endless composition of claims in conflict.” (Kedourie 1993, 18) In ethnic nationalism, the existence of the nation is never debated and the claims of others to the same indigenous roots (e.g., language, territory, or race) are not negotiable. Politics in this context is therefore accompanied by strictly emotional responses which are divorced from critical deliberation.

The most common emotions associated with ethnic nationalism are those of humiliation, marginality, and resentment. Isaiah Berlin argues that a defining characteristic of nationalism is that it results from “some form of collective humiliation.” (Berlin 1990, 245) The oppression and denigration of a people leads to the creation of nationalism because it will necessarily result in a reaction like that of a bent twig, “forced

down so severely that when released, it lashes back with fury.” (Berlin quoted in Gardels 1991, 19) Borrowing from Nietzsche, Greenfeld describes this “backlash” as *ressentiment*, which she defines as the “selection out of [one’s] own indigenous traditions of elements hostile to those of [the oppressing nation] and their deliberate cultivation.” (Greenfeld 1992, 16) The emphasis on indigenous traditions provides “emotional nourishment” to a nation that sees itself humiliated or under attack. (Greenfeld 1992, 16)

Liberal nationalism, which by and large distances itself from ethnic nationalism, agrees with ethnic nationalism on this point: that emotions are not only an integral part of nationalism but that they are neither regrettable nor unimportant. However, liberal nationalism tends to emphasize another set of emotions, such as dignity and self-respect, which are not intended to deny the role of humiliation and resentment in nationalism but rather to complement them. Liberal nationalism sees, in Miller’s words, “nationality as an essential part of our identity.” (Miller 1995, 10) This means that “the self-image of individuals is highly affected by the status of their national community.” (Tamir 1993, 73) Therefore, in order to preserve individual dignity and self-respect, liberal nationalism assumes a need for nations to be “generally respected and not be made a subject of ridicule, hatred, discrimination, or persecution.” (Margalit & Raz 1990, 449) Liberal nationalism emphasizes the importance of dignity on two levels: first, at the national level: the nation must have “a safe, dignified, and flourishing ... existence [in order to] significantly contribute to [individuals’] well-being.” (Tamir 1993, 73) And second, at the individual level: the “demand of recognition of [individuals’] dignity as human beings” must be recognized and respected in any national endeavor. (Berlin 1990, 257)

Recognizing the role of dignity in nationalism does not, however, preclude the existence of debate in liberal nationalism. National memberships to which one ties one's well-being and self-respect "are not beyond choice" or deliberation. (Tamir 1993, 7) Because liberal nationalism does not see the nation and national identity as natural, but as a social construction, the members of the nation are expected not only to help preserve the national culture but also to constantly participate in negotiations over its meaning and boundaries. This obligation mirrors Ernest Renan's definition of nationalism as "a daily vote of the people": *un plebiscite de tous les jours*. (Renan 1994, 17) Here the nation is interpreted as, first of all, being in the hands of the people. Neither the state, a divine entity, nor history are responsible for its creation and maintenance. And, secondly, the nation is not seen as static, as an entity that was created in a singular event in the past. Rather, the nation claims its legitimacy from an ongoing deliberation among its members about the nature and meaning of the nation's boundaries.

Liberal nationalism, like liberalism, emphasizes the autonomy of the individual. The individual should be able "to make as many effective decisions without fear or favor about as many aspects of her or his life as is compatible with the freedom of every other adult." (Shklar 1989, 21) To be free to make one's choices means that in a liberal society, there will be room for "different experiments of living."<sup>2</sup> (Mill 1978, 55) The nation does not have to endorse, or even support, those experiments of living, but if it respects the autonomy of the individual, it will let its citizens choose how they should live their lives. As Jürgen Habermas argues, "the legally guaranteed freedom of choice of private legal

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<sup>2</sup> Mill goes on to argue that pluralism goes to the heart of what makes us human, because "he who lets the world, or his own portion of it, choose his plan of life for him, has no need of any other faculty than the ape-like one of imitation." (Mill 1978, 56)

subjects creates the free space for pursuing a plan of life informed by one's own conception of the good." (Habermas 1998, 100)

The variety of experiments of living in liberal nationalism is framed by a common belonging to the nation. However, the boundaries and "the nature of the national culture" are far from fixed. (Tamir 1993, 89) There is room, in other words, for a variety of experiments about the meaning and breadth of the national identity. So, for example, Miller argues that "recognizing one's French identity still leaves a great deal open as to the *kind* of Frenchman or Frenchwoman one is going to be." (Miller 1995, 45) Liberal nationalism requires internal debate because it is only through self-reflection that national identity can be legitimately argued to be a matter of individual choice. Choice is important in liberal nationalism because it brings with it individual liberty and autonomy—something which is absent from ethnic nationalism.

The importance of individual liberty and autonomy in liberal nationalism has much to do with its conception of the individual. In ethnic nationalism, the individual is understood as fundamentally a member of a group. One's identity is fundamentally tied to that of the group in the sense that "it sees social roles and affiliations as inherent, as a matter of fate rather than of choice." (Tamir 1993, 20) Therefore, the history of the nation becomes intimately linked to that of the person and even though the life of an individual is finite, he will nonetheless identify himself with a national history that appears to loom "out of immemorial past, and, still more important, glide into a limitless future." (Anderson 1991, 19) For this reason, in ethnic nationalism the individual takes on the fate of the nation (whether glorious or victimized) as though it was his very own. The particular life of an individual becomes submerged by the collective life of the nation.

In liberal nationalism, the individual is seen neither as solely a member of a group nor an isolated individual, but rather as both. There is a conscious effort to find a “midway position able to encompass the nationalist belief that individuals are the inevitable products of their culture, as well as the liberal conviction that individuals can be the authors of their own lives.” (Tamir 1993, 13) Liberal nationalism, therefore, argues that one should simultaneously understand the individual as living within a cultural context, from which he derives his moral and national identity, and at the same time accepts that this “contextuality need not preclude choice.” (Tamir 1993, 33) In other words, cultural contextuality is said to co-exist with individual autonomy. For liberal nationalism, it is central to the conceptualization of the individual that these two aspects of the individual are seen to be in co-existence. A liberal such as John Rawls does not deny this cultural contextuality: we may have attachments that we cannot give up, even constitutive attachments. However, he argues that attachments that we are not willing to give up, even in his original position—such as national belonging—have no place in a well-ordered society. For a liberal society to be at all possible, according to Rawls, it is necessary to have reasonable pluralism rather than pluralism as such. That is, in liberal society it is possible for the citizens to have irreconcilable comprehensive doctrines as long as those doctrines are also reasonable. (Rawls 1996, 36-8)

As for the individual, liberal nationalism, like liberalism, argues that one must have “will, choice, reflection and evaluation” in one’s life plan if one is to claim true autonomy. (Tamir 1993, 20) However, what distinguishes liberal nationalism from liberalism is that liberal nationalism argues that these choices and reflections not only can, but *necessarily* must occur within a social context. For example, a liberal like



Stephen Holmes does not believe that liberalism fits comfortably within a national context; rather, he sees it as universalistic: “In principle, basic liberal rights should be extended charitably across all national borders. . . . As a universalistic or cosmopolitan doctrine, liberalism is wholly unable to draw territorial boundaries or separate insiders from outsiders in a principled way.” (Holmes 1995, 39) However, according to Avishai Margalit and Joseph Raz, national belonging “shapes to a large degree [individuals’] tastes and opportunities.” (Margalit & Raz 1990, 448) In this sense, being a social animal cannot be reduced to a game of means and ends in which society is no more than a vehicle to satisfy individuals’ goals. Rather, being a social animal in the sense used by liberal nationalism means that “those goals themselves are the creatures of society, the products of culture.” (Margalit & Raz 1990, 448)

Because cultural context frames the choices made by individuals, it is impossible to separate these choices from the social context in which they are created. A defense of individuals’ right to choose must therefore recognize that the choice is bounded by the culture. However, Yael Tamir is careful to note that “liberal nationalism does not claim that individuals can find true freedom and expression only through complete identification with the community.” (Tamir 1993, 84) Rather, liberal nationalism only makes the assumption that individuals can lead a more meaningful life in a cultural context. For Tamir, understanding life within a social context is more meaningful because “it conceptualizes human actions, no matter how mundane making them part of a continuous creative effort whereby culture is made and remade.” (Tamir 1993, 85) By being part of a nation, our actions take a personal and national relevance. For Isaiah Berlin, on the other hand, a contextualized life is meaningful because of the ease it

creates for individuals to communicate with others. Loneliness, he says, “is not just the absence of others but far more a matter of living among people who do not understand what you are saying: They can truly understand only if they belong to a community where communication is effortless, almost instinctive.” (Gardels 1991, 21) Communal life allows for human relationships that are more conducive to mutual understanding while at the same time communal life is the context within which we frame our individual goals and values.

### **III. Liberal nationalism and the self-governing individual**

Liberal nationalism argues that our ability to have individual “will, choice, reflection and evaluation” depends on the presence of society itself. Only by being part of society can we determine “the boundaries of the imaginable” and “the limits of the feasible.” (Margalit & Raz 1990, 449) To talk about individual choice becomes meaningless without a social context in which to understand those choices. Culture does not so much limit our choices as enable them. Therefore, if one is interested in an individual’s ability to exercise choice, one must be equally interested in protecting the cultural context within which the individual frames and exercises his choices. Liberal nationalism is as much concerned with the preservation of cultures, in so far as they contextualize the individual, as it is with the protection and promotion of an individual’s ability to make meaningful choices within those cultures.

Maintaining a plurality of cultures, in which a variety of individuals are situated, becomes closely connected with a concern for individual autonomy—the right to choose. In order to allow for all people to “make cultural choices” there is a need to create a

“world where the plurality of cultures is protected.” (Tamir 1993, 30) Only by guaranteeing the existence of different cultures, which enable individuals to make a variety of choices, can liberal nationalism claim that individual autonomy is being protected. In order to protect that autonomy, it is important that members of a liberal nation, in particular members of minority groups, should be able to challenge public decisions and policies that harm them without at the same time challenging the legitimacy of the institutions that made them. Ronald Dworkin thinks that this can be accomplished with “a scheme of civil rights, whose effect will be to determine those political decisions that are antecedently likely to reflect strong external preferences, and to remove those decisions from majoritarian political institutions altogether.” (Dworkin 1978, 134) This removal is necessary if the liberal state is to remain neutral between conceptions of the good.

However, whether liberal nationalism ultimately prefers autonomy over diversity, that is, that it sees diversity as no more than a vehicle to get at individual autonomy, is not clear. William Galston argues that this ambiguity is representative of a tension which exists in liberalism regarding these two concepts. (Galston 1995) Galston claims that Will Kymlicka, in his book *Liberalism, Community, and Culture*, is worried about cultural diversity only because he is ultimately interested in the protection of choice. This, Galston argues, is problematic on two accounts: first, because Kymlicka, and other like-minded theorists of liberal nationalism, would have to reckon with groups who do not value choice and who nonetheless deserve to exist, by Galston’s standard, for the sake of diversity. And, second, because if indeed liberal nationalism would deny such groups a right to exist, it would lead to the inevitable conclusion that “in the guise of protecting the

capacity for diversity, the autonomy principle in fact represents a kind of uniformity that exerts pressure on ways of life that do not embrace diversity.” (Galston 1995, 523) This, for Galston, would be profoundly illiberal. Therefore, if liberal nationalism wants to uphold its claim that it is trying to place “national thinking within the boundaries of liberalism without losing sight of either,” it must be watchful of the emphasis it puts on either diversity or autonomy. (Tamir 1993, 12)

Whether liberal nationalism opts to emphasize diversity for its own sake or not, it is nonetheless clear that liberal nationalism makes a strong connection between the individual and the cultural group, specifically, the nation. More importantly, liberal nationalism claims that this connection implies that a concern for the individual must be matched with a concern for the nation. That is, to defend the value of the nation is nothing more than to defend the individual himself. Yet, liberal nationalism goes one step further. Not only is the nation beneficial for the individual but the nation is also beneficial for politics. This claim derives from the assumption that “ties of community are an important source of trust between individuals ... A shared identity carries with it a shared loyalty, and this increases confidence that others will reciprocate one’s own co-operative behavior.” (Miller 1995, 92) In other words, trust and willingness to work with others, created by a national identity, engenders a greater facility for deliberation and social cooperation in a polity.<sup>3</sup>

But, Miller is not the first to point out the benefit, if not necessity, of national identity to politics. John Stuart Mill saw nationality as a “principle of sympathy,” a

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<sup>3</sup> Miller argues that, in particular, states should require citizens to “trust one another if they are to function effectively as democracies; in particular if they are guided by the ideal of *deliberative* democracy.” (Miller 1995, 96)

“feeling of common interest,” that was essential for good politics, that is, politics that promote freedom. In his often quoted statement from *Consideration on Representative Government* that “free institutions are next to impossible in a country made up of different nationalities,” Mill makes the claim that a polity that is interested in promoting freedom must also promote national cohesion. (Mill 1975) National cohesion provides a sense of solidarity that opens up the possibility for citizens to “respect one another’s good faith in searching for grounds of agreement.”<sup>4</sup> (Miller 1995, 98) In a similar vein, Alexis de Tocqueville wrote favorably of American patriotism and noted it as one of the virtues, rather than dangers, of American democracy. Tocqueville argued that in the United States one finds a patriotism that is “more rational,” drawing its strength from the fact that it is “mingled with personal interest.” (Tocqueville 1988, 235) Tocqueville admired this type of patriotism because it led each citizen to “see the public fortune as his own.” (Tocqueville 1988, 237) For him, such a sentiment meant that an individual had a stake in the well-being of society and this would in turn encourage citizen participation in the polity. Though Tocqueville and Mill later disagreed with each other regarding the type of patriotism each was defending (Mill claimed Tocqueville glorified a national sentiment based on “pride” rather than “interest”), both these thinkers saw the existence of a national sentiment to be crucial for a society that was interested in the promotion of individual liberty and self-rule.

The argument that national identity is good for politics serves as the basis for one of liberal nationalism’s most important tenets: the right to national self-determination.

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<sup>4</sup> For an excellent account of Mill’s writings on nationality see (Varouxakis 2002)

This right comes from a liberal concern with self-government and the idea that an individual can only be free if he has control over his own life. Any imposition on that control, whether by a king, a state or another individual, denotes a loss of freedom. Therefore, it is not surprising to find Mill defining the word “nationality” in terms of self-government: “a portion of mankind may be said to constitute a nationality if they ... desire to be under the same government, and desire that it should be a government by themselves or a portion of themselves, exclusively.” (Mill 1975) Similarly, Greenfeld finds the meaning of the word “nation” to be linked to sovereignty. She traces the changing meaning of the word from “group of foreigners” to “a community of opinion,” “an elite,” “a sovereign people,” and finally to “a *unique* sovereign people.” (Greenfeld 1992, 9) What is important about this transformation is that the final evolution of “nation” to mean a particularistic (unique) sovereignty co-exists with its previous non-particularistic sovereign meaning. This is important to Greenfeld’s argument because she argues that it has led to two competing and “dissimilar interpretations of popular sovereignty.” (Greenfeld 1992, 11) One interpretation of popular sovereignty is that people are sovereign insofar as their nation—understood as a “collective individual”—is sovereign. This is a “collectivistic-authoritarian nationalism” that values the sovereignty of the collective over that of the individual. The second interpretation is that of liberal nationalism. Here popular sovereignty means that the nation is sovereign only insofar as there is “actual sovereignty of individuals.” (Greenfeld 1992, 11) This is termed by Greenfeld an “individualistic-libertarian nationalism” because national sovereignty ultimately relies on *individuals* actually governing themselves—which does not mean that each minority *group* has a right to its own state.

However, the right to national self-determination stands in opposition to classical liberalism because it claims that individuals have a right to govern themselves not only as individuals but also as members in a group. The defense of national self-determination is a consequence of the way in which liberal nationalism conceptualizes the individual. Because national liberalism links the well-being of the individual with that of the group, the well-being of the group must be protected. This implies that “group interests cannot be reduced to individual interests” and that the group, *qua* group and not simply as an aggregation of individuals, deserves rights of its own. (Margalit & Raz 1990, 449) The right to national self-determination is a right that aims to protect the well-being of the nation for the sake of the individuals who are members in it. Therefore, the right must be understood on two levels: national and individual.

On the national level, the right to national self-determination entails “the right to a public sphere.” (Tamir 1993, 8) The public sphere is where a community can express that which ties it together, that is, community life requires a space where individuals “can share a language, memorize their past, cherish their heroes” and, generally, live a fulfilling national life. (Tamir 1993, 8) The public sphere is central to the right to national self-determination because the expression of one’s membership in the nation, that which gives its meaning, can only take place “in the open, public life of the community.” (Margalit & Raz 1990, 451) It is only by guaranteeing this space for national life that there can be said to be an honest effort in the “preservation of a nation as vital and active community.” (Tamir 1993, 73)

The existence of a public sphere in which national life can actually take place— with shared language, memory, ceremony, etc.—implies a corollary right to political

institutions. Liberal nationalism interprets this right in two different ways. First, the right to political institutions requires that these institutions are seen as “representing a particular culture and as carriers of the national identity.” (Habermas 1998, Tamir 1993, 74) This is achieved by creating public institutions that reflect the history, the culture, and the language of the nation. Only by having this representation can members of the nation consider these institutions to be their own. Second, the right to political institutions means that members of the nation should have access to the political sphere. In the liberal view, these political rights, according to Habermas,

afford citizens the opportunity to assert their private interests in such a way that, by means of elections, the composition of parliamentary bodies, and the formation of a government, these interests are finally aggregated into a political will that can affect the administration. In this way the citizens in their political role can determine whether governmental authority is exercised in the interest of the citizens as members of society. (Habermas 1998, 240-41)

From the liberal nationalist perspective, these are rights that allow members of the nation to participate “in the political life of their state, and [fight] in the name of group interest in the political arena.” (Margalit & Raz 1990, 452) In this sense, the right to political institutions is a right to political participation.

In order to effectively exercise the right to political institutions, there is an implicit need for as little external interference as possible. However, according to liberal nationalism, this need does not necessarily imply that the members of the nation should be granted autonomy and the right to establish their own sovereign nation-state. The demand for sovereignty is not necessarily part of the right to political institutions, nor part of the larger right to national self-determination. Rather, the degree to which autonomy is desirable must “take into account that all nations are equally entitled to it.”



(Tamir 1993, 74) Therefore in order to avoid inequalities, liberal nationalism emphasizes the variety of political arrangements that can be established to satisfy the right to national self-determination without necessarily granting a nation a sovereign nation-state. For example, Tamir suggests “the establishment of national institutions, the formation of autonomous communities, or the establishment of federal or confederal states.” Margalit and Raz point to “multinational states, in which members of the different communities compete in the political arena for public resources for their community.” (Margalit & Raz 1990) All these solutions are meant to grant nations the right to self-determination while at the same time avoiding dogmatism by being sensitive to the particular conditions of each case.

However, the arguments in favor of the right to national self-determination should not lose sight of the fact that ultimately this is a right that belongs to individuals. Because the membership of individuals in a nation constitutes, according to liberal nationalism, an important aspect of their identity, the justification for the right to national self-determination is in essence based on a concern for the protection of this individual identity. This means that in order to preserve their *national* identity, *individuals* must be given the opportunity to express this identity, both privately and publicly. This is the sense by which the right to national self-determination should be understood at an individual level. For liberal nationalism, it is only insofar as the nation is valuable to individuals that there is any “moral importance” to protecting the group’s interest. (Margalit & Raz 1990, 450) In other words, “the right to national self-determination should be seen as an individual right.” (Tamir 1993, 73)

#### **IV. Liberal nationalism and cosmopolitanism**

In addition to its dialogue with both nationalism and liberalism, liberal nationalism is also in a debate with cosmopolitanism. Precisely because liberal nationalism tries to rescue nationalism from the bad reputation it has received during the history of the 20th century, cosmopolitanism is eager to show that liberal nationalism is no better than the old (or “bad”) nationalism, and, contrary to the claim that liberal nationalism is a *liberal* theory, cosmopolitans find liberal nationalism to be just the opposite.

The cosmopolitan critique of liberal nationalism can be divided into two central arguments. The first concerns what Salman Rushdie calls the “mongrel self.” (Waldron 1995, 94) Cosmopolitans do not, by and large, challenge the liberal nationalist notion that we have cultural attachments that create and shape our choices and identity. In fact, cosmopolitanism takes our cultural identities very seriously—more seriously, it argues, than liberal nationalism does. What is challenged in the cosmopolitan view is that the existence of a cultural contextualization of our choices does not mean that we “need any *single* context to structure all our choices.” (Waldron 1995, 108, emphasis added) Rather, the cosmopolitan self draws meaning for its choices from a variety of cultural contexts. In other words, contextuality can be fragmented and diverse.

By upholding the multiple sources of identity, cosmopolitanism leaves liberal nationalism with the challenge of knowing precisely which culture constitutes the individual, and therefore, which culture must be protected in order to secure the well-being of the individual. Whereas liberal nationalism tries to draw cultural boundaries around the individual, cosmopolitanism aims at disrupting them. Cosmopolitanism stresses boundary-crossing because it sees this as the only honest defense of diversity. To

put any kind of boundary would mean some sort of exclusion, and this is precisely what cosmopolitanism thinks is dangerous with liberal nationalism.<sup>5</sup>

The second argument of cosmopolitanism concerns what I call the “universal, cosmopolitan spirit.” Cosmopolitanism argues that there are some universal values that everyone, regardless of their cultural background, should (or do) believe in. Judith Lichtenberg argues that one of the problems of liberal nationalism is that while it “promotes diverse national sentiments and ideas within a state” it is unable to answer the question “whether members of different cultures will have enough in common to bind them into one society.” (Lichtenberg 1990, 68) For Lichtenberg this question of social unity is important because she suspects that lacking a shared sense, various national groups within a society will not only be at odds with each other, but may also experience actual conflict. Therefore, she argues that to avoid this social disunity there should be a “glue that binds us” specifically, the recognition that “we are all human beings.” (Lichtenberg 1990, 69) Martha Nussbaum modifies this somewhat, seeing “reason and the love of humanity” as common to all human beings. (Nussbaum 2002, 15) Lichtenberg’s “glue” translates into a commitment among all people that “recognizes our *undifference*,” that is, it accepts both our difference and equality. (Lichtenberg 1990, 69) The mutual recognition of our humanity is part of the effort to recognize diversity and avoid the trait in liberal nationalism of protecting one culture at the expense of others.

The “glue” that Lichtenberg writes about is echoed in Jeremy Waldron’s article “Minority Cultures and the Cosmopolitan Alternative.” Here Waldron argues that liberal

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<sup>5</sup> For a response to the cosmopolitan critique of liberal nationalism see, for example, (Taras 2002, 203-5)

nationalism fails to appreciate the existence of a cosmopolitan spirit that is committed to the protection of cultures in a way that is very similar to that of liberal nationalism. Because liberal nationalism is concerned with protecting boundaries around minority cultures, it loses sight of the fact that there are a “large number of men and women who are prepared to devote themselves to issues of human and communal values *in general*.” (Waldron 1995, 104, emphasis in original) Similarly, Nussbaum warns that “by conceding that a morally arbitrary boundary such as the boundary of the nation has a deep and formative role in our deliberations, we seem to deprive ourselves of any principled way of persuading citizens they should in fact join hands across these other barriers.” (Nussbaum 2002, 14) Neither Nussbaum nor Waldron are interested in contesting the fact that people have “their own particular heritage” and that this should be protected. (Waldron 1995) However, they are contesting the denial by liberal nationalism that this precludes the existence of a cosmopolitan spirit that can help promote these particular heritages.

Furthermore, Waldron is also concerned that liberal nationalism overlooks the value and benefit of international institutions. He argues that similar to the way “individuals need communal structures in order to develop and exercise the capacities that their rights protect, so minority communities need larger political and international structures to protect and to sustain the cultural goods that they pursue.” (Waldron 1995, 104) In a similar vein, Kymlicka also remarks that minority nationalism would benefit from increased attention to the way international institutions “exercise an increasing influence over our lives.” (Kymlicka & Straehle 1999, 79) International institutions cross national and state borders and represent a universal concern for the protection of cultural

minorities—a concern that is not unique to liberal nationalism, International institutions should therefore be considered relevant and valuable in any discussion about the protection and promotion of cultural groups.

## **V. Liberal nationalism and communitarianism**

Although liberal nationalism has entered into a debate with cosmopolitanism, the relation between liberal nationalism and communitarianism has not been as readily debated. Communitarians share liberal nationalists' suspicion that the liberal individual is too decontextualized. Michael Sandel, for example, claims that the liberal individual is a disembodied self, a self unencumbered by attachments and by the specifics of the local context. This means that the liberal individual is not shaped by experience:

No commitment could grip me so deeply that I could not understand myself without it. No transformation of life purposes and plans could be so unsettling as to disrupt the contours of my identity. No project could be so essential that turning away from it would call into question the person I am. (Sandel 1982, 62)

Likewise, Benjamin Barber criticizes the liberal emphasis on autonomy as being isolating. This is how he describes the liberal individual: “We are born into the world solitary strangers, live our lives as wary aliens, and die in fearful isolation.” (Barber 1984, 68) Both liberal nationalism and communitarianism argue against liberalism by stressing the view that an individual's identity is properly conceived as formed by constitutive attachments to community and culture. Thus, understanding the “nation” as a type of “community” can easily lead to a smooth reconciliation between the communitarian emphasis on community and the defense of the nation by liberal nationalism. Given the strong similarity between these two critiques of liberalism, is there a difference between liberal nationalism and communitarianism?

In his article “Should Communitarians Be Nationalists,” John O’Neill argues that communitarians should not consider the nation a community and should, therefore, distance themselves from nationalists. According to O’Neill the modern state was “responsible for centralizing power that was previously diffused—empire, church, prince, lord, city and guild had distinct powers over an individual.” (O’Neill 1994, 137) The nation-state, therefore, “demands of its citizens loyalty that overrides all others.” (O’Neill 1994, 137) O’Neill is particularly critical of the view that the nation can be considered a community at all. He argues that the idea of a coherent national culture is a myth because no modern nation actually has a coherent ethnic and cultural identity. Rather, nationalism has had to go out of its way to create a coherence and to “suppress the differences within a nation.” (O’Neill 1994, 141) Though he does not argue this directly, O’Neill is also implying that the “centrifugal force inherent within nationalism that each ‘ethnic and cultural group’ within existing nations deserves its own nation” means that nationalism can only deal with difference by allotting it an independent realm. In other words, nationalism does not acknowledge real difference; the only tool it has to do so is to apply the principle of the right to self-determination to smaller and smaller homogeneous sub-groups within the nation *ad infinitum*, thus retaining its original position that nations (or sub-nations) need to be internally cohesive. Liberal nationalism does not embrace diversity as much as it compartmentalizes it. However, for Tamir, the problem of minorities in the liberal nation is of a different nature. Rather than a concern for the internal cohesion of minorities, she argues that although minorities in a liberal nation will have “a wide range of rights and liberties and distribute goods and official positions fairly... [they] will unavoidably feel alienated to some extent.” But, she argues, “the

openness of the political culture and the readiness to compensate culturally disadvantaged members of minority groups may lessen the hardship faced by cultural minorities.” Tamir acknowledges that “this tension is endogenous to any liberal national entity and *cannot be resolved.*” (Tamir 1993, 163, emphasis added)

For communitarians, the rise of the nation is largely responsible for the processes of monopolization of power and the suppression of difference that has left the individual isolated, lacking local loyalties and cultures, i.e., using Sandel’s term, an unencumbered self. On this basis, O’Neill argues that it is a mistake for communitarians to align themselves with the nationalist defense of the nation, because “if communitarianism is to be understood as a form of social criticism that is aimed at the disappearance of community in modern society, then nationhood and nationalism should be amongst its targets.” (O’Neill 1994, 141) The inability of the nation to work as a real and meaningful community means that communitarianism is not only different from liberal nationalism but that it stands in opposition to it.

O’Neill’s critique of the relation between communitarianism and liberal nationalism depends on the main claim that the nation is not a community. However, the extent to which a nation is a community goes back to the theory of liberal nationalism itself. From the standpoint of liberal nationalism, the nation cannot help but be a community, albeit an imagined one. Anderson’s description of the nation as an imagined community is not an accusation of the nation as being a “false” community. Rather, the term “imagined community” serves as a distinction between “real” communities where there is actual physical interaction among people, and “imagined” communities where such contact is impossible due to its large size but in which the sense of belonging exists

nonetheless. (Archard 1996) Therefore, according to Archard, “any nation whose members consider themselves to be a nation is a genuine community.” (Archard 1996, 218) But this argument does not make the relation between communitarianism and liberal nationalism irrelevant. Rather, Archard claims that the real question nationalists should address is not whether nations are real communities, but rather they should examine “what sort of status [nations] are to have as communities.” (Archard 1996, 219) In a world that is increasingly globalized there is no longer a need to restrict the existence of the nation to the state level, but instead focus on its significance as a community. Following Kymlicka, Archard argues that the value of the nation as a community should be questioned in terms of its worth in providing a meaningful identity, a cultural resource and in contextualizing our lives and choices. (Archard 1996, Kymlicka 1989)

## **Conclusion**

By virtue of trying to bridge between two seemingly irreconcilable values, liberal nationalism is in constant dialogue with nationalism and liberalism. It espouses liberal values which are universal because *everyone* is entitled to them regardless of cultural, racial, or geographical background. This means that within liberal nationalism there is an aspiration to some kind of universality whereby one’s identity and political choices depend on one’s ability to reason and, as Nussbaum terms it, to seek the pursuit of justice and the good. However, these universal values must sit with national-particularistic values which situate the individual in a particular cultural context. These values emphasize the importance of belonging to a group, i.e., the nation, and the importance of



this belonging for political life. For liberal nationalism a healthy political life depends, in fact, on our protecting our cultural or national background.

Naturally, liberal nationalism has many voices which can be, at times, in tension with one another. On the one hand, Tamir believes that a liberal nation will have necessarily one dominant national group whose cultural values will have more representation in the political structures (e.g., the Jewish population in Israel). On the other hand, someone like Kymlicka increasingly emphasizes the idea of cultural federalism in the nation where no one group dominates over the others. However, in this chapter I have sought to describe liberal nationalism in broad strokes, avoiding the finer distinctions *within* theories of liberal nationalism. I have done so in order to emphasize the inherent tensions of liberal nationalism, i.e., national versus liberal values, which are shared by all theorists of liberal nationalism. Liberal nationalism must walk the fine line between arguing that national sentiments (and the nation-state) are still legitimate and defensible in today's world, and avoiding the dangers that nationalism is known for.

In the chapter that follows, I reconsider nationalism not as merely a theory, but as a set of practices. My discussion turns from theoretical analysis of the values espoused by liberal nationalism to an analysis of national practices, specifically national monuments. The next chapter, as well as the rest of the dissertation, focuses on the idea that nationalism is a situated practice. This means that to understand nationalism, and by extension liberal nationalism, we must not look only at the theoretical arguments in its defense (or against it), but rather look to its manifestations in our daily life. It is in the practice of daily life that we can see *how* nationalism operates. Such an analysis can show

that problems that nationalism may face on a theoretical level, such as the tensions within liberal nationalism, find a whole host of solutions when it takes form on the ground.

## Chapter Two / National Monuments

Nationalism is sustained by a set of practices that together construct the idea of a nation. Far from being an idea that exists apart from the material world, nationalism is embodied in the everyday life of individuals. From political and economic policies to aesthetics in art, music, and literature, nationalism finds expression in a range of activities that affect the individual in an immediate and real way. Through these practices the idea of a nation is continuously created and reproduced. The practices create imaginative ties, in the sense proposed by Benedict Anderson, that bind people into a community and which define the boundaries of the nation, its characteristics as well as its relation to the individual. Together, these practices comprise a national narrative, or alternatively, they are the substance of nationalism.

This chapter explores the ways in which nationalism can indeed be considered a set of practices. It serves, more specifically, as an introduction to the study of national monuments as a vehicle for a study of liberal nationalism. It argues that national monuments are an example of a national practice in the built environment and that, as such, national monuments are appropriate grounds for exploring the intersection between space and nationalism and, more specifically, between space and *liberal* nationalism. It further argues that national monuments produce meaning and are capable of embodying a

particular image or interpretation of the nation. In Chapters 3 and 4, I analyze *how* monuments do so—I explore this question by focusing on the politics of memory and death—while here I provide a general discussion of what monuments *do* and I make explicit what I mean by the term “national monuments.”

## **I. Nationalism as a collection of practices**

National practices produce national meaning. They include all those activities that contribute to the construction of the “nation.” National practices are considered a category of cultural practices, to use William Sewell’s language, in the sense that they are part of a dialectical relation between a system of symbols (a semiotic code) and the practical activities that reproduce them. (Sewell 2005) National practices produce a distinctly *national* meaning by using the symbols available to them and by interpreting them through a national lens. More specifically, national practices are elements that contribute to our understanding of what the nation is, how it is defined, and who belongs to it. They produce what is often referred to as the national narrative or discourse. Like other cultural practices, national practices cut across spatial, political, educational, and aesthetic dimensions. They are present in the buildings we construct, in the social policies we support, in the music we compose, in the history we learn at school, etc. They permeate, to borrow from Pierre Bourdieu, our *habitus*. (Bourdieu 1992)

Along these lines Rogers Brubaker argues that the nation should be seen as a category of practice rather than a category of analysis. (Brubaker 1996) He sees the idea of “nation” as *arising* from a series of practices and not, as it is usually seen, as *engendering* them. In this view, the “nation” as such does not exist; what exists are the

practices that give rise to it. Brubaker argues that “nationalism is not engendered by nations” but rather that “it is produced—or better, it is induced—by *political fields*.”<sup>1</sup> By *political fields* Brubaker means the diverse locations where national meaning, i.e., the construction of the nation, is contested, produced and challenged. By this account, the study of nationalism will turn away from asking the routine question: “What is the nation?” and instead ask “How is a nation *practiced*?” The analysis will look into the different modes and conditions by which the “nation” affects our perception of the past and future, our relation to others, and our sense of self. The study of nation and nationalism will, in other words, investigate the political fields of nationalism, or rather, the set of national practices that produce the “nation.”

National practices take a variety of forms and in this work I focus on one of them: national monuments. National monuments are a national practice because they produce meaning for the nation. Through their design and location, as well as the debates and competitions that precede their construction, national monuments, like other forms of national practices, participate in the construction of the “nation.” However, as opposed to other national practices—which may include educational curricula, language policies, or political rhetoric—national monuments reveal a particular mode of producing meaning that is anchored in space. The configuration of space, both of the monument itself and of its surroundings, serve as a medium through which national meaning is constructed and

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<sup>1</sup> This is reminiscent of Ernest Gellner’s view that “nationalism engenders nations.” (Gellner 1983, 55)

reproduced. Therefore, the role of space in the production of meaning becomes central to a study of national monuments as a form of national practice.<sup>2</sup>

By this account, the debates that precede the construction of national monuments can be considered as a separate set of national practices that is distinct from practices which operate *after* a national monument has been built. The practices that precede the construction of many national monuments often involve bargaining and negotiation between political interest groups which seek to determine the construction, design, and location of national monuments. This was famously the case with the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, whose original design by Maya Lin was contested (and eventually modified) due to efforts by Secretary of the Interior James Watt, and with the National World War II Memorial, whose design and placement on the National Mall's main axis was subject to many controversies. (Hass 1998, Mills 2004, Mock 2003) The politics at play before national monuments are constructed not only reveal that national monuments do not arrive on the scene *de novo*, but also that national monuments are the result of prolonged efforts by individuals whose diverging views reflect competing ideas about the nation and the monuments that are erected in its name.

Ironically, the very practices that are at play before a national monument is constructed are often concealed by the actual, built monument. Kirk Savage argues that “public monuments [exercise] a curious power to erase their own political origins and

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<sup>2</sup> The idea that national monuments contribute to the construction of the nation is not new. Eric Hobsbawm argues that monuments can play an important role in the invention of tradition. In his discussion of France during the Third Republic, he finds that the multiple statues of Marianne, which appeared throughout France during this time, were not simply a collection of public art works, but that they were “the visible links between the voters and the nation.” (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983) In other words, the monuments to Marianne were active participants in the construction of an “image of the Republic.”

become sacrosanct.” (Savage 1997, 7) This is a power, he believes, that is evident “whenever people rise to defend monuments from change or attack.” (Savage 1997, 7) Once a monument is built, it seems to have always existed. Its design does not refer, at least not in an explicit or intentional way, to the debates and controversies that may have surrounded its construction. Furthermore, a national monument often appears to exist quite independently from any particular human *choices* and debates. Therefore, as opposed to the practices that operate *after* the construction of national monuments, these early practices are quintessentially non-material: once the monument is built, all traces of them seem to disappear.

However, the seeming disappearance of debates and controversies does not mean that the national meanings produced by the *built* monument are immutable. On the contrary, national monuments produce an array of national meanings through their design, configuration in space, and the activities they inspire. These elements are necessarily influenced by the debates and intentions that brought the monument into existence, but it is precisely because these are often concealed from us that meaning is rooted, ultimately, in the monument as it stands before us. In other words, the debates that occur before a monument is built—in particular, the way in which these debates reflect different national meanings—are relevant only insofar as they help us understand monuments as objects anchored (and existing) in space; otherwise, the debates that precede the construction of monuments would be similar to any other non-material national practice. Therefore, in considering national monuments as a national practice that is quintessentially embedded in space, I focus on the production of meaning that occurs once national monuments are, indeed, put in place.

Yet beyond the questions of space, what is particularly interesting about national monuments producing a national meaning, or in Hobsbawm’s term, an invented tradition, is that not all national monuments produce the *same* meaning. Different monuments will produce different visions of what the nation is and how an individual relates to it. These differences will often play out in the diverse design choices of monuments. Monuments on a grand scale, for example, are likely to construct an image of the nation as larger than life—larger, perhaps, than the individual. Monuments that are smaller, even dispersed, are more likely to signal a view of the nation as *composed of* (and not *imposed on*) individuals. Since different design choices in national monuments reflect an array of different national meanings, the study of national monuments opens the door to a parallel examination of different, and often competing, ideas of the “nation.”<sup>3</sup>

In order to discuss national monuments as a national practice, i.e., to study the national meanings they produce, it is necessary to first define what I consider to be a *national* monument. The second part of this chapter looks at what monuments do—a discussion about the production of national meaning. But here I begin first with a discussion about the definition of national monuments. I offer this discussion not in order to arrive at a definite and final definition of the concept but rather to explore the subtleties and nuances that are at stake when considering national monuments as a type of

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<sup>3</sup> In Chapter 5, I discuss how national monuments might produce a national meaning that is congruent with liberal nationalism. My discussion relies on the idea that since national monuments produce different national meanings one would expect national monuments built in the context of liberal nationalism to appear different from monuments built in, say, the context of ethnic nationalism. In particular, I examine how national monuments can contribute not only to a *national* narrative but also a *liberal* one. That is, how might they produce a national meaning without sacrificing a commitment to liberal values?



national practice. Above all, this discussion aims to map the potential for multiplicity of meanings and functions in national monuments.

## **II. What is a monument?**

### ***Monument or memorial?***

A distinction is often drawn between a monument and a memorial. A monument is sometimes associated with a life-affirming commemoration, such as a celebration of a victory or a hero, whereas a memorial is linked to the commemoration of death and is considered part of the grieving process. However, etymologically the words “monument” and “memorial” come from roots that do not draw this distinction between life and death. The word “monument” is derived from the Latin *monere* which means to remind; so monument could be construed as a “remind-ment.” The word “memorial” is the adjective form of the Latin word *memoria*, that is, memory. Both these roots refer to the way in which we recollect the past. A monument refers to those objects that bring back to mind, through representation, events or stories that otherwise would remain forgotten. And a memorial functions as a physical extension of memory itself. The etymological roots of both words imply that both monuments and memorials are active participants in the reenactment (or even invention) of a past.

If both monuments and memorials engage with the past, how can we distinguish between them? Or, rather, *should* we distinguish between them? Maya Lin once said that in order to understand her work properly it is important to differentiate between a monument and memorial. (Lin 1995) For Lin, monuments and memorials perform different functions: the first stands detached and works to inform or educate its audience,

while the latter engages the individual, encouraging introspection and self-evaluation. About her commemorative designs, Lin said: “I consider the work I do memorials, not monuments; in fact I’ve often thought of them as anti-monuments. I think I don’t make objects; I make places.” (Lin 1995, 13) Here Lin associates monuments with objects and memorials with places. The distinction that she draws between an object/monument and a place/memorial is important because Lin argues that a place allows for “experience and for understanding experience.” (Lin 1995) And since she is keenly interested in the processes that occur *within* the individual rather than the processes that impose a certain experience or knowledge *on* the individual she is interested in designing memorials and not monuments.

Lin’s distinction is appealing because it differentiates among the roles that commemorative structures may have. However, such a distinction is weakened by the day-to-day use of the terms “monument” and “memorial.” For example, on the National Mall both the Lincoln and Jefferson structures are officially named memorials, even though they are structures that do not immediately seem to allow for the type of personal experience that Lin is interested in. They do not encourage an active engagement with their audience, but are rather objects which tower above their audience and whose main object is to invoke awe and respect. And, conversely, there are commemorative structures whose aims are similar to Lin’s definition of a memorial, which nonetheless carry the title “monument.” Such is the case with Jochen Gerz’s Monument to Racism—a commemorative structure composed of 2,148 engraved stones dispersed throughout the Saarbrücken plaza in Berlin. Gerz’s design is meant to create a space where one can

experience a sense of absence and loss. It is, like Lin's memorials, a place that reaches for personal, inward experience.

Lin's desire to distinguish among different commemorative functions is important. But doing so through terminological distinction, i.e., monument versus memorial, is counterproductive. The two terms are so often used interchangeably that forcing a separation between the two becomes not only artificial but cumbersome. Therefore, in this dissertation, I use the words "monument" and "memorial" interchangeably, and what I say about one refers to the other. This does not mean that I think that different commemorative structures cannot have different functions—far from it. In Chapter 5, I focus precisely on the different commemorative functions that a monument (or memorial) might have in the context of liberal nationalism. As opposed to Lin, I do not anchor these differences in the choice of word (monument/memorial), but rather in an extended description about how these differences operate.<sup>4</sup>

### ***What is a national monument?***

Although I use "monument" and "memorial" interchangeably, I must distinguish a national monument from other non-national monuments. In a succinct formulation, I consider a *national* monument to be a monument that forms part of the national discourse. By national discourse I refer to (similar to Brubaker) the practices that contribute to the construction and maintenance of the idea of the "nation." In this sense,

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<sup>4</sup> My choice of the word "monument" in the title of the dissertation, and its more common use throughout the text, is to some extent arbitrary. I prefer the word "monument" over "memorial" because "memorial" appears to be linked more strongly to memory and, although I certainly think it has a lot to do with memory (see Chapter 3), I also argue that monuments are linked to death, space, the production of meaning, etc.

monuments, as I have discussed at the beginning of this chapter, are one of the many practices of nationalism. Yet, what is at stake with *national* monuments, as opposed to other monuments, is the way in which they address their viewers. The primary viewers of a national monument are assumed to be members of the nation. In order for the monument to function as part of the national discourse, it must be able to engage the individuals who form part of the national community. Therefore, the location, as well as the values, events, and people represented in the monument, are meaningful only if the viewer, the individual, sees himself as part of the nation. Because national monuments are only one in a variety of mechanisms that bind the individual to the nation, national monuments have a dual role of both reinforcing *and* inspiring the relationship between the individual and the nation. And, although different national monuments may vary in the way that they represent the nature of this relation, asserting the existence of such a relationship is nonetheless an integral part of what makes a monument *national*.

The difficulty in defining national monuments as monuments that participate in national discourse is that some monuments may not intend to engage in the national discourse but do so nonetheless. James Young discusses this particular phenomena with regard to Holocaust memorials. In *The Texture of Memory*, Young examines Holocaust memorials in four countries: Poland, Germany, Israel, and the United States. (Young 1993) On the surface, these memorials are dedicated to an event that transcends national discourse and national belonging. They are memorials dedicated to an event that is relevant to the Jewish people, or alternatively, to humankind in general—their significance is not limited to any particular nation. However, Young finds that the Holocaust memorials have different designs and interpretations about the meaning and

significance of the Holocaust and that these differences are dependent on the national context in which they are embedded. Holocaust memorials in Poland, for example, fail to distinguish between Jewish and non-Jewish Polish victims and therefore couch the Holocaust within a general Polish suffering. Similarly, in the United States and Israel, the Holocaust is memorialized from each country's perspective: America as a safe haven and Israel as Zionist redemption, respectively. And, finally, in Germany, the design of counter-memorials convey the uneasy and difficult task of Germany which has "[called] upon itself to remember the victims of crimes it has perpetrated." (Young 1993, 21) Young's study shows that monuments that commemorate events that are not originally limited to a national audience, can nonetheless become "nationalized."

However, Young leaves open the converse question, that is, can a national monument gain an international, supra-national, significance? Because national monuments are often sites for international tourism, they may become part of an international stage and have international significance that may replace, or add to, the national one. A good example for this is the Hiroshima Peace Memorial in Japan. The memorial speaks to a specific Japanese narrative of nationalism which, according to Benedict Giomo, views the Japanese as "a pacifist people emerging from the very act of atomic victimage." (Giomo 2003, 705) However, for the non-Japanese visiting the site, the memorial functions as a reminder of the horrors of nuclear weapons in general and as a warning against all future nuclear wars. The memorial functions both as a Japanese

national memorial and as an international one.<sup>5</sup> This example indicates that national monuments may have an ambiguous character, oscillating between having a national and universal significance.

However, despite the way in which international tourists may approach a national monument, the role of the monument in participating in and framing the national discourse is not diminished. The various ways in which a monument can operate—for example, as an international symbol—does not bear on the role national monuments have as one of the practices of nationalism. What distinguishes national monuments from other monuments is their conscious effort to speak to members of the nation. As I have discussed, national monuments may have a parallel effect on individuals who are outside the national community. Although an examination of the nature of this parallel discourse is interesting, it lies outside the scope of my study of monuments as national practices.<sup>6</sup> National monuments function as *national* tools insofar as they deliberately contribute to, and participate in, the national discourse.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Giamo's critique of the memorial as "the ideal project of specious national identity for public consumption and reiteration" rather than "historic accuracy," is misguided. He criticizes the memorial for doing exactly what national monuments are meant to do: giving a historic event a *national* significance. On the whole, it is not clear whether his dislike of the "mass ignorance" that the memorial produces is a criticism of the memorial as a *national* memorial, or whether it is a criticism of "bad" Japanese nationalism.

<sup>6</sup> Monuments that have a super-national audience, e.g., humankind, or a narrower one, e.g., a particular city, should of course be considered monuments, but not necessarily national ones.

<sup>7</sup> The question of "intent" is, of course, tricky. Monuments do not have a will or agency. *They* do not intend to be part of the national discourse. Rather, the design, location and construction indicate a particular way of integrating the monument into a national landscape. This is true even in the case of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial whose architect, Maya Lin, did not intend it to be specifically a monument about American nationhood (she wanted it to be "about death"). However, the location and some elements in the design of the monument make it quintessentially an American monument. Located at the intersection of the axis between the Washington and Lincoln memorials, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial places the Vietnam war in relation to, and in dialogue with, the American War of Independence and the Civil War. Furthermore, the inclusion of the names of only the American dead on the black granite wall shows again that, despite Lin's intent, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial is a monument about and for Americans.

### *National monuments are public monuments*

The function of national monuments as tools that affect the way people think of themselves and their relation to the nation is dependent on the monuments' being placed where people can view them and, in some cases, interact with them. National monuments are, in other words, *public* monuments. They are located in public spaces that have open access for people to see them. The location of national monuments can be divided into two types of public spaces: official space and everyday space. An official space is a space that is dedicated to the symbolic representation of the nation. Often these spaces are located in a center of a city, either in official buildings or great avenues and squares, such as the location of monuments on the National Mall. It is important to note that an official space does not have to be purely symbolic. Often it can be tied to a function, such as housing a governmental body (e.g., the Capitol building in Washington, DC). However, even when official space is functional, its design and location is imbued with symbolic significance. One enters these spaces as a member of a particular public (i.e., the nation), rather than as a private individual. And, therefore, these official spaces might be more properly called *national spaces*. They are spaces that derive their meaning from the national discourse with which they are imbued and to which they contribute.<sup>8</sup>

National space is not limited to what one might call "intentional national space." There are national spaces that become significant to the nation by virtue of a particular event. This is the case for places like Pearl Harbor and Ground Zero that have become

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<sup>8</sup> The National Mall is a good example of a national space. It is especially interesting to note that L'Enfant's original design of the National Mall was meant to actually replicate the geography and national destiny of the United States. The western extreme of the Mall, where the Lincoln Memorial is located today, was left open with a clear view of Virginia and the Potomac in order to represent the open Western frontier.

meaningful to the nation not because they were designed to be so (as with L'Enfant's design of the National Mall), but rather because of the events that took place on their grounds. This type of national space may be thought of as accidental. Despite the fact that the space was originally built for a military or economic purpose, it has become a space that is meaningful for the nation because of subsequent events that occurred there and therefore a place where one finds national commemorative monuments. However, although these two types of national space are distinguished by their "intentionality," they both share the characteristics of a space imbued with national meaning and identified with a specific representation of the nation.

National monuments can also be public by being located in everyday spaces, such as neighborhoods, shopping centers, or public parks. Everyday spaces are characterized by their immediacy to people. As opposed to official spaces, one does not have to travel to an everyday space—one lives in it. Monuments that are built in these locations derive their public character from the interaction of individuals in their vicinity. They are monuments that are woven into daily routines, even though their design is often meant to interrupt it. Take, for example, Shimon Attie's *Writing on the Wall*, a memorial which consists of projected images in the old Jewish quarter of Berlin. The images are photographs of buildings from the 1920s and 1930s that are projected onto the current buildings. Through this juxtaposition, Attie seeks to draw attention to the loss of the Jewish community in the places where this community actually lived.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> In Chapter 3, I further discuss the problems that designs like Attie bring to the memorialization of absence.



One of the main differences between national monuments in official and everyday spaces is what they say about how individuals relate to the nation. Monuments in official spaces address the individual only when he stands, both metaphorically and literally, in a *national* space. What is relevant to the nation, the representation of its values and history, occurs only in official spaces (potentially, strictly state-sanctioned spaces). The designers of monuments that are built in everyday spaces, on the other hand, offer a critique of this view. By locating the monuments where people actually live, the designers hope to make their monuments (and their message) more visible and harder to ignore. But, more importantly, the location of national monuments in everyday spaces is meant to remind us that what is relevant on a national level must also become relevant in our daily life. One cannot relegate the various debates about the content of our national identity to an official space. In this view, the individual becomes responsible for defining the nature of his national identity, rather than leaving this responsibility to the power structures from above.

### ***A typology of national monuments***

National monuments can be roughly divided into four types.<sup>10</sup> These types can overlap and be used simultaneously; they are not mutually exclusive. However, it is useful to provide a typology of monuments insofar as it elucidates the various elements that may be used by monuments to construct a national meaning. The various elements resonate in different ways and each contributes to the image of the nation, its characteristics and

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<sup>10</sup> I restrict myself here to “useless” monuments. Living memorials, monuments that are functional, such as freeways and stadiums, provide an alternative view of *how* monuments should commemorate. (Shanken 2002) However, assuming that monuments should commemorate through a “useless,” arguably aesthetic, artifact, this typology is relevant.

boundaries. The types of national monuments are: founding monuments, hero monuments, value monuments, and object monuments.

### *Founding monuments*

First, founding monuments are monuments that are dedicated to specific historic events that are deemed significant to the national community. The historical moments can be represented either as the moment of the birth of the nation or as a significant and therefore defining moment in the nation's history. However, whether it is a literal moment of birth (e.g., independence) or a significant turning point, these events symbolize a founding moment for the nation, that is, a moment that quintessentially defines the way in which the nation sees itself. The particular moment that is memorialized is deemed crucial to the identity of the nation and to articulating its defining characteristics. The memorialization of founding moments often take the form of war monuments. In these monuments, the victory or defeat is represented as an event that has fundamentally changed the nation. This is the case with such monuments as the World War II Memorial, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, and the Korean War Memorial whose presence on the National Mall reflect the important historic events that changed the way America sees and understands itself. Founding monuments can be simultaneously seen either as new founding moments in the history of the nation or as moments that strengthened or redefined the original founding.

### *Hero monuments*

The commemoration of national founding moments can overlap with the other type of national commemoration: the hero monument. The national founding monuments often

play the double role of memorializing *heroes* whose ideas or actions are believed to have allowed the nation to come into existence (or, as Gellner would have it, “to be awakened”). This is the case, for example, with the Washington Monument that presents George Washington as a role model for American civic virtue, and George Washington as the father of the American nation. Similarly, the Lincoln Memorial has the dual function of commemorating Lincoln as national hero and representing the Civil War as a second founding of the United States. (Johnston 2001)

Monuments to national heroes are probably the most common form of national monuments. The construction of national monuments can be traced back to the identification of the king as national hero. (Borg 1991) Since the king was seen as embodying the nation, in order to commemorate the nation, the king himself was commemorated as its representative. This concept proceeded to spill over to the representation of military leaders as national heroes. (Borg 1991) Monuments to particular battles were centered around the person who led them—a good example here is Nelson’s Column in London, commemorating Lord Nelson and the Battle of Trafalgar. In these monuments, it was not just the war that was commemorated, but the hero associated with it. Later, particularly after World War I, the concept of a national hero was expanded to include the common soldier as a representative of the national community.(Borg 1991, Mosse 1991, Savage 1997) In particular, the concept of the “tomb of the unknown soldier” was developed during this time—in the United States it lies in the Arlington Cemetery. It was a response to the changing nature of war which made the scale of the dead immensely larger, and to a growing inclination to de-emphasize military rank in favor of anonymous heroism. Hero monuments, whether those that commemorate the

leaders or the common soldier, have the dual function of memorializing the person along with the cause or ideas for which he or she died.<sup>11</sup>

### *Value monuments*

However, the commemoration of specific ideas that are important to the nation is not always directly tied to a hero. The idea of freedom, for example, recurs in many American national monuments with the actual word appearing as part of the monument's design. This is most noticeable in the World War II Memorial, which bears the following text at the center of the memorial, "Here we mark the price of freedom." (See Figure 1.)<sup>12</sup> In this memorial, the concept of "freedom" is presented as one of the values for which the nation is willing to sacrifice its own. In other words, the memorial articulates a threat to freedom as an equivalent threat to American identity. In this, and many other memorials, it is not merely an event or a person that is being memorialized but there is an affirmation and commemoration of national *values*.

### *Object monuments*

Lastly, the fourth type of monument is a monument that commemorates an object. Rather than abstract ideas, there are certain objects that become focal points for national commemoration. National monuments that commemorate objects are rare since it is seldom that a national identity centers around an object. However, in the United States

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<sup>11</sup> Civil War memorials are an interesting case. Kirk Savage argues that after the Civil War it was more common to see monuments to soldiers than to the ideas, e.g., emancipation, for which the war was fought. (Savage 1997) Savage claims that the common soldier provided a better "glue" for a recently-divided nation, whereas the commemoration of emancipation was more likely to revive the North-South animosities. In the case of the Civil War's hero monuments, by omitting one idea (emancipation) another idea was memorialized: the hero died for unification, not for emancipation.

<sup>12</sup> All figures can be found in the appendix.

(and possibly in other constitutional democracies) the Constitution, as a physical object, becomes an especially cherished object. The Constitution is seen as a concentrated, physical representation of the core of American values. As an example, the Constitution has received its own commemorative center in the National Constitution Center in Philadelphia. The center revolves around the Constitution and its significance to the American nation. Although not strictly a *monument* to the Constitution, the center provides an insight into how an object can become integrated into national commemorations.<sup>13</sup>

### ***What is not a national monument?***

This typology of monuments provides a broad sketch of the different themes that are commemorated in national monuments and which are woven into the national discourse. However, these different types of national monuments share the same function, that is, the construction of a national community. This function is not unique to national monuments. As I discussed at the beginning of this chapter, there are many other practices that form part of the national narrative and participate in the construction of a national community. However, some of these practices are particularly interesting in the context of national monuments because they function in a very similar but ultimately different way than national monuments. The following discussion covers a selection of practices whose function often becomes blurred with that of national monuments. They deserve special attention not so much in order to distinguish them from national

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<sup>13</sup> The Center becomes particularly lively around Constitution Day when there are four days of activities and commemorative ceremonies on the Center's grounds.

monuments, therefore making the definition of a national monument more narrow, but rather to elucidate the subtleties that are at play with the practices of nationalism.

*A museum is not a national monument*

Museums can be similar to national monuments in two important ways: they can be pedagogic tools and vehicles for the construction of memory.<sup>14</sup> In museums, there is a particular organization of knowledge that is meant to display a specific view of society. Michel Foucault regards museums as places that, like a mirror, reflect a real image of ourselves—of society—but do so through the creation of a space that is not real—in the case of museums, a space that is isolated and apart from society. (Foucault 1986) By functioning as both “utopias” and “heterotopias,” museums are capable of creating knowledge about ourselves and our place in society. This knowledge is particularly interesting when it is appropriated by a national narrative, because the knowledge that we gain about ourselves becomes filtered as knowledge about the nation and the nature of our relation to it. Through a national narrative, the content of the museum and even the building that houses the museum is seen as part of a national heritage that must be studied and preserved. Therefore, the museum becomes a symbol of “national identity” and a site of “civic education.” (Bennett 1995, Macdonald 1998) Like a national monument, the museum can be a place that can teach us who we are and what our society, or nation, is.

The display of artifacts, and the instruction that results from viewing them, means that museums also engage in the construction of memory. Museums use artifacts in

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<sup>14</sup> There are many different types of museums. Here, I particularly have in mind history museums, such as the American History Museum in Washington, DC. These museums not only aim to reconstruct the past but also to put it into a distinctly national context.

exhibitions to display, like national monuments, a certain narrative about the past. The collection and exhibition of artifacts is guided by a specific interpretation about what the past contains and, more importantly, what elements about the past are important to the viewers of today. The past is organized, categorized and presented as a re-telling of the past, not least a *national* past. This organization of the past is nothing less than the construction of memories, elements of the past that we wish to re-enact in the present. In this sense, museums are *lieux de memoire*—sites of memory—since they collect and archive memories.<sup>15</sup> (Nora 1989) The relation of museums to memory in this sense is similar to that of national monuments. Both engage in the politics of memory and use it to construct, or sustain, a national community.

The similar roles that national monuments and museums play in the construction of a national community has led to an apparent blurring of the two concepts. The apparent blurring is literally achieved in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, which houses both a museum, with its usual series of displays and educational resources, and a memorial. (See Figure 2.) The existence of both an educational component and a contemplative one makes the Holocaust Memorial Museum neither “just” a museum nor “just” a memorial, but both. However, the combination of both museum and memorial does not mean that there is a blending of both national practices. Rather, the combination serves as an illustration of what a museum needs but a memorial can fulfill, and vice versa—what a memorial lacks but a museum can supply. The museum is capable of teaching its viewers the history of the Holocaust. It uses its archives, which are an

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<sup>15</sup> I shall return to this point and discuss it extensively in the next chapter.

extension of the exhibits, to preserve the testimonies of survivors and to make them accessible to visitors. However, in order for the museum to provide a place for visitors to “reflect upon the moral and spiritual questions raised by the events of the Holocaust,” the museum avails itself of a distinctly memorial practice: it creates a sacred space.<sup>16</sup> Later in this chapter I discuss the creation of sacred space in more detail, but here it is enough to point out that memorials have the capacity of creating a space—sacred-like in nature—that is separate from our everyday life and that encourages introspection and contemplation. And this is precisely what the Holocaust Memorial Museum incorporates into its structure.

However, the inclusion of a memorial within the Holocaust Museum also signals that memorials may need museums too. The memorial in the Holocaust Museum is especially powerful precisely because it comes after the experience of walking through the exhibitions. The process of learning that precedes entering the memorial augments the impact of the memorial itself and makes the need to reflect more acute. Memorials therefore seem to lack something that museums can provide: education. The increase and broadening of visitor centers at national memorials is an indication that there is a need to educate in order to remember properly. The growing visitor centers often function as quasi-museums which serve as built-in educational tools for the memorial. Therefore, the increasing overlap between monuments and museums shows that while both can

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<sup>16</sup> The full mission statement of the Museum is: “to advance and disseminate knowledge about this unprecedented tragedy; to preserve the memory of those who suffered; and to encourage its visitors to reflect upon the moral and spiritual questions raised by the events of the Holocaust as well as their own responsibilities as citizens of a democracy.” (<http://www.ushmm.org/museum/mission/>)



complement one another, this does not imply that they replace one another. They are, in other words, two related but distinct national practices.

*A historical monument is not a national monument*

Historical monuments are sites that become appropriated by the national narrative as a place that is significant to the nation. They share with national monuments the preoccupation with the preservation of the past. However, like national monuments “the past that is invoked and called forth, in an almost incantatory way, is not just any past: it is localized and selected to a critical end, to the degree that it is capable of directly contributing to the maintenance and preservation of the identity of an ethnic, religious, national, tribal, or familial community.” (Choay 2001, 6) Historical monuments are often architectural structures, such as buildings or gates, that are selected from the ruins of the past and are conceived as symbolic or meaningful to the history of the nation. Once selected, these sites require conservation because keeping the structures intact in some way guarantees the survival of the national memory attached to them. This process is linked to the construction of a national heritage which seems to become particularly urgent when the site is “couched in terms of some national legacy at risk.” (Lowenthal 1996, 25)

Historical monuments are sites that become significant to the nation *post factum*. The original functions of the sites are different than they are today—they move from being sites with particular utilitarian functions to being conceived as “mirrors of a world or a period.” (Nora 1989, 22) It is in this sense that historical monument differ the most from national monuments. Historical monuments lack what Pierre Nora calls an “intent to

remember.” (Nora 1989) They become monuments, whereby they contribute to the national discourse, only by accident. As Alois Riegl argued: “Any object from the past can be converted into an historic witness without having had, originally, a memorial purpose. Conversely, any human artifact can be deliberately invested with memorial function.” (Riegl 1998) The accidental nature of historical monuments means that given a different construction of the national past, the same building that today is considered a historical monument (or a national heritage site) could have been left to oblivion. National monuments, on the other hand, owe their meaning not to their location but to the premeditated will to remember, that is, to the conscious intent to build them in order to remember.

However, as was the case with museums and national monuments, historical and national monuments can overlap. This is the case with sites that become integrated into the national narrative and as a result are provided with a new memorial structure on their grounds. For example, many battlefields are considered “monuments to the nation” but the actual memorial that is placed on the battlefield is also considered a “monument to the nation.” The field, in this case, is a *historical* monument, whereas the memorial is a *national* monument. The two types of monuments share a space that is specifically set aside for remembering the past. They both contribute to commemorating the battle as a significant and formative event for the nation. But, while both historical and national

monuments may share the same national space, they do not lose their distinguishing characteristics, of preservation and memorialization, respectively.<sup>17</sup>

### *National monuments and national cemeteries*

Similar to museums and historical monuments, national cemeteries are also national practices. They too define the nation by a specific relation to the past. However, national cemeteries are distinctive due to their immediate relation with death. It is in this regard that they are more similar to national monuments than museums and historical monuments. Like national monuments, national cemeteries integrate the dead into a national narrative. By being buried in a distinctly national cemetery, the body becomes literally embedded in the national space. The burial in the cemetery marks the individual's death as significant for the nation, thereby incorporating it into a national narrative. As I will discuss in Chapter 4, the death of the individual becomes transformed into the life of the nation. In both national cemeteries and monuments, the memorialization of the dead converts death into sacrifice, the ordinary into heroism and the inevitable into destiny.

The similar attitude towards death in both national monuments and cemeteries can also be seen in the architecture and ceremonies that they inspire. Both places can be

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<sup>17</sup> There are symbolic buildings such as the Capitol that are neither historic nor national monuments. While they are structures that have utilitarian functions and have grown more iconic with time, they lack both the accidental element of historical monuments and the commemorative purpose of national monuments. However, the Statue of Liberty (not Ellis Island) can arguably be seen as both a historical and national monument. Its aesthetic and symbolic imagery reminds us of traditional national monuments. But, at the same time, it was not built with the intent to commemorate liberty, but was rather built as a token and symbol of friendship between France and the United States. In this sense, it is more like a historical monument. However, the Statue of Liberty is an interesting case because its prominence as an *American* icon is rather divorced from its original role as a symbol of *universal* friendship.

marked by similar architecture, some of which is inspired by Christian motifs. The cross, for example, is a common symbol that is used for marking a grave site as well as being integrated into memorial forms. (See Figure 3.) (Borg 1991) National war memorials can often be confused in their scale and design for mausoleums, that, in the absence of an actual body, memorialize rather than bury the dead that are honored by the nation. By constructing monuments to the dead, national monuments inspire the same type of funerary practices that are commonly found in cemeteries. These may include laying of flowers or wreaths, routine pilgrimages, speeches, and possibly even the act of respectful silence. The blurring of the lines between tombs and monuments is the result of extending the boundaries of the national community to include the dead. This inclusion links the present with the past. The national community does not only exist today, but it is presented as though it has always existed, and, by extension, always will exist.

In many ways, national cemeteries, e.g., the Arlington Cemetery, can be considered national monuments. They are built intentionally to memorialize the dead. By cordoning off a space that is solely dedicated to the nation's dead, national cemeteries create a *national* space that both speaks to the construction of a national community and contributes to the definition of its boundaries. However, although I argue in Chapter 4 that national cemeteries can be analyzed as national monuments, there are a few differences between the two that should not be overlooked. First, national cemeteries, like most cemeteries, are located on the outskirts of the city. (Ariès 1974) They are not, like national monuments, integrated into the main axis or spaces of public life. Second, in national monuments, the memorialization of the dead is achieved only through metaphor and symbol, while in national cemeteries, the incorporation of the dead into the national

community is not metaphorical—the actual body is interred in national ground. Third, because national cemeteries are actual locations of death, they can inspire a reverence for the dead that may be absent in national monuments. National cemeteries appear to be more sacred in this sense. There are far more social taboos about death that deny the possibility of protests, marches, graffiti, or political rallying on cemetery grounds than around national monuments.<sup>18</sup> National cemeteries demand a reverence (or arouse anxiety) in a way that national monuments do not. Therefore, national cemeteries are more immune to the type of political activities that national monuments often inspire—an immunity, one might add, that is augmented by the location of cemeteries away from the city. Arguably, this makes national cemeteries a more powerful national practice. They are more protected than other practices from challenges and debates about their role in constructing a certain image of the nation.

### **III. Monuments as practice: What do national monuments do?**

National monuments, like other national practices, produce meaning.<sup>19</sup> However, monuments, in particular, create meaning through space. In this final part of the chapter, I discuss the ways in which monuments produce meaning. First, I look at the capacity of monuments to create a space that is distinctly national and sacred-like in character. And, second, I describe how the choices in monument design and location contribute to the construction of an imagined national community. The latter discussion serves as the basis

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<sup>18</sup> See Ariès for a discussion about social attitudes toward death. (Ariès 1974)

<sup>19</sup> From here on, and throughout the rest of the dissertation, I will use the word “monument” to refer to “national monuments.” I do so in the interest of simplicity only.

for Chapters 3 and 4 which analyze the construction of an imagined community through a particular approach to memory and death in the national narrative.

*Monuments separate the sacred and the profane*

Monuments create a spatial separation between sacred and profane space. The creation of a sacred space in particular contributes to the sense in which nationalism can be thought of as a civic religion. (Mosse 1991, Smith 1986) Whether through their design or the space formed around them, monuments have the capacity to inspire activities akin to those usually associated with religious ones. The sacredness of a monument is often upheld through repetitive ceremonies on its grounds: for example, the President delivering a speech inside the Lincoln Memorial on Lincoln's birthday not only honors Lincoln's memory; it also serves to associate the current President with Lincoln's legacy. (See Figure 4.) These ceremonies can include laying wreaths or holding an official event on its grounds, such as the annual Memorial Day ceremony held at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. These ceremonies mark the monument as a place of veneration and of paying one's respect. In addition, one finds that marches or protests often begin or end at monuments. The significance of the march or protest is increased by its proximity to a national symbol. The monument is used as a sacred spot that might be said to bless the event and give it its extraordinary—i.e., outside of the ordinary—meaning. In both these cases, of ceremonies and marches, the monument and the space around it are used as locations, similar to temples, that one visits on holidays, or special, non-ordinary, days.

Thinking of monuments as temples is also expressed in the structure of the monuments themselves. Many monuments resemble temples both in scale and in their

design. The grandiose scale of cathedrals, for example, is shared by monuments in which the individual is meant to feel small and insignificant compared to the grandeur of God or the nation, as the case may be. But, beyond a question of scale, the architecture of monuments has borrowed heavily from traditionally religious architecture. The obelisk, for example, was originally dedicated to the worship of the sun-god. (Borg 1991) It later evolved as a monument to victory, and today we see it on the National Mall as a monument to George Washington and the nation he founded. (See Figure 5.) Similarly, the Doric columns of the Lincoln memorial are reminiscent of Greek temples. The steps leading up to the platform where Lincoln's larger-than-life sculpture appears God-like contribute to the sense that one is entering a sacred place. (See Figure 6.) The memorial is similar to a religious temple, because its architecture is designed to inspire awe and invite worship and is thus unlike everyday useful buildings.<sup>20</sup>

The capacity of monuments to provide a sacred space is harnessed for the purpose of converting bureaucratic centers into spiritual ones as well. A nation's bureaucratic center is usually in its capital which houses such institutions as the Parliament or the Supreme Court. However, a nation's capital is also a symbolic center for the nation, and therefore it must go beyond being merely a bureaucratic center. Monuments bring to a city both a symbolic and spiritual power. They are built along the main avenues and squares of the city as markers of a place that is special. One example of this is the recent construction of the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe one block south of the Brandenburger Tor in the center of Berlin. In the United States, on the other hand, the

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<sup>20</sup> Viewing the memorial as a temple is made explicit in the memorial itself. Above Lincoln's sculpture, the text reads: "In this *temple*, as in the hearts of the people for whom he saved the Union, the memory of Abraham Lincoln is enshrined forever." (Emphasis added.)

whole city of Washington was designed around the axis of the National Mall which was, from its inception, intended to include governmental institutions, such as the Capitol and the White House, as well as symbolic elements, such as the monument to George Washington. In fact, one of the original proposals for Washington's monument called for bringing his body to Washington, DC and placing it in the monument (then conceived as a mausoleum). The presence of Washington's body on the National Mall was intended to emphasize the sacred aspect of the monument and, by extension, of the city itself.

(Savage 1992)

Nevertheless, the idea that a monument ought to create a sacred space that is separate from daily life and its routines has not always been seen as a positive thing. After World Wars I and II, there was an increasing criticism of monuments that were not integrated into the environment of daily life. Traditional monuments were said to be “cluttered and random” and that their distance from living space made them easily ignored and forgotten. (Shanken 2005, 7) There was a call to make monuments useful, rather than merely works of public art—pieces that risked becoming stale and purely decorative. It was argued that the fallen could only be appropriately commemorated through an actual and real improvement in the lives of those who survived them. In the 1940s and 50s, this notion of living memorials led to a wave of public institutions such as highways, parks, and community centers that were built in the name of people or events



to be memorialized.<sup>21</sup> (Borg 1991, Shanken 2002) Some examples include the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC and the Nimitz Freeway in the San Francisco Bay Area.

However, the integration of monuments into daily life is problematic. Practical monuments rob them of their sacred character. Practical monuments undo the separation between a daily space, in which we perform our biological necessities (borrowing Arendt's terms), and a space that is set aside for contemplation and introspection. One of the more striking elements of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, for example, is the silence it inspires. As one approaches this monument, one involuntarily quiets down, forgets the heat or hunger one often experiences on a hot summer day at the Mall, and instead one's eyes are drawn to the black granite and to the names etched onto it and one's thoughts begin to wander. Similar to the type of silence one encounters in a church, monuments are places where the buzz and hum of daily life stops. On the grounds of a monument, our minds are turned away from our personal needs towards a contemplation of the thing being memorialized. We stop and ponder about the meaning of, for example, the Vietnam War or the values for which our nation stands. At a monument we are oriented toward the nation and our relation to it; that is, our thoughts reach beyond ourselves.<sup>22</sup> By making monuments practical, we lose this silence and contemplation that monuments can provide.

In addition to silence and a contemplative environment, the sacredness of monuments is also maintained by the prohibition of touching. Monuments are restricted

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<sup>21</sup> Borg argues that although these charitable institutions might themselves risk losing their memorializing meaning, at the very least, "it is better to provide a form of remembrance that will be of some practical value." (Borg 1991, 138)

<sup>22</sup> This is different from the type of contemplation that occurs in a church where our thoughts are directed inwards towards an examination of our actions and our innermost thoughts and desires.

areas where playing, picnicking, or climbing is prohibited. (See Figure 7.) The scale itself can also prohibit meaningful contact with monuments, since many of them can only be appreciated from a distance. By placing monuments beyond our reach, their sacred character is emphasized. Like holy objects, we are allowed to view them, but not touch them. This sacred distance also occurs with monuments that ostensibly invite people's interactions with it. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial is a classic example, but one can also think of the Monument Against Fascism in Harburg, Germany, where the viewers are encouraged to engrave their thoughts onto the monument itself. (See Figure 8.) However, even in such monuments, the type of touch that is encouraged is contained. We do not touch these monuments in the sense of using them, but rather, we touch them on the terms determined by what is being memorialized. The interaction that we have with such monuments is still sacred in nature; touching them is done out of reverence and respect, something akin to the way we might touch a gravestone or the feet of a sculpture of a saint.

The creation of sacred space is also significant in terms of separating the spaces we enter as individuals and those we enter as members of a group. Because the space around monuments is public, when we enter these spaces we necessarily become mindful of our existence in relation to others. Rather than retreating into our private lives, monuments propel us into a space that binds us to others. Of course, *what* binds us to others may vary. However, the communal worshiping and meditation that occurs at monuments strengthen the sense in which we can understand monuments as creating a sacred space that emphasizes and defines our membership in the nation.

That being said, there are numerous new monuments whose designs seek to disturb precisely this sense of “holy-ness” and “religious-ness” of monuments. These monuments are purposefully placed within our living places, so that we do not need to take a special trip to visit them, but rather we encounter them in our daily routines. A good example of this type of monument is Gunter Demnig’s Stumbling Blocks in Berlin and other cities in Germany and Austria. This monument is composed of blocks of stone engraved with names of individuals killed by the Nazis which are distributed throughout the city. (See Figure 9.) The monument is not limited to one particular place, but rather it is scattered throughout different neighborhoods in the city. The intent of Demnig’s monument is to bring the reality of the Holocaust into our daily life where we are more likely to perform a personal reckoning, rather than visit the monument with a tourist-like detachment. Monuments like Demnig’s undo the sense in which monuments can be thought of as sacred, and instead, they offer a vision of monuments that disrupt (if not, undo) the sacredness of what is associated with the nation.

Monuments like Demnig’s blur the separation between the sacred and the profane but they do so at some risk. With such monuments, the everyday spaces that are normally reserved for our profane activities as individuals or as members of other non-national groups, become invaded by the symbols, texts, and images of monuments. Elements that would otherwise be relegated to national, i.e., sacred space, become an inseparable part of our everyday life. The difficulty in the blurring produced by such monuments is that spaces that we enter as individuals and those we enter as members in the nation become indistinguishable. The blurring of the sacred and profane, in other words, means a blurring of national and individual *space* as well.

The risk of blurring national and individual space is not so much the loss of the national space as it is a loss of individual space. The loss of individual space means a loss of a distinct space where an individual can be just that—an individual. The existence of individual space is crucial for the development of a sense of self and a capacity for self-government. Therefore, without this space, the individual may be left without the tools necessary to build an identity separate from a national one. The loss of individual space should be of particular concern to those who are wary of a nationalism that does not distinguish between an individual and national identity. In Chapter 5, I will discuss this line of argument more at length. However, here it is sufficient to say that, although the concerns that motivate the construction of monuments that are integrated into our daily environment are appealing, such monuments may ultimately risk losing a distinction—between the sacred and the profane—that can be important for safeguarding the individual.<sup>23</sup>

### ***Monuments construct and define the nation***

The production of sacred space is linked to the production of a certain image of the nation. The sacred space creates an area that is dedicated to the display of what the nation, now deemed sacred, looks like. Similar to a church, the sacred space is not only used for worship, but also for the presentation of the history, values, and promises of the nation (or in the case of the church, of Christianity). In the sacred space, monuments create an image of the nation through the activities, images, and spaces they encourage.

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<sup>23</sup> To be sure, there are other ways in which nationalist practices can invade our daily life, e.g., the use of nationalist slogans in advertising or postage stamps. However, the difference between such practices and monuments is that monuments need not enter our daily routines, whereas other practices would not exist if they did not do so.

They become objects in the national landscape in both a literal and metaphorical sense. Literally, monuments are visually present on national grounds, such as the National Mall, just as their reproductions are present on postcards and in film and advertising. However, if we think of the national landscape as a metaphor for the ideas and actions that contribute to the definition of the nation, we find that monuments play a role in inspiring and reflecting competing interpretations of the nation itself. The design of monuments reflects a certain conception of the nation which, when it is observed by an audience, creates an understanding not only of the nation as an abstract entity, but of an individual's relation to it. Furthermore, because the construction of monuments is never a smooth and unchallenged process, the contestations about the design, location, or necessity of a monument are in themselves a contestation about how the nation defines itself and the relation of individuals to it. Therefore, a monument is not a stagnant object that, once in place, becomes simply an ornament that neither stirs nor challenges us. Rather, the space created by monuments is a "morally and politically *charged* space." (Barshay 1995, emphasis in original)

At stake with the politics of space and monuments is the representation of competing ideas about the character and boundaries of the nation. The location and the design of monuments are critical in conveying a certain image of the nation. This image is based on the creation of an imagined community. Similar to the role Anderson assigns the printing industry (itself a form of national practice), monuments also participate in the construction and definition of an imagined national community. According to Anderson, an imagined community is defined by a feeling of comradeship among people who are, by all accounts, strangers. However, the feeling of comradeship that Anderson writes

about is not only limited to people who are presently alive and who are separated by remote distances. In the nation, the comradeship extends backward in time to include people who are dead but who are still considered part of the community. The inclusion of the dead in the imagined community is central to the way a nation defines itself. Without a connection to a life preceding our own, a nation can only exist for a single generation. By linking the community to the past, a nation simultaneously creates a sense of shared history and a shared destiny.

### *Death*

The presence of the dead in national monuments—particularly, the memorialization of the fallen—creates a promise of life beyond death. With the dead included in the national community, there is a sense that the nation has existed since antiquity. This strengthens the idea that the nation is timeless and that its existence does not require further justification. However, the inclusion of the dead does not merely give the nation a certain characteristic, i.e., that it is eternal, but it also affects the way an individual is related to the nation. The memorialization of the dead provides an assurance that one's life is not lost with physical death, but rather that it can be immortalized through its appropriation by the nation. One's life is no longer seen as beginning with one's own birth and ending with one's own death, but rather one's life is reconceptualized as linked to the life of the nation. And, since the nation is seen as eternal, one's life is also seen as eternal. The inclusion of the dead in the national community is nothing short of a promise of immortality. This is a promise which, one might add, makes the idea that nationalism is a civic religion seem once again compelling.

The memorialization of the dead plays a role in defining the character of the nation, that is, of its national values. By publicly memorializing those who died for the nation, monuments associate the willingness to die for the nation with a respectful and admirable act. The memorialization of the dead signals an endorsement and appropriation of the willingness for sacrifice as a value that defines the members in the nation. To be included in the national community, one must, in other words, accept the occasional need for sacrifice. However, the causes that lead to the individuals' death are also articulated as national values and they too find expression in monuments. The causes for which people died are represented as values worth dying for. Without these particular values the nation would risk losing its defining character—hence the willingness to die for them. Once again, the etching of the sentence “This is the price of freedom” at the World War II Memorial is significant because it links the death of the soldiers with a cause: a threat to freedom. This link establishes the value of freedom as a distinct value for Americans. If it were not an important American value, the death of the soldiers in its name would have been pointless. Therefore, the representation in monuments of the causes that lead to the death of people serves as an indication of the values that define the nation.<sup>24</sup>

### *Memory*

By memorializing the dead, monuments become responsible for conserving the past. In them, they capture a glimpse into the past and the people who lived before. However,

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<sup>24</sup> The particular way in which the dead are memorialized can signal how the boundaries of the nation are defined. For example, the racial makeup of the figures that are represented can serve as an indication of the inclusion, or exclusion, of a racial factor in national membership. A good example of how this plays out can be seen in the Fredrick Hart's Vietnam Veterans Memorial sculpture which includes a racially diverse ensemble. The design choice of the soldiers' racial background conveys the notion that American heroes are considered heroic regardless of race.

beyond the pervasive presence of the dead in monuments, monuments also relate to the past through the collection and reproduction of memories. By representing past events, monuments bring to our attention specific moments and help us re-live them, thus serving as a vehicle for collecting and re-telling the stories of the past. However, the selection of events from the past is not random, but is rather done through a nationalist lens. The events are selected because they are deemed relevant to the nation and their mere presence in a national monument gives them a national significance. The assembling of memories in monuments creates a distinct interpretation of the past. It is a past that has become, by way of monuments, a *national* memory. Monuments, in other words, help us remember the past but they do so while giving the past a distinctly national meaning. In this sense, monuments do not simply reify memory by collecting it; rather, they are also involved in producing memory, namely, a *national* memory.<sup>25</sup>

The production of national memories is central to the way in which monuments create an imagined national community. Because the construction of a national past is also the construction of a *shared* past, monuments link individuals who may not know each other but who are joined through “shared” national memories. A shared past also—and perhaps more importantly—creates a sense of companionship that extends over several generations. Generations of the past become linked to those of the present, and both of these become linked to the generations of the future. Therefore, the construction of shared past establishes a national life, so to speak, that extends beyond our own. It

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<sup>25</sup> The idea of a national memory is not restricted to one, singular, monolithic memory. Monuments can produce national *memories*. They can do so both in the sense that different monuments remind of us of different things, but also in the sense that one monument can host a multiplicity of national memories. In Chapters 3 and 5 I discuss the latter type of monument particularly in regard to counter-memorials. These memorials speak to the idea that memory, like individual identity, is varied, multiple and fluid.



both looks back toward a shared past and forward toward a shared future (if not a shared destiny). The companionship that arises from the construction of a shared, national past implies the construction of an imagined national community.

In addition to constructing an imagined community, national memory also helps define the character of the nation. The nature of the events being memorialized defines in some way the character of the group that is being linked to these events. The connection between what the past consists of and the defining character of the nation is particularly important to Isaiah Berlin. He writes that nationalist sentiment springs from a shared sense of a past injury. (Berlin 1990) The event, or series of events that mark the moments of collective humiliation, awakens the nation to self-awareness and defines the terms in which it sees itself. Berlin argues that the experience of being under attack leads its victims to assert themselves as a nation through the cultivation of specific traits that separate them from their attackers. These traits are cultivated as a resistance to and separation from the *other*. Berlin's discussion of collective humiliation as defining the character of the nation is, to be sure, only one example. Other non-humiliating events, such as victory or independence, can be equally important for the definition of a nation. However, in general, the legitimization of the existence as well as the definition of the distinguishing character of a nation is based on having a common past. And, it is precisely this—a common past—that monuments create so well.

The creation of a national past means that monuments define *what* should be remembered, as for example with the memorialization of instances of collective humiliation. However, beyond *what* is remembered, monuments also give us a sense of *how* we remember. The construction of a specifically shared past establishes a

relationship between the individual and the group. It binds the individual to memories that he may not have lived through but with which he identifies precisely because they are presented as a *shared* past. As I argued earlier, this means that the individual is connected to a past beyond his lifetime. But, more than that, it means that, in a national context, to remember adequately, one must do so with others. A shared national past tells us that the past can only make sense when it is shared by a community. In other words, we cannot remember alone because our memories do not have meaning in the absence of others. Therefore, the question of *how* we remember is related to how the nation conceptualizes individuals, i.e., as forming part of an imagined community.

### **Conclusion**

Monuments, both with regard to death and memory, are oriented toward the past. The preoccupation with the past is central to the way a monument can function as a national practice. In order to contribute to the construction of an imagined community, monuments must extend their meaning beyond the immediate and the daily. A past that is not limited to our life span, either because there is a shared past or because the concept of sacrifice transforms individual death into national life, connects us in a fundamental way to others. Furthermore, the way in which the past is articulated helps define the boundaries and character of those included in the group. Since monuments articulate the past in a variety of ways, whether with regard to memory or death, monuments construct different, possibly competing, ideas about the “nation.” And this, as I argued at the beginning of the chapter, makes monuments a national practice.

In the chapters that follow I look at monuments and memory. In the next chapter, I use Nora's concept of *lieux de mémoire* as a framework for thinking of monuments in relation to memory. I examine the way in which monuments function as sites of memory that simultaneously safeguard memory but also have the potential of corrupting it. I discuss how different ideas about the way we remember and what we *can* remember affect the design of monuments. Then, in Chapter 4, I analyze the ubiquitous presence of death in monuments. I look at the place of the hero in the memorialization process and I examine the ways in which the memorialization of the hero reflects a certain understanding of the relation between the individual and the group. In that chapter I also discuss how the concept of sacrifice in the nation denies death itself and asserts, instead, the eternal life of the nation. Finally, in Chapter 5, I investigate how monuments not only are able to construct national meaning but also accommodate liberal values. I rely on Chapters 3 and 4 to develop a discussion about how monuments might respond to a conception of the "nation" as both traditionally national but also liberal. Chapter 5 examines how monuments can open up to liberal possibilities while maintaining their role in the production of a national narrative. More generally, the chapter serves as a concluding discussion about monuments as a national practice but with particular attention to how monuments would serve as a national practice in the context of liberal nationalism.

## Chapter Three / Memory and Monuments

One of the distinguishing characteristics of monuments, as a national practice, is their relation to the past. Overwhelmingly, monuments bring to our attention events that occurred in the past or people that have lived before us. They represent, or more accurately, they create memories that contribute to the construction of the image of the nation. These memories, in turn, become *national* memories because they both create a national community and define its character.

In this chapter, I begin with a discussion about memory as a particular approach to the past. I argue that memory infuses the past with particular meanings. In the case of national memory, the past is interpreted through a national lens. The second section of the chapter analyzes the particular relationship between monuments and memory. Here I expand Pierre Nora's brief discussion of monuments as *lieux de memoire* to illustrate the way in which monuments can be simultaneously places, sites, and *loci* of memory. Finally, the third part of the chapter is dedicated to an analysis of the relationship between the design of monuments and their approach to memory. In particular, I am interested in the implications that this relationship has on the way in which the nation is imagined. Therefore, I discuss a variety of different designs and I examine how each might reflect a particular understanding of national memory and, by extension, of the

nation as well. The purpose of this analysis, as of the chapter as a whole, is to illustrate *how* monuments, vis-à-vis memory, function as a national discourse.

## **I. Memory and nation**

Pierre Nora famously distinguishes between the role of history and memory. He argues that memory is an organic, if at times inaccurate, retelling of the past. It relates to the past as a source for explanation and meaning for the present. In particular, memory participates in the construction of communities and their respective identities. In a similar vein, David Lowenthal argues that memory is responsible for exaggerating, emphasizing, de-emphasizing, or minimizing the significance of events. He argues that memory imposes a framework on the past that infuses it with purpose. (Lowenthal 1996, xi)

However, Paul Ricoeur is careful to point out that the selection of certain events at the expense of others has the dual effect of recalling and forgetting. Ricoeur reminds us that “seeing one thing is not seeing another, recounting one drama is forgetting another.” (Ricoeur 2004, 452) In order to make sense of past events, memory purposefully selects those moments that are most meaningful to us. But, in doing so, it cannot help but reject some other moments as well. So, although memory is neither an accurate nor an infallible re-telling of the past, it is not a total creation or fabrication of facts either. Memory is the process through which the past is subject to “successive deformations, vulnerable to manipulation and appropriation, susceptible to being long dormant and periodically revived.” (Nora 1989, 8)

For Nora, history, as opposed to memory, is a distinctly modern phenomenon that is rational, ordered, and objective in its aim. It organizes the past rationally, according to

universal guidelines, in order to make its re-presentation intelligible to us. (Nora 1989, 9)

Nora argues that history besieges memory because it aims to explain the past rather than mold it in order to give meaning to the present. Lowenthal argues that the desire to explain the past, if not rationalize it, makes the past seem as though it were fundamentally separate from the present, that is, as though the past were “a foreign country.” (Lowenthal 1985) Both Nora and Lowenthal see memory as having opposing tasks: revealing the past only insofar as it supports or creates values in the present whereby it blurs the separation between our life in the present and the past.<sup>1</sup> (Nora 1989, 22)

However, it should be made clear that Nora’s definition of history and memory, as well as the distinction he draws between them, reflect different *approaches* to the past. Whether or not we agree with calling one approach “history” and the other “memory,” Nora’s discussion is useful insofar as it illustrates that the past can indeed be approached in different ways, and that the way we approach the past affects the way we frame the present. In this chapter, I am particularly interested in how the past can be “infused with meaning,” which in Nora’s terms would be the construction of memory. To take Nora’s definition of memory as an *approach* to the past opens the possibility of analyzing *how* meaning is constructed, how that construction changes over time, and the shape and effect of these constructed meanings on our society. Therefore, in the discussion that follows I understand the term “memory” as Nora does: it is neither a neutral nor an

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<sup>1</sup> For a good review of the literature about the distinction between history and memory, see (Jenkins 1997, Legg 2005, Olick and Robbins 1998)

objective re-telling of the past. That “history” also is neither neutral nor objective goes without saying.

### ***Collective memory***

Maurice Halbwachs argues that the processes of memory cannot help but be social. He rejects Freud’s notion that the ultimate source of memory stems from an individual’s subconscious. Rather, Halbwachs thinks that what is crucial about memory is not *what* we remember, but rather *how* we remember. He argues that our memories spring from our social, exterior environment. Memory cannot be individual, as Freud would argue, because “it is in society that people normally acquire their memories. It is also in society that they recall, recognize, and localize their memories.” (Halbwachs 1992, 38) This notion of the social source of our memory leads Halbwachs to introduce the term “collective memory.” Collective memory is the understanding that “memory is a matter of how minds work together in society, how their operations are not simply mediated but are structured by social arrangements.” (Olick & Robbins 1998, 109) Therefore, to speak about memory is to speak about a social community.

The collective nature of memory can be understood in two parallel ways: first, as Halbwachs points out, memory draws meaning from the social frameworks to which we belong. Second, memory interprets the past so that our current experience makes sense to us. That is, the meaning and values that memory imposes on the past provide a social context for our identity. The power of collective memory is, therefore, its ability to connect us to other people. Specifically, it makes us feel linked to people we may not even know, but who nonetheless form part of our same collective memory. Eviatar

Zerubavel argues that collective memory gives us “the ability to experience events that happened to groups and communities to which we belong long before we joined them as if they were part of our own past.” (Zerubavel 1996) This means that collective memory allows for the development (or the maintenance) of such familiar emotions as pride or humiliation that result from events we did not experience in our own life, but feel connected to through the groups to which we belong.

The fact that we feel connected to people who essentially are strangers is an odd notion. This should remind us of Benedict Anderson’s discussion of “imagined communities.” Anderson uses the term “imagined community” to define communities in which members “will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives an image of their community.” (Anderson 1991, 6) For Anderson, the national community is an imagined community *par excellence*. However, the nation is noteworthy not because of its imagined quality but because of *what* is imagined and the *way* in which it is imagined. A nation is often imagined to share language, culture, territory, history, and destiny. And, while some nations may have only some of these elements, and others may have elements not listed, what characterizes a nation above all else is the sense of belonging to it. (Renan 1994) A nation owes its existence to a specific collective memory: a memory that interprets the past and imposes on it meaning, purpose, and values that give the nation its legitimacy.

Eric Hobsbawm calls this process of imposing national meaning on the past, the invention of tradition. Hobsbawm argues that nations are “exercises in social engineering” because they claim to “to be the opposite of novel, namely rooted in the remotest antiquity, and the opposite of constructed, namely human communities so



natural as to require no definition other than self-assertion.” (Hobsbawm & Ranger 1983, 14) The ancient and natural quality assigned to the nation forms the basis for the justification of its existence. And, furthermore, this justification becomes the base for any actions carried out in the name of the nation, whether they be struggles for independence, external or internal war, citizenship restrictions, etc. A nation cannot help but be a community tied by memory because it uses the past to transmit values—in this case values that affirm its antiquity and legitimacy.

The invention of tradition, the construction of a collective national memory, works through various processes and discourses. Ernest Gellner, for example, argues that the codification and extensive literacy of vernacular language and folk culture in general in the 19th century gave rise to a sense of solidarity and loyalty to the new political unit, the nation. He points out that “the age of nationalism” was defined by a rise of a bureaucratic machinery that required the invention of a common language for its workers, i.e., the people. (Gellner 1983) This, he claims, constructed a sense of national belonging. The spread of a common national language was simultaneously sustained by the rise of print-capitalism. Anderson argues that not only did the newspaper extend its reach further than ever before, therefore transforming local events into national news, but more importantly, the spread of the newspaper gave rise to a new national awareness and consciousness. (Anderson 1991)

## II. Monuments and memory

Monuments play a particularly interesting and important role in the construction of a national memory.<sup>2</sup> This role makes them, once again, a national practice. The role of monuments in the construction of memory is distinct because they are exclusively constructed for the sake of memory. As I discussed in the previous chapter the very word “monument” is derived from the word *monare*, which means “to remind” in Latin. Monuments remind us of past events and re-enact them for us in the present. In this sense they truly re-present the past for us. But, by doing so, monuments link the past with the present. A monument, by virtue of having a public, necessarily brings together its audience—the present—with the symbolic representation of the past.

A monument does not, however, remind us of just anything: it reminds us about what is deemed important for the nation. By choosing specific events or people to memorialize, monuments control “the narrative of actual events, determining the sequence of experiences, and interpreting them for subsequent generations.” (Ivy 2002, 190) A monument serves as a reminder of a nationally significant past which in turn serves as a vehicle for the communication of national values. But, more importantly, monuments participate in the justification and legitimization of the nation. The selection and manipulation of the past is done to serve the present. In Nora’s terms, this would mean that the past that is captured in monuments is transformed into memory, rather than history, because it does not aim for accuracy—rather, the past is a malleable substance that contributes to the national discourse. The memory that results from this construction

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<sup>2</sup> As before, I use the term “monument” to mean *national* monuments.

is a “memory of a national past [that] aims to affirm the righteousness of a nation’s birth, even its divine election. . . . To do otherwise would be to undermine the very foundations of national legitimacy, of the state’s seemingly natural right to exist.” (Young 1992, 52)

The interplay of the past and the present in monuments has a pedagogic element. Monuments can instruct us about events we never lived through. Since most monuments are constructed to last for many generations, or at least so that they *seem* to last forever, most monuments are seen by people who did not actually live through the events that the monuments memorialize. Despite not having lived through the experience that is being memorialized, the fact that it been deemed worthy of a monument teaches the audience that this event was, and continues to be, important to the nation. In addition, a monument teaches *how* one ought to remember a specific event. The monument represents a specific interpretation and explanation of the past and as such it is, once again, a tool of memory. The audience is instructed in what the past, the event that is memorialized, should mean to them. For example, the Korean War Memorial bears the inscription “Freedom is not free.” The inscription is significant because it simultaneously teaches us that the war required human sacrifice, and, more importantly, that the war was fought for the sake of freedom. In this way, monuments can “supplement” our memory, that is, teach us about the past, as well.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> A special case of the pedagogic character of monuments can be seen in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Again, this museum is unusual because it combines a museum with a memorial. In the context of memory, this example is relevant because one enters the memorial only after having walked through the museum and *learned* about the Holocaust. In this way, the museum provides an additional pedagogical tool to the memorial.

Though monuments are artifacts of memory and therefore are bound to the past, they also promise an existence in the future. The construction of collective memory implies a timeline which extends not only from the past to the present, but to the future as well. Gellner observes that “the most commonly used word in the nationalist vocabulary: [is] *awakening*.” (Hutchinson & Smith 1994, 8) He argues that saying that national sentiments are being awakened, rather than constructed, implies that one conceives of the nation as having been merely asleep rather than non-existent. Monuments participate in a similar process of awakening because they remind us of—literally, they bring *back* to our attention—memories that otherwise would be forgotten. This is particularly interesting when the meaning of monuments change over time. To illustrate how this occurs, in 1988 the artist Hans Haaschek built a replica of a Nazi monument in Garz, Germany as a protest against the Nazi regime. The same monument that previously celebrated Nazi Germany now served to condemn it. What is important here is that although the meaning of monuments may change, the existence of the monument itself provides an important link between the present generation and the future ones. In this case, it allows for a symbolic dialogue between Nazi Germany and the present non-Nazi generation. Therefore, a monument can address present as much as future viewers.

The orientation of monuments toward the future can take unexpected shapes. A striking example is the case of the “Victory Arch” designed by Saddam Hussein in Iraq. The monument was meant to mark the victory of Iraq over Iran, yet it was commissioned in 1985 when no victory was in sight. Its conception therefore “precedes the reality it is meant to commemorate, which is most uncommon in the history of monument making.”

(Makiya 2004, 10) This monument is future-oriented in a different sense: it is preemptive because it serves as a prophetic declaration, or memorialization, of victory.

The continuity between past, present, and future makes the destruction of a monument significant to the processes of construction—and destruction—of memory. The physical destruction of a monument symbolizes a break in the connection to the past and the future. It literally demolishes the image of the nation as eternal and ever-lasting that is conveyed by the monument. The ruins symbolize the end of national values, myths, and destinies. There are countless examples of monuments that were destroyed as part of an effort either to bring an end to a certain society and the memories that shaped it and/or to herald the beginning of a new era with new memories. It suffices simply to mention the well-publicized demolition of the statues of Lenin after the fall of the Soviet Union, and in a similar manner, those of Saddam Hussein after the American invasion.

### **III. Monuments as *lieux de mémoire***

The link between monuments and memory is significant because monuments serve, in addition to vehicles for the construction of memory, as *lieux de mémoire*. The term follows from the distinction Nora draws between history and memory and from what he sees today as the rise of history and the relegation of memory as primitive or irrational. As I have discussed before, Nora argues that modern society is obsessed with history, resulting in compulsive archiving, and that memory is being endangered. But, he argues, the decline in “spontaneous memory” results in a forced, unnatural protection of memory at the hands of history; it consecrates memory in the form of *lieux de mémoire*. *Lieux de*

*mémoire* can be thought of as islands of memory in a constantly rising ocean of history. They are the stuff of memory but they are inextricably situated in the world of history.

### ***Unraveling the term “lieux de mémoire”***

Nora's term *lieux de mémoire* has been translated in a variety of ways. The word *lieu* is problematic because it can have different meanings in English. *Lieux de mémoire* can be translated as places, sites, or *loci* of memory. Each of these choices expresses a different aspect of what Nora meant by the term. *Lieux de mémoire* can rightfully be translated as places of memory because for Nora these “shells of memory” are material locations or things which host or embody memory. He gives the examples of museums, monuments, and cemeteries (Nora 1989, 12) These are the locations where the politics of memory play out. But Nora is also careful to include in his definition of *lieux de mémoire* such things as calendars and national flags. (Nora 1989, 19 and 23) These examples are not a physical location of memory but rather its place in our social imagination. The Stars and Stripes, for instance, embodies our American collective memory and identity even when we are not confronted with the physical flag itself. Any image, description, or allusion to the flag are sufficient to inspire in us the memories it symbolizes. Therefore, we would be wise to extend the *places* of memory to *sites* of memory, as well.

However, for Nora what is crucial about *lieux de mémoire* is that they are the remnants of organic memory. In the face of the danger of being lost to the advance of history, *lieux de mémoire* serve as a safeguard for memory. In this sense, they should also be understood as *loci* of memory because our memories emanate from them while at the same time they keep our memories safe and secure within them. Nora's term *lieux de*

*mémoire* describes the varied ways in which memory is preserved and reproduced in today's world. Selecting only one of these translations, whether places, sites, or *loci* of memory, would limit the scope of the term and would highlight one aspect of it while obscuring another.<sup>4</sup>

### ***What makes monuments lieux de mémoire***

In his definition of *lieux de mémoire*, Nora includes three different characteristics: *Lieux de mémoire* are material, functional, and symbolic. Although Nora identifies monuments as examples of *lieux de mémoire*, he does not provide a comprehensive analysis of how monuments embody these three characteristics. (Nora 1989, 12 and 22) It is possible, however, to draw this analysis rather directly from Nora's work. The monument as physical object is the most obvious way in which a monument has a *material* manifestation. The choice of its location and design is purposeful and is different from, say, historical monuments, which are "ensembles constructed over time" and which serve as mirrors to history rather than as objects of memory. (Nora 1989, 22) Furthermore, the very existence of the monument is testimony to the *will* to remember. The materiality of a monument reflects the desire to "stop time, to block the work of forgetting, to establish a state of things, to immortalize death, to materialize the immaterial." (Nora 1989, 19) By being, both literally and metaphorically, inscribed into the material of the monument, memory appears to be fixed and permanent. Like the stone (or marble, or granite, or

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<sup>4</sup> In order to maintain its richness, I have chosen to keep Nora's term in its French original. I will only use the words places, sites, or *loci* of memory to emphasize a particular aspect of the broader concept.

glass) of the monument, memory seems to be protected from decay and, ideally, from destruction as well.<sup>5</sup>

A monument shares with other *lieux de mémoire* a functional aspect as well. Like other *lieux de mémoire*, monuments have the function of preserving memory. Through different design choices and the selection of specific imagery, text, and location, a monument “preserves an incommunicable experience that would disappear along with those who shared it.” (Nora 1989, 23) According to Nora, a monument captures memory and saves it from forgetfulness, not to mention from the claws of history. In addition, the preservation of memory has a pedagogical function, as well. It instructs us about a shared past and teaches us about our national values and their meaning.

Finally, monuments have a strong symbolic power. The very image of monuments plays an important symbolic role in popular culture. For example, Miranda Banks traces the imagery of monuments in science fiction films and illustrates how their appearance in films such as *Independence Day* or *The Day the Earth Stood Still* reinforces “the ideals and aspirations . . . related to the nation and the political body.” (Banks 2002, 144) Monuments that are reproduced and used as icons in popular culture carry with them a reference to the nation and what it stands for. And, conversely, monuments can integrate recognizable symbols, such as eagles or flags, in their designs to elicit an immediate, partially pre-existing response.

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<sup>5</sup> As I will discuss later in this chapter, the need for a “materiality” requirement in monuments is challenged by James Young. Young argues that the *debate* surrounding a monument prior to its construction is in itself a monument.



For Nora, the symbolic aspect of *lieux de mémoire* is particularly important because he argues that beyond the symbols themselves, monuments inspire symbolic actions. Monuments could be said to inspire two different kinds of actions: “dominant” and “dominated” (to use Nora’s terms). The former would include official events such as ceremonies and parades that occur on and around monuments, while the latter points to non-official or spontaneous activities inspired by monuments—such as protest marches, demonstrations, and speeches, as well as objects for graffiti and vandalism. Monuments can become, in other words, centers for resistance movements and oppositional politics. Monuments also draw non-political and extremely personal pilgrimages, such as those that occur at cemeteries or road-side shrines. (Santino 2002) The Vietnam Veterans Memorial is noteworthy in this case because it not only attracts tourist-like visitors, as do most of the other national monuments on the National Mall, but also individuals who approach the monument as a tombstone for their loved ones. The monument’s funerary architecture has inspired the now well-known tradition of leaving objects to the dead ones, much like the tradition of visiting a grave. (Hass 1998) This array of symbolic activities, official and non-official, contribute to the politics of memory and monuments.

However, even though Nora argues that *lieux de mémoire* are our only connection to memory in a time when it is increasingly being lost, he also argues that *lieux de mémoire* are fundamentally unsatisfactory. He distinguishes between the memory embedded in *lieux de mémoire* and “true” memory. He argues that *lieux de mémoire* are born out of a fear of loss of memory whereas “true memory” is an organic extension of society. True memory is transmitted through story-telling, ceremony, and ritual. It is a memory that is born out of experience within our social or cultural frameworks, and not

kept in the constrained, somewhat artificial, form of a *lieu de mémoire*. For this reason, Nora thinks that *lieux de mémoire* are “like shells on the shore when the sea of living memory has receded”; they have the trappings of memory but are lacking its real substance. (Nora 1989, 12) Surprisingly, therefore, to understand monuments within the framework of Nora’s *lieux de mémoire* means that one takes monuments to be a fundamentally unsatisfactory medium for the exercise of memory.

Furthermore, Nora argues that the less memory is experienced from the inside, in our daily life, the more it will exist through “exterior scaffolding and outward signs.” (Nora 1989, 13) He claims that the proliferation of *lieux de mémoire*, and hence of monuments, is the result of the general loss of true memory in society. James Young extends Nora’s notion that monuments may be inversely related to memory and claims that monuments shoulder our “memory-work.” This is crucial for Young because he is concerned that the building of monuments may encourage us to abandon our “memory-work” and be encouraged to forget the past. (Young 1992, 55) He warns that monuments in particular may run the risk of relieving us of the responsibility, and possibly the burden, of doing our own “memory-work.” Perhaps, he continues, the drive to build monuments goes hand in hand with the desire to forget.

Ironically, the very thing that was meant to protect memory from disappearing seems, if we take Young’s word for it, to induce more forgetting. However, at the same time, Young believes that monuments are the perfect tools and vehicles of memory because they have the capacity to create a discussion, or debate, about memory. He argues that the most successful monument may not be a “single memorial at all, but simply the never-to-be-resolved debate over which kind of memory to preserve, how to

do it, in whose name, and to what end.” (Young 1997, 879) Monuments have the capacity to problematize memory in a unique way because they can inspire debate that reaches beyond a discussion about the monument, but that extends to a discussion about the meaning and nature of memory itself.

The ability of a monument to inspire debate is important because it can contribute to the creation of a meaningful public space. Specifically, Michael North argues that monuments are successful only if they engender a public space in the Habermasian sense. (North 1992, 27-8) North credits the Vietnam Veterans Memorial with achieving such a space because it places the “viewers in a public space that is articulated in terms of political controversy so that to view the piece is not simply to experience space but also to enter a debate.” (North 1992, 20) The design of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial creates not only a symbolic and powerful national monument but also a natural space for rallies, reunions, and political speeches. (Griswold 1993) The monument and its surroundings are a physical and metaphorical public space. By creating space for debate, monuments like the Vietnam Veterans Memorial articulate the idea that memory, especially national memory, is fleeting, unsettled, and in need of exploration. Monuments that can become locations for debate provide an alternative to “closed” memory that is immune to criticism and analysis. Furthermore, monuments as centers of debate that create an “open memory” may be particularly important to a democratic nation that aspires toward self-reflection and even self-criticism—a point I return to in Chapter 5.

#### **IV. Memory, the design of monuments, and the image of the nation**

The complex relationship between monuments and national memory implies a running dialogue with the discourse of nationalism. Because memory is tied to the construction of a national community, as I have discussed in the first section of this chapter, whenever monuments wrestle with the meaning of memory, they simultaneously grapple with the meaning of the nation as well. Different approaches to memory, or rather the problematization of memory, as well as competing ideas about the nation, are therefore expressed in the design choices of monuments.

The problematization of memory is most salient in the design and conception of counter-monuments. Counter-monuments are “memorial spaces conceived to challenge the very premise of the monument.” (Young 2000, 96) Counter-monuments set out to question the relationship between memory and monument and to represent this difficult relationship in their designs. Rather than do away with monuments entirely—which would be an alternative response to challenging the merit of monuments—counter-monuments seek to integrate the material, functional, and symbolic aspects of traditional monuments with new modes of understanding the role of monuments in our society, in general, and in constructing memory, specifically. In this sense, counter-monuments continue to be *lieux de mémoire* because they continue to sustain a dialogue with and about memory.

## *The complexities of memory and monuments*

### *The burden / responsibility of memory-work*

One of the most interesting challenges of counter-monuments is the claim that monuments cannot remember for us. James Young argues that monuments fall short in helping us remember things past because “once we assign monumental form to memory, we have to some degree divested ourselves of the obligation to remember.” (Young 1992) Rather than view the monument as a guarantee for remembering, monuments can often lose their social and political significance and become points of reference in the landscape, or artifacts of public art. Counter-monuments are designed to warn us of the risk of building a monument in the name of memory, but in actuality building them because we do not want to deal with a painful past, that is, building them for the sake of forgetting.

Architects Jochen Gerz and Esther Shalev-Gerz illustrated this danger in their design of the Monument Against Fascism. The design of this monument focuses on the idea that the responsibility to remember lies on our shoulders, and cannot be relegated to the monument itself. The Monument Against Fascism was unveiled in Harburg in 1986, and it consisted of a pillar 12 meters high made of hollow aluminum. The pillar was designed to allow for memorial graffiti to be etched onto it, and invited viewers to express their thoughts and reactions to fascism or the monument. As the lower sections of the monument filled with graffiti, the monument-pillar was successively lowered into the ground. At the end of seven years, the pillar was completely underground leaving only a burial stone inscribed to “Harburg’s Monument against Fascism.” (Young 1992) (See Figure 9.) For the Gerzes, the memory of fascism could not be tied to a monument

because, like the metaphoric disappearance of their pillar, the meaning of a monument risks fading away with time. The idea of the Monument Against Fascism is that we, the viewers, commit “ourselves to remain vigilant.” It represents an understanding that “in the end, it is only we ourselves who can rise up against injustice.” (Gerz and Shalev-Gerz in (Young 1992, 274) The memory of fascism and its horrors can ultimately survive only in the commitments made by living individuals—that is, it can only survive in the *absence* of monuments.

The Monument Against Fascism brings up the interplay between recalling and forgetting which Ricoeur so aptly captures. For Young and the Gerz architects, the danger of forgetting is so daunting that they see the building of monuments as a threat to memory, rather than its tool or vehicle. For them, monuments should be built only if the dangers they imply, i.e., forgetfulness, are made explicit. However, it is worth at least noting that in order to remember the past, which both the Gerzes and Young are keen to do, there needs to be *some* form of forgetting. In order to make sense of the past or, in the case of the Gerz monument, to make sense of fascism, we must reckon with the need to forget as well. To avoid forgetting all together, as the Gerzes argue, may be not only impossible, but undesirable.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Jorge Luis Borges muses over the consequences of total memory in his short story entitled *Funes the Memorious*. In this story he tells the story of Funes who remembers *everything* and forgets *nothing*. (Borges 1998) Though at first we are tempted to be jealous of Funes, Borges makes it clear that Funes’ gift is nothing other than an affliction from which he suffers considerably. Funes’ present is solidly melded to his past (and future). Borges illustrates that forgetting is necessary, because without it we cannot have a sense of progression (not progress) through time.

### *Monuments as a medium for changes in memory*

Though Young worries about the role of monuments in our desire to forget and possibly deny the past, monuments do not necessarily imply a shirking of responsibility.

Monuments are not necessarily a medium for forgetting; on the contrary, they can be a medium for the on-going and lively process of producing, revising, and re-evaluating the meanings of the past. For example, the Lincoln Memorial has served as a framing device for a variety of memories over the years. Built in 1922, the monument commemorated the end of the civil war and the second founding of United States. The meaning of the monument changed, however, after Martin Luther King delivered his “I Have a Dream” speech on the steps leading up to the monument. The staging of the event created an association between Lincoln in the background and Martin Luther King in the foreground, emphasizing not the unity of South and North, but the promises made by the Gettysburg address. Martin Luther King’s speech has served to revive and redefine the memories of Lincoln and give them a renewed meaning in today’s world. Furthermore, the delivery of the speech has become itself incorporated into the memories embodied in the monument. To walk up the steps to the monument means not only visiting the memorial to Lincoln, but visiting the steps upon which “I Have a Dream” was delivered. In this way, the Lincoln Memorial has been far from an excuse for forgetfulness, but rather a fertile ground for contestation, layering, and reviving memories. (Thomas 2002)

### *Vicarious memory*

By putting the burden of memory on individuals rather than monuments, one is inevitably confronted with what Young has termed “vicarious memory.” (Young 2000) For Young,

this is the type of memory that springs from experiences that we have not lived through, but which we feel are as vivid and important to our current life as if we had. Halbwachs uses the term “historical memory” in a similar way to refer to memory that reaches us only through historical records and not through personal experience. Though both thinkers highlight memory that is informed by external sources, I prefer Young’s term “vicarious memory” because it manages to simultaneously point to those who *did* experience the event and those who remember it. Our memory, therefore, is vicarious insofar as *we* experience it through *others*.

There are interesting monuments that have approached the problems of vicarious memory, and many have dealt with it through a focus on memories of the Holocaust by the children of Holocaust survivors. A good example of the use of vicarious memory in monuments is the Oregon Holocaust Memorial, built in 2004 which was the product of efforts by the Oregon Holocaust Survivors, Refugees, and Families Committee. What is striking about this memorial is its didactic character and the incorporation of survivors’ names onto the monument. The memorial is located at the end of a short path on which are strewn fragments of iron-cast items that were left behind by Jews rushing onto the trains, such as a damaged suitcase, broken violin, a menorah. The memorial itself consists of a wall of black granite on which there is a relatively lengthy summary of the war, and adjacent to it a collection of short quotes of Holocaust survivors. On the back of this wall are inscribed the names of Holocaust survivors along with the names of their family members who perished in the war. The “instructional” text, designed to literally address a non-experienced audience, as well as the transcription of survivors’ testimonies, makes explicit the fact that the audience of the monument is not expected to have lived through



the Holocaust. On the contrary, the audience is assumed to connect with the event only indirectly, i.e., vicariously, through its survivors. The design of the monument focuses on enshrining the survivors' memory rather than some collective or national memory. By doing so, the monument engages directly with the issue of vicarious memory; it draws attention to what lies at the heart of vicarious memory—memory *vis-à-vis* the testimonies of the *other*.

### *Memorializing absence*

The subtlety of vicarious memory becomes even more difficult when there is no *other* left from which to draw memories. This situation, most noticeable in the case of genocides, has opened the door to the problem of memorializing absence. Rather than memorialize an idea, hero, or event that is meant to live through the ages, one is confronted with the challenge of memorializing that which is lost. The difficulty of memorializing absence is that the monument can no longer point to itself as a representative (however inadequate) of an event or person, but must now point to that which does not exist. Such a monument must deny its role as a safeguard of memory and instead affirm its role as a signifier of absence. Many of the counter-monuments that have looked at this problem have, once again, done so within the context of the post-World War II era in which entire cultures were swept away with few people, if any, left to tell its stories.

An emerging design solution to this problem among counter-monuments has been the construction of negative-form monuments. The Aschrott-Brunnen Monument is a good example of this type of monument. It consists of an inverted underground replica of a fountain that was located outside Kassel's City Hall Square. (See Figure 10.) The

original fountain was funded by the Jewish entrepreneur Sigmond Aschrott and was destroyed by the Nazis in 1939. Horst Hoheisel, the artist who designed the new monument, writes that he “designed the new fountain as a mirror image of the old one, sunk beneath the old place, in order to rescue the history of this place as a wound and as an open question.” (Young 1992, 288) Hoheisel’s design points to the fact that the Jewish community is gone and, therefore, a monument cannot memorialize the community, but only the *absence* of the community. The absence of the community, captured in this and in other monuments, consists not only of the physical death of the individuals, but also in the death of the memories that these individuals carried. The absence that is memorialized represents the schism, the unsettling discontinuity between the past and the future.<sup>7</sup>

### ***Collected vs. collective memory***

The problematization of memory in the design of counter-monuments, whether by dealing with the burden of memory-work, vicarious memory, or the memorialization of absence, has highlighted the role of the individual in the processes of memorialization. And, consequently, it has also brought a reevaluation of the concept of collective memory. Collective memory has been the target of growing criticism since the term was

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<sup>7</sup> The memorialization of absence addresses issues of memory at its extreme limit—the total lack of memory. However, as the design of negative-form monuments make clear, the place of the audience at these memorials is also problematic. The underground space created by negative-form monuments is purposefully unapproachable and beyond our reach. It makes gathering around and even viewing the monument difficult. By doing so, these monuments run the risk of making not only themselves but also the public invisible. The public is excluded from being in the presence of the monument and, though the intent of the negative-form monuments is precisely to point to the inaccessibility of the past, this exclusion creates the odd situation where we may have a public monument without a public.

coined by Halbwachs. Writers such as James Fentress and Chris Wickham criticized the term by writing that it is “curiously disconnected from the actual thoughts processes of any particular person.” (Fentress & Wickham 1992) Similarly, Allan Pred argues that the term is problematic because any conception of collective memory cannot help but be constructed through practices, which must stem from actual, non-abstract, individual practices. Without any grounding in individual experience, collective memory would be meaningless, at best, if not absurd.<sup>8</sup> Alternatively, Yael Zerubavel criticizes the notion that collective memory is on the decline. In her work on the historical monument of Masada in Israel, she has shown that despite the growing obsession with historical documentation in modern society, Israel and other nations continue to construct shared memories of the past. Zerubavel reverses Nora’s claim that “history besieges memory” by arguing throughout her work that “memory can also besiege history.” (Zerubavel 1994, 73)

Furthermore, the critique of collective memory puts at stake the conception of identity itself. Collective memory assumes that the individual is part of a collectivity from which he draws his sense of self, as well as a shared past and future. In this view, the individual is thought to be born into a pre-determined path or destiny. An individual’s memory in this case is not seen as the product of his own creation but rather as hereditary. A critique, therefore, of collective memory implies a related critique of the conceptualization of identity. Those who have resisted the term *collective* memory are

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<sup>8</sup> This idea was suggested to me by Allan Pred in the spring of 2006 when I participated in his graduate seminar “Urban Modernities: Culture(s), Space(s), and Everyday Life” at the University of California, Berkeley.

concerned that the term renders “the individual a sort of automaton, passively obeying the interiorized collective will.”<sup>9</sup> (Fentress & Wickham 1992) The use of the term risks losing sight of the individual *qua* individual and instead see him as merely a member of a group.

The design of counter-monuments has distanced itself from the notion of collective memory and the view of the individual implied in this view. Counter-monuments have turned toward an emphasis on individual memory and experience. This emphasis has led many of the monument designers toward the idea of *collected* memories. (Young 1993) The idea of collected memories, as opposed to collective memory, is based on the understanding that there is no singular national memory, but a multiplicity of perspectives and memories. By emphasizing the plurality in the nation, counter-monuments are also making monuments more public insofar as they “[preserve] the many perspectives through which [they are] understood.” (Donohoe 2002, 239) What becomes important here is a steadfast resistance to imposing a singular meaning. Following Hannah Arendt’s concept of plurality, Janet Donohoe argues that “it is important for those who experience a monument to recognize that we perceive it differently.” (Donohoe 2002, 239) The identity of the individual comes to the center of the discussion, where the assumption that we perceive the monument differently is coupled with the assumption that individuals maintain a unique identity within the nation.

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<sup>9</sup> The collective will, in this case, is different than the super-ego as discussed by Sigmund Freud. For Freud, though our ego is pressured by the super-ego (which consists of social norms and expectations), we are capable of wrestling with this pressure and retaining our agency. In other words, for Freud, as opposed to Fentress and Wickham, the existence of the super-ego in the self does not imply that we become “automatons.” (Freud 1989)

The individual does not get lost among the multitude but has an independent and autonomous presence.

### *Participatory monuments*

In order to engage with the idea of collected memories, monuments have been designed to have the dual function of representing a collection of memories on the one hand, and addressing an audience composed by a plurality of memories on the other. To do so, many of the designs have an element of audience participation. The participation of the public is meant to work against the imposition of official (collective) memory from above and the distance that this creates between the monument and those viewing it. However, The use of the public in monument designs is a delicate matter because there is the danger in combining massed crowds and heroic architecture. For example, Michael North uses the example of Leni Reifensal's *Triumph of the Will* to illustrate the intrinsic danger of monuments. North argues that the integration of the public in the design of monuments could be dangerous if the public enters the monument only as "mass-ornament" rather than as a collection of individuals. (North 1992, 16) To avoid the use of the public as mere "mass-ornament," the design of monuments has worked toward the integration of individual perception and experience.

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial and the Korean War Memorial in Washington, DC are interesting in this regard. Both share the use of reflection in their designs. Both monuments are made out of polished, shiny, black granite (another aspect that distinguishes them from any of the other monuments on the National Mall), which reflects the image of the viewers as they look at the monuments. By superimposing our

image with the names or etched faces of the dead, “the dead and the living meet.” (See Figure 11.) (Griswold 1993, 91) This effect forces us to reflect on our personal relation to the memories captured in the monument. The mirror effect in these monuments brings the public *into* the monument, thereby allowing, both literally and metaphorically, for a multiplicity of meanings.

In a similar vein, the participation of the audience is invited in such monuments as the Monument Against Fascism by the Gerzes and the Wall for Peace by artist Clara Halter and architect Jean-Michel Wilmotte. The Wall for Peace is located in Paris on the Champ de Mars, at the foot of the Eiffel Tower. It consists of tall glass columns on which the word for peace is etched in several languages. At the center of the memorial, there is a structure that holds a screen and keyboard that welcomes visitors to enter a record of their thoughts or reactions to the memorial.<sup>10</sup> As in the Monument Against Fascism, members of the public are invited to add their individual experiences and integrate them into the monument. This type of interaction with a monument work in a similar way at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. At the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, individuals can trace over the name of their lost and dear ones and take the rubbing home. There is also a tradition of leaving flowers, notes, and personal artifacts at the base of the monument.<sup>11</sup> These activities make the monument interactive in a double sense: individuals give their memories *to* the monument, which in turn become part of the monument itself, and

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<sup>10</sup> The monument’s database is also open to contributions on-line at <http://www.wallforpeace.com/mur.html#>

<sup>11</sup> The *Vietnam Veterans Memorial Collection* was created in 1992. It is managed by the National Park Service and consists of the collection of artifacts left at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. A portion of this collection is exhibited at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington DC.

individuals take the memory of their loved ones *from* the monument. The participation of the audience in these three monuments reflects a growing concern with viewing the individual as an integral part of national memory. The individual is considered a participant in the construction of the memory that defines the boundaries and meaning of the nation.

### **Conclusion**

Despite the transition in monument design from a representation of collective memory to collected memories, these new monuments cannot escape confronting the national context in which they are placed. The rejection of the term “collective memory” must not blind us to noticing “the different ways in which the ideas of individuals are influenced by the groups to which they belong.” (P. Burke quoted in Olick & Robbins 1998, 112) When an individual approaches “participatory monuments,” he is presumed to have a personal connection and memory of the event at hand. But if this personal connection is severed in some way (most possibly by a generational gap), the individual cannot help but rely upon other sources to construct an opinion or memory of the past. In other words, “participatory monuments” must reckon with the power of national discourse in the construction of memory, including the individual memories, of their audiences.

National monuments, whether traditional, innovative, or counter-memorials, are subject to the discourses of nationalism because of their engagement with what is presumed to be a *nationally significant* past. National monuments refer to a past, or alternatively, they represent an interpretation of the past, that is meant to be significant to individuals as

members of the nation.<sup>12</sup> The contestation of what a nation is, what it stands for, or the nature of memory does not change the fact that *national* monuments are a *national* practice. Alternatively, if national monuments did not contribute to the construction of *national* memory, they would not be *national* monuments. A more substantial rejection of the legitimacy and justification of the *nation* (such as cosmopolitanism) would in fact make *national* monuments impossible.

To some extent, national monuments must engage in collective memory because a nation is a collectivizing entity. If we strip the nation of *any* collective properties, it would cease to be a nation. Recall that a for Renan nation requires *belonging*. (Renan 1994) Regardless of what is theorized to join individuals together—whether race, ethnicity, language, territory, or values—these elements create a sense of belonging, that is, they *join* us. By extension, therefore, national monuments must engage with collectivizing values and narratives that *join* us into the nation.

Monuments are therefore active participants in the construction of both national memory and the image of the nation. The relationship between monuments and memory is an uneasy one and requires constant challenges. The questions about the limits of memory, how it is formed, and what constitutes it can find a variety of solutions through different design ideas. However, what I have tried to show in this chapter is that these

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<sup>12</sup> Even an innovative memorial such as the Vietnam Veterans Memorial is meant to address Americans, rather than say, Vietnamese. In a conversation I had with Steven Johnston, he wondered how, and why, the national meaningfulness of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial would change if one constructed a parallel wall that listed the names of all the Vietnamese people who died during the Vietnam war. This, of course, would be impossible in practice since there are 58,195 Americans listed on the current memorial, whereas one would need space to list the 230,00 South Vietnamese and/or the 1,100,000 North Vietnamese killed during the war.



tensions imply a confrontation with questions of nationalism as well. The place of the individual in relation to the group, specifically the national community, is constitutive to the definition of the nation, because it is in the nature of this belonging that the nation is defined. Therefore, the challenges made to traditional monuments and memory must inevitably result in a critique of what defines and bounds the nation. The discourse of nationalism is articulated through and by monuments.

## **Chapter Four / Death and Dying in the Nation**

Michel Foucault wrote in his 1976 lectures that our society is no longer a society defined by death, but rather it is defined by life. In modern society, he argues, power is exercised through the extension of life, not the administration of death. Foucault sees the rise of bio-power as one of the main changes that distinguishes this episteme from its previous one, that is, the 16th and 17th centuries. (Foucault et al 2004) However, if we were to follow along with Foucault's assessment, we would be surprised to find a dominant presence of the concept of death and dying in national narratives. National monuments in particular are overwhelmingly dedicated to memorializing the dead and not, as Foucault might predict, the celebration of the living.

This chapter aims to examine the seemingly unlikely presence of the dead in the national narrative. I argue that the ubiquity of the concept of death and dying is not only necessary for defining the boundaries of belonging in a nation, but that, through the idea of sacrifice, it also guarantees the nation's survival. Following Phillipe Ariès' notion that a nation is "composed of both the dead and the living," I look into how the inclusion of the dead in the imagined community is fundamental to creating a sense of belonging in the nation. (Ariès 1974, 74) The idea of a "national necropolis" (a term used by Ariès) is, in other words, integral to the definition of the national community.

The chapter also explores the way in which the nation reinterprets the death of individuals as the necessary guarantee for the life of the nation. I see the notion of sacrifice as the conceptual framework that allows for this transition (i.e., the death of the individual into the life of nation) to occur. Furthermore, I argue that sacrifice is crucial for linking the individual to the nation. Through the frequent presentation of death as sacrifice in national monuments, an individual death is not seen as final but rather as part of a continuous, national existence. This last part of the chapter aims to open up an examination, which continues in Chapter 5, about the way in which monuments of a liberal nation approach death and dying and how this approach fits in the context of liberal nationalism.

### **I. National necropolis: Death defines the nation**

The sense of belonging to a nation extends back in time so that we are not only connected to our contemporary national peers, but also to those who have lived before us. By extending our sense of belonging backward in time, we necessarily make those who have died—and their death—part of the time continuum along which the nation exists. This creates a sense of the passage of time, or more specifically, a sense of history.

Furthermore, the existence of an imagined past implies an imagined future as well. Whether it is by thinking of the present generation as the “future” of generations past, or by simply extending the life of the nation beyond our own life span, the nation extends its reach both backward and forward in time. In the future lies the constructed image of our national destiny. The imagination of destiny can take different forms: the national destiny can be redemptive with promises of glory and salvation, or it can be

simply a promise that the nation will live eternally. Whatever form it takes, the imagined destiny guarantees that the nation *has* a future towards which it is headed. And, more often than not, it is this vision of the future that needs to be defended from potential dangers.

The link between the present and the past, along which the nation is thought to have “lived,” often begins with a moment of founding. This is the point of reference for all future events in a nation’s “life” both because it is the beginning of time, so to speak, and because often it is cast as a nation’s best, or most authentic, moment. This moment is important to the nation’s self-definition, because it emphasizes the passage of time, and often the specifics of the founding moment provide a basis for the definition of the unique characteristics that are said to be shared by the members of the nation.

The importance of founding moments in the national imagination is evident in the integration of historical monuments into the national narrative. As I discussed in Chapter 2, historical monuments are places, such as old buildings or ancient ruins, that are conserved in the name of “some national legacy at risk.” (Lowenthal 1996, 25) Yael Zerubavel discusses the role of Masada, a collection of ancient ruins, in the national Zionist narrative. Zerubavel uses Masada to exemplify the sort of “political spin” that nationalist movements apply to their interpretation of the past. (Zerubavel 2004, 234) Masada is set on top of a butte near the Dead Sea, which made it the perfect location for the last Jewish stronghold against the Romans in the years 66–73 C.E. Masada became part of the Zionist discourse beginning in the 1920s when members of the Zionist youth movements would make nocturnal, somewhat ceremonial, pilgrimages to Masada. These trips had the effect of associating the contemporary Zionist struggle for an independent

state with the struggle of the Jews against the Romans. Later, after Israel gained independence, Masada became the location for military ceremonies which, once again, superimposed an event of the past on the current Israeli life. For Zerubavel, these activities are important to the way a nation approaches its past because they transform “the story of the last stand at Masada from a final chapter of Antiquity that ends with death and destruction to a narrative that leads to national renewal by inspiring the Zionist revival.” (Zerubavel 2004, 238) The appropriation of this historical monument helped the emerging Zionist nation expand its imagined community to include not only the Jews living today but also the Jews of the ancient past.

However, the founding moments of the nation do not always imply the appropriation of historical places. Rather, much of what contributes to the emphasis on founding moments in national discourse is achieved symbolically. In particular, the construction and design of national monuments are key participants in linking the current nation to its (imagined) past. On the National Mall there are not one, but two founding moments that receive a central place in the layout of this ceremonial national space. The Washington Monument is located at the very heart of the Mall, making it central to this national space. The monument “pays tribute to the birth of the republic. It speaks to an American ‘in the beginning.’” (Johnston 2001) It is a monument that that marks the founding of the American nation. On axis with this monument, we find the Lincoln Memorial. (See Figure 12.) Here the Lincoln Memorial marks a second founding. It interprets the Civil War as an event that “constructed and consolidated the nation’s

founding.”<sup>1</sup> (Johnston 2001) The inclusion of the past as part of the national narrative of the Mall, in the form of founding moments, is crucial to the way we imagine the nation—we imagine that it *has* a past, and it is a past to which we feel connected.

It is important to notice that creating a sense of a past also gives the nation its legitimacy as well as establishing the promises for the future. With a past, the nation appears to have *always* existed, or at the very least, that it is “rooted in the remotest antiquity.” (Hobsbawm & Ranger 1983, 14) In doing so, the right of the nation to exist could potentially be based solely on its long, ancient history. This alone is a reason for self-assertion. But the past is used by the nation to define its characteristics and destiny as well. The Washington Monument and Lincoln Memorial, for example, do not only tell us that the American nation *has* a past, but also that the American nation stands for a commitment to freedom and justice. The past is therefore an integral part of the nation’s self-definition since it provides both its legitimacy and character.

In order to strengthen our ties to the past, that is, to strengthen our sense of belonging to past generations, the nation also appropriates the wounds or humiliations of the dead. Isaiah Berlin, in fact, defines nationalism on the basis of such wounds. He characterizes national sentiment as arising from “some form of collective humiliation.” (Berlin 1990, 245) For Berlin it is precisely our identification with the wounds of the past that gives the nation its powerful appeal. For it is the name of those wounds, of that pain,

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<sup>1</sup> It is this characteristic of the Mall, that is, the alignment of these two memorials, that made the construction of the National WWII Memorial controversial. The critique went beyond an aesthetic concern over the unobstructed view from the Lincoln Memorial to the Washington Monument. It concerned the place allotted to World War II in the way the American nation imagines itself. The current, prominent place of the National World War II Memorial signals at least the possibility that the American experience in the war was akin to a third founding moment in the nation.

that we assert our national identity today. In a similar vein, Ernest Renan writes that “common suffering is greater than happiness. In fact, national sorrows are more significant than triumphs because they impose obligations and demand a common effort.” (Renan 1994) For both of these thinkers, the connection to the dead of the past is more powerful through an identification with injury than through victory.<sup>2</sup>

## **II. Immortality in the nation: The national hero**

Precisely because we are made to feel the wounds of the past as though they were our very own, we should be careful not to consider the nation’s dead as lifeless. Rather, the dead in the nation are eternally alive. The dead are literally part of the *life* of the nation. They never cease to exist because they establish a past against which the present is defined. Without the dead, the nation itself would be without life. In other words, though the dead are indeed *dead*, they are nonetheless the life-blood of the nation.

This strong presence of the dead in the imagined national community is important not only to the definition of the nation at large, but also to the way an individual thinks of his own death. In the case of the national hero, his death becomes immediately part of the national “necropolis.” The personal death of the hero becomes fused with the dead of centuries past, and in so doing, his death is converted from a personal *death* into a grand,

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<sup>2</sup> The incorporation of the wounds of the dead into the national narrative becomes particularly poignant in Yael Zerubavel’s discussion of Masada. She describes an odd event: bones that were excavated at Masada were given an official military burial ceremony. Zerubavel is careful to point out that what makes this ceremony peculiar, but yet important, is that the burial of the bones was given the same treatment as the burial of fallen soldiers of the Israel Defense Forces. In this way, the terrible death of the people at Masada was quite literally integrated into the current national practices and discourse. However, creating an imagined community that is based on shared pain is not unique to the nation. We find this, for example, in the Jewish celebration of Passover. The observance of Passover is meant not only to commemorate but literally to reenact the pain and humiliation of slavery in Egypt.

national *life*. This transformation of death into life is fundamental to the way the nation imagines itself because it implies that in the nation there is no actual death: there is only a change from life today to eternal life.<sup>3</sup>

This metamorphosis from death to life is nothing short of a promise of immortality in the nation. Anthony Smith notes that the promise of immortality in the nation works similarly to that found in religion. He argues that individuals overcome the “sense of futility” that arises from notions of absolute death by being linked “to persisting communities whose generations form indissoluble links in a chain of memories and identities.” (Smith 1986) In this sense, Smith views nationalism as a “surrogate religion.”

But, precisely because the idea of immortality is not unique to the nation—we find this concept in both Greek philosophy and Christian theology—the question that must be asked is: How does the concept of immortality operate differently in the nation? To start, we should point out that much of what is at stake with the immortality of man in both Greek philosophy and Christianity is the distinction between body and soul. In Greek philosophy, for example, we find Plato conceiving of the soul as being trapped in the body. For him, the soul is free and eternal only once it is outside the body.<sup>4</sup> (Plato 1988) Similarly, in Christianity the soul and body are separate. But in Christian theology there is the added notion that the soul rather than the body bears the rewards and punishments of a virtuous, sinful, or repentant life.

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<sup>3</sup> This, one should add, is also the case for the non-heroes in the nation. Through an identification with the hero, non-heroes live (and in this case also die) vicariously through him.

<sup>4</sup> Aristotle, on the other hand, argues against the possibility of the soul existing without the body, since he regards the soul as a form of the body, and a form cannot exist on its own.



The idea of the immortality of man in the national imagination operates differently than in both these cases. As opposed to the Christian and Platonic views, the immortality of man in the nation is not literal. The dead in the nation *are* dead, but it is their memories that are kept up beyond physical death. The memory of the dead is enshrined in a variety of national practices—such as national anthems, calendars, symbols, myths, and of course, monuments. Therefore, what distinguishes the concept of immortality in the nation from that of Greek philosophy and Christianity is that what remains alive is not one’s soul, but rather one’s memory.<sup>5</sup>

However, the idea of immortality in the nation still begs the question of *who* deserves to live forever. In Hannah Arendt’s *The Human Condition* we find an argument about immortality in which she claims that men can become immortal through their actions. For Arendt, the ability of men to create something in the world which does not disappear once they are dead, allows them, “their individual mortality notwithstanding, [to] attain an immortality of their own and prove themselves to be of a ‘divine’ nature.” (Arendt 1958, 19) Actions are, for Arendt, the key to becoming immortal.

But in the nation, man’s immortality does not depend on his actions but rather on his belonging in the nation. It is sufficient for an individual to be part of the nation in order to enjoy the promise of immortality. This is especially true of an ethnic- or racially-based nation in which membership is defined by a biological trait. In such a nation membership does not depend either on beliefs or actions, but merely on biological

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<sup>5</sup> Although we know that memories fade, nationalism promises that they will not. This is what makes nationalism, in Tismaneanu’s words, a “fantasy of salvation.” (Tismaneanu 1998)

composition. Immortality, in this case, is as predestined as the biologically-determined membership.

However, immortality is also guaranteed in a nation in which membership is based on shared values and choice. In particular, a liberal nation that is composed of members who share a commitment to liberal values, regardless of their ethnic, cultural or racial background, also holds the promise of immortality on the basis of belonging alone. So long as one forms part of the nation, one partakes in its history. The shared values bind us to the dead of the past and they bind us equally to the generations of the future. In so doing, though we may choose to become part of the nation, once we belong, we are promised immortality.

### ***Immortality of the hero***

Immortality in the nation is particularly salient with regard to heroes. The hero's immortality is conspicuous in the wide range of memorializing practices dedicated to him. He seems to preside over other members of the nation as someone who is particularly worth remembering. However, it is important to note that although the hero stands out among the multitude, his immortality is not unique. All those who belong to the nation, heroes or not, are immortal. For this reason, what becomes interesting about the place of the hero in the national discourse is the way in which his immortality differs from that of the multitude.

The immortality of the hero is granted a level of detail that is absent from that of common people. In whatever form the hero is being immortalized, his image (metaphorical or not) is filled with such details as his name, his physical appearance, or

his life story. These details set him apart from common people who are immortalized in more abstract ways. Common people are present in the national imagination merely as parts of a larger whole, i.e., the nation. The hero, on the other hand, is distinguished by the specificity of his memory.

The hero's immortality also differs in its function. The hero is immortalized because his actions or afflictions represent something that the rest of us must either emulate or admire. The common person, on the other hand, is immortalized only insofar as he identifies with the hero or, as I will discuss later in the chapter, insofar as his death is linked to a national event or cause. The immortality of the common person strengthens the sense of continuity and shared destiny in the nation. But the immortality of the hero is sustained thanks to his function as an example for others.

Although the role of the hero as an example is a primary justification for his immortality, this role is nonetheless problematic. Taking the hero to be an example can be ambiguous. It can mean, on the one hand, that the hero exemplifies certain national traits or experiences. This means that if indeed the traits are *national* in character, they are shared by everyone in the nation. To say, for instance, that George Washington's commitment to republican values is exemplary, that is, that it represents the authentic national character, it means that we expect all other "true" Americans to have a similar commitment. Though Washington, as a national hero, may stand out for the ease and the strength of his conviction, this does not change the notion that we expect others to share his commitment to republican values. But—and here is the problem—there is an unavoidable tension between taking a hero to be an example and taking him to be an exception. To raise a hero above the multitude, with the intention of making an example

out of him, must necessarily mean that this person is *exceptional* in some way. To deny any sort of distinctiveness would leave no justification for deeming him outstanding.

George Washington serves, in fact, as a particularly good example for this tension. Kirk Savage, in his essay on the construction of the Washington Monument, argues that the tension between example and exception lay at the heart of the debates surrounding the design of the Washington Monument. The first design proposal for the monument followed the “grand monarchical prototype.” (Savage 1992, 8) It was to be an equestrian statue with Washington represented in Roman dress. This design worked well with the notion of Washington as an exceptional human being, who merited a monument depicting him as a loftier, almost sacred, person. Other design proposals sought to emphasize Washington’s republic legacy instead. Here Savage traces two monument designs that looked to Washington as an example of the common man. One monument, by John Nicholas, was a “plain tablet, on which every man could write what his heart dictated,” and another, by George Washington Parke Custis, proposed creating a burial mound built by citizens from all over the country. In both these designs Washington’s legacy emerges out of the people, rather than towering above them.

The contest between the different design proposals for the Washington Monument captured the problem of a national hero: “Was Washington an example (the double meaning of the word *example* is significant), or was he an aberration?” (Savage 1992, 8) The immortality of the hero distinguishes itself from the immortality of other nationals in this inherent tension. Therefore, to immortalize a hero, for instance, by building a monument in his honor, means wrestling with the function of the hero as either example or exception.

In addition, the immortality of the hero is distinguished from the multitude by the level of detail allotted to his memorialization. Traditionally, the heroes that were given this treatment in national discourse were great figures—such as founding fathers or liberators.<sup>6</sup> The National Mall includes such figures, with monuments dedicated to Lincoln, Jefferson, Franklin Delano Roosevelt and, soon, Martin Luther King as well. These monuments bear the inscription of the hero's name, as well as accompanying texts and images that inform the audience of both the national ideals which they embody as well as the accomplishments they bestowed on the nation.

The monument that stands out, of course, is the Washington Monument which does not include his name, image, or any descriptive element. The monument, as it stands today, is a cut-down version of an original design by Robert Mills. After much delay in the construction of the monument, the current obelisk is attributed to the efforts of Thomas Casey, an engineer. Casey's monument is more of an engineering feat than one of architectural design; it suffices to point out that its initial attraction was the steam-run elevator in its interior. (Savage 1992)

The terse nature of the Washington Monument distinguishes it from the other hero monuments on the Mall. Its wordlessness draws our attention away from Washington, the hero, and instead toward the character of the American nation. Its grandiose proportions elicit an image of the American nation as soaring upward, with literally the sky as its only

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<sup>6</sup> Before the rise of nationalism, one could have also included "rulers" as heroes. But, in the nation, the ruler is always identified with the people. He does not represent a rulership for the sake of a divine entity or power, but always for the sake of the people. Therefore, a ruler in the nation cannot be immortalized simply because he is a ruler. Rather, he can be immortalized in a heroic manner only when he is perceived to have given or done something for, or in the name of, the nation itself.

limit. When we stand at the foot of the monument we can view the symbolic representation of the nation around us: with the Capitol to the east and the White House to the north, the Lincoln Memorial to the west, and the Jefferson Memorial to the South. The location, which remains true to L'Enfant's original plan, emphasizes the glory and grandeur of the American nation in general. In a monument that lacks details of the hero it intends to immortalize, the memory of the hero disappears and instead we find a monument with a different purpose: the memorialization of the proclaimed virtues of the nation.<sup>7</sup>

### ***Immortality of the citizen-hero***

In addition to the traditional great figures of the nation, one can also find the immortalization of heroes who come from the multitude. Again, like most national heroes, these citizen-heroes are chosen because they represent certain national virtues, and it is on the basis of these virtues that they are immortalized as heroes (i.e., their memorialization is rich in detail and used as exemplary to others).<sup>8</sup> The immortalization of the citizen-hero is particularly prominent in the national practices rising after the Civil War in the United States, and World War I in Europe. In both these cases, nations were engaged in a war of immense proportions which required the active involvement of

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<sup>7</sup> The issue with the design of the Washington Monument is not the obelisk itself. There is a monument in the shape of an obelisk on Bunker Hill in Boston as well. The problem is with the "wordlessness" of an obelisk in honor of national hero. The obelisk on Bunker Hill is not problematic in this sense because it is intended to memorialize the Battle of Bunker Hill in general, not a national hero.

<sup>8</sup> The nation's citizen-heroes are different than other folk-heroes, such as Robin Hood, because they represent strictly *national* virtues. For this reason, the existence of national citizen-heroes does not preclude the existence of other types of folk-heroes in the nation. It is simply a matter of the citizen-hero symbolizing a trait or experience that is specific to the national identity, and that other folk-heroes do not.

previously unthinkable numbers of citizens-soldiers. This resulted in the rise of monuments honoring the common soldiers, not generals or great commanders, and thus signaled an expansion of the concept of a national hero. (Borg 1991, Mosse 1991, Savage 1997) The new status of the national hero gave the common soldier a new and privileged position in the national commemoration practices. The soldier was no longer grouped with the rest of the multitude, but was seen, for the first time, as an example of a willingness to sacrifice oneself for the nation.

In particular, the creation of the tomb to the Unknown Soldier is significant in this regard. The idea for the tomb appeared almost simultaneously in England and France in 1920, quickly spreading to other countries, including the United States in 1921. (Borg 1991, Mosse 1991) The tombs of the Unknown Soldiers were meant to represent all the war dead but have since come to symbolize “the ideal of the national community as the camaraderie among members of equal status.” (Mosse 1991, 95) With the tomb to the Unknown Soldier, the citizen-hero is granted, like the great figures, an immortalization of, in this case, not his name, but his sacrifice for the nation, that is, an immortalization of his patriotic act.

Today the inclusion of the soldier-hero in the national pantheon is familiar to us. However, the way in which soldiers are immortalized has changed. For example, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial broke with the traditional ordering of the war-dead by rank. The listing of names in the Vietnam Veterans Memorial is not unique. We find the listing of the names of the dead as far back as Roman war memorials and in many WWI memorials. In the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, however, architect Maya Lin organized the name chronologically. For Lin, “chronological listing is the heart of the memorial.”

(Mock 2003) It emphasizes the moment of a soldier's death rather than his specific role in the war. By doing so, the memorial focuses on the topic of death (and, by extension, on the topic of loss) rather than patriotic zeal.<sup>9</sup>

The recently inaugurated National World War II Memorial addresses the immortalization of the citizen-hero in a different manner. The National World War II Memorial combines a narrative and symbolic style. It includes 24 bas relief sculptures that tell the story of the war, as well as eagles holding a victory laurel representing *American* victory, and 56 pillars honoring the American states and territories that participated in the war. More pertinent to the discussion of the hero, the monument also includes 4,048 stars representing “more than 400,000 Americans who gave their lives.”<sup>10</sup> (See Figure 1.) The design of the stars in the National World War II Memorial is unusual because as opposed to either the detail accorded to every name of American soldier in the Vietnam Veterans Memorial or the symbolism of one interred unknown soldier, the stars of the National World War II Memorial aim to be both specific and all-inclusive. The text in front of the stars, “Here we mark the price of freedom,” makes us aware of soldiers’ sacrifice for the nation (similar to the message of the tomb unknown soldier). But, because each star represents *about* 100 soldiers, any given star on which we may focus our attention does not connect us to the sacrifice made by one, unknown, soldier. Nor, on the other hand, does it connect us with *all* of the death caused by the war. The

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<sup>9</sup> Maya Lin’s design was criticized for being too abstract. It was argued that the austere listing of names did not sufficiently represent the story, i.e., the willingness to die for the nation, of the soldiers. In response, Lin has said: “The people who protested the design saw that it is formally very abstract in nature, but they did not acknowledge how real the names are—more real than any depiction or representation.” (Lin 1995, 41)

<sup>10</sup> See the National World War II Memorial website: <http://www.nps.gov/nwwm/>



immortalization of the soldier-hero is problematic in this memorial because ultimately it does not give us the level of detail that distinguishes the immortalization of any national hero, whether soldier or great figure.<sup>11</sup>

To further complicate the issue, the immortality of the citizen-hero and the great figures of the nation can be at odds with each other. In the Shaw Memorial in Boston, we can see an interesting example of the tension that these two kinds of hero memorializations can produce. In his book *Standing Soldiers, Kneeling Slaves*, Savage uses the example of the Shaw Memorial to discuss the difficulty of designing a monument that accommodates our desire to honor, for example, both Colonel Robert Shaw and the individuals in his regiment. The memorial commemorates Colonel Robert Shaw and the 54th Massachusetts regiment which he commanded. It seeks to mark their famous attempt to capture Fort Wagner during the Civil War—an attack that was notably brave but ill-fated with most of the regiment being killed, including Shaw himself.

The Shaw Memorial consists of a narrative relief with Colonel Shaw in the center, riding his horse and heading toward battle, and beside him are his troops, who are accorded a detailed and individual representation. (See Figure 13.) The monument fuses “two apparently antithetical types—a monument to a famous officer and to the common soldier he commanded.” (Savage 1997, 194) In so doing, the monument suggests how one might represent the immortality of both the common soldier and the great figure simultaneously. The citizen hero and the national hero do not need to stand in opposition

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<sup>11</sup> In addition, the memorial is unusual because it commemorates the war dead as part of a bigger architectural complex, in which many different things are being memorialized (victory, states, territories of the US, the home-front, etc.) In such an ensemble, the memory of the soldiers is at risk of being lost amid the larger grand-national narrative.

to one another, but rather they can coexist. The Shaw memorial further suggests how infrequently we see such a synthesis.

### **III. Sacrifice for the nation**

The presence of death in the nation connects the individual to the group, i.e., the nation. In contradistinction to how *the dead* are thought of in the nation, *death*, as a concept also receives a particular interpretation in the national narrative. Death in the nation is never final. The untimely death of an individual, whether as the result of a heroic act or as a victim in a national war, is recast not as an individual death and loss, but rather as a *sacrifice* for the nation at large. This goes beyond our usual understanding of sacrifice in which death, despite its noble cause, is final. In the nation, death is transformed into life. This concept of sacrifice is crucial to the way the nation justifies the death of its members. It makes death a moment which strengthens the nation rather than weakens it.<sup>12</sup>

The concept of sacrifice is only applicable in those cases in which an individual dies in the name of the nation. This could be either voluntary or involuntary (as in the case of a terrorist attack). By virtue of their circumstances, these deaths belong to the nation, and it is therefore possible to position them within the national narrative. These types of death should be distinguished from accidental deaths, such as from illness or automobile accidents. Accidental deaths do not depend on an individual's belonging to the nation and they therefore lie outside the boundaries of the national narrative.

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<sup>12</sup> This is contrary to Foucault's argument that death signifies the limit of the state's reach.

However, the distinction between a national death and an accidental death does not mean that the two may not overlap. A death that happened within a national framework can also be felt at the private level. The description of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, which accompanied the work in its original presentation to the judges of the competition, oscillates between conceiving of death in these two ways. In the first paragraph, Maya Lin writes:

These names, seemingly infinite in number, convey the sense of overwhelming numbers while unifying those individuals into a whole. For this memorial is meant not as a monument to the individual, but rather as a memorial to the men and women who died during this war as a whole. (Lin 1995)

Here, Lin points to the national context in which we understand the death of the individual. The death of the individual can only be understood insofar as he is a member in the nation. The individuals that are listed on the wall are there precisely because they belonged to the American nation and died for its cause.

However, further down in her statement, Lin interprets the deaths in Vietnam as a private matter rather than a national one. She writes: “For death is, in the end, a personal and private matter and the area contained within this memorial is a quiet place meant for personal reflection and private reckoning.” (Lin 1995) Lin makes explicit the dual characteristic of a national death. Though it may occur within a national context, it does not cease to be a death in which an individual, not a nation, loses his life. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial aims to be both a national monument and a funerary monument—a

monument that encourages us to approach it as both individuals and members of the nation.<sup>13</sup>

But, what exactly does a national death mean? A national death is a death that is understood as occurring in the name of the nation and which becomes conceptualized as a sacrifice for the nation. The nature of this sacrifice lies in the transformation of the death of an individual into the continued life of the nation. The death itself is denied and the life of the nation is emphasized instead. Such sentences as “Freedom is not free” (engraved in the Korean War Memorial) and “Here we mark the price of freedom” (National World War II Memorial) refer to death but only as a price to be paid. That is, death is understood in terms of what was gained from it. Death does not exist other than as a contribution to the life of the nation—in this case, its freedom.<sup>14</sup>

It is difficult for a nation to justify the death of its own members. The same entity that promises protection, a secured destiny, and immortality is the same one that may be responsible for our deaths. This problem is explored by Carolyn Marvin and David W. Ingle who apply Freud’s theory of totem and taboo to explain both the necessity of sacrifice in the nation as well as its justification. They take up Freud’s scheme of the head of the clan (the totem figure), his right to kill, and the prohibitions (the taboo) on the rest

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<sup>13</sup> The ability of a monument to address us as both individuals and as members of a nation will be discussed in the next chapter on liberal nationalism and national monuments.

<sup>14</sup> Arguably both these monuments look to freedom as a universal concept. One may interpret these inscriptions as meaning: these are American sacrifices for the sake of freedom worldwide. This may be particularly true in the case of the Korean War Memorial because it explicitly mentions all the other countries that participated in the war. However, I think that since most of the design is centered around the American nation, it would be prudent to understand “freedom” as synonymous with “America.” Notice that the main element in the Korean War Memorial are *American* soldiers walking through inclement weather in full combat gear.

of the clan to appropriate this right. The authors argue that this scheme is at work in the nation where the nation is the totem which has the right to kill its own, while the prohibition to explicitly acknowledge this infanticide are the taboos. For Marvin and Ingle, the taboos in the nation are the mechanisms behind converting individual death into national life. In other words, the idea of sacrifice (i.e., death becomes life) is precisely the avoidance of acknowledging the terrible truth: a nation may require the death of its members for its own survival.

Marvin and Ingle also go on to discuss, although somewhat implicitly, the consequences of the idea of sacrifice in the nation. One of them (which has already been discussed) is the metamorphosis of “individual bodies into social ones.” (Marvin & Ingle 1999, 13) Sacrifice allows the individual to be connected—at best—or subsumed—at worst—into the group. For this reason, one can go on to say that sacrifice figuratively “creates the nation from the flesh of its citizens.” (Marvin & Ingle 1999, 63) The nation needs the occasional death of its members to guarantee its own existence. When such an idea is in place, any attack on the nation constitutes an attack on the citizens who died in its name. The sacrifice of individuals for the nation legitimizes its existence and, more importantly, it legitimizes the necessity of *ongoing* sacrifice. Sacrifice is therefore conceived as necessary for the nation.

Sacrifice is also useful to the nation because it helps create and define its boundaries. Those who have sacrificed themselves for the nation are immediately included in the nation. This can be seen in monuments that are inscribed with the names of the dead. In such memorials, the names of the dead mark them as members of the nation while those who are not mentioned are not members of the nation. This is most

obvious in the exclusion of enemy fatalities from war memorials, but it is more interesting to note that in the case of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, for example, the overwhelming appearance of Latino and African American names highlight their inclusion in the nation, particularly in the face of their under-representation in many social and political areas. However, the marking of boundaries by the dead does not mean that those who did not die for the nation are excluded from it. Rather, it is sufficient to be willing to die for the nation, or at least to recognize the need for sacrifice to create such boundaries. The acceptance of the need for sacrifice in the nation is the only way that the nation can legitimize its existence.

But sacrifice can also be seen as beneficial for the members of the nation. Through the metamorphosis from individual death to national life, the angst of death is lifted. Janet Donohoe argues that monuments which present us with the image of life after death in the form of national sacrifice “appease our anxiety about death, distract us from the fragility of life, and prevent our attentiveness to the human condition.” (Donohoe 2002, 238) Donohoe is critical of the presentation of sacrifice in monuments because she would like us to “be mindful of our own mortality.” (Donohoe 2002, 238) However, Donohoe overlooks the attractiveness of such distraction. Through sacrifice, we are promised to have life beyond our physical death. We are indeed invited to do what Donohoe fears: let go of the angst of dying. This promise of immortality may be particularly appealing in a world where, as Ariès argues, death has become a taboo. (Ariès 1974) Therefore, it should perhaps be no wonder that many monuments continue to reinforce the notion of sacrifice for this reason.

### *Cemeteries and funerary architecture*

Because the sacrifice of individuals in the name of the nation happens primarily in times of war, the interment of soldiers, i.e., their tombs, also becomes articulated in terms of the death of the individual transformed into the life of the nation. The first military cemetery in the United States is particularly interesting in this regard because it combines the Park Cemetery Movement of the 1830s with the transformation of soldiers' tombs into national monuments.

The Gettysburg National Cemetery (originally the Soldiers' National Cemetery) was inaugurated by President Lincoln in 1863 following the Battle of Gettysburg. This military cemetery is notable for its park-like feeling. It is located on the slopes of Cemetery Hill and the layout of the cemetery follows the contours of the landscape.<sup>15</sup> This affinity with nature exemplifies the Park Cemetery Movement's idea that cemeteries should invite contemplation of one's natural environment. The contemplation of nature was supposed to "elevate and strengthen patriotism, for the character of the landscape where one's loved ones were buried and its appeal to the emotions would lead one to love the land itself." (Mosse 1991, 41) The link between the nation and the land can be seen in how David McConaughy, founder of the Gettysburg Battlefield Memorial, talks about the "rich, sensuous descriptions of the heroic contours of [the Gettysburg battlefield] landscape." (Hass 1998, 48) McConaughy refers to "the massive rocks and wonderful stone defenses" combining a praise for the landscape with a praise for its utility in battle.

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<sup>15</sup> Cemetery Hill holds the Evergreen Cemetery, a civilian cemetery established by the town of Gettysburg in 1858.

The location of the Gettysburg National Cemetery directs the appreciation of the natural surroundings towards a parallel admiration of those who died to protect them.

The Gettysburg National Cemetery is also famous for being the location of the Gettysburg Address. Lincoln asked that the “dead shall not have died in vain.” This remark is important in the context of this discussion because in it Lincoln articulates for the first time what it means to die as members of the nation. (Hass 1998, 52) The dead soldiers of the Battle of Gettysburg were conceived as a guarantee for the life of the nation. By attaching their death to a national cause, Lincoln’s words aimed to undo the literal death of the soldiers and convert it instead into a promise of “a new birth of freedom.” The end of life—death—was presented as quite the opposite, its beginning: birth.

In a similar but different way, the Arlington Cemetery in Virginia has also become incorporated into a distinctly national, not just funerary, landscape. Although separated by the Potomac, the Arlington Cemetery is part of the architectural scheme of the National Mall. It is an extension of the east-west axis of the Mall, located at the end of the Arlington Memorial Bridge southwest of the Lincoln Memorial. It is odd that the Arlington Cemetery is part of the National Mall because Arlington is not home to a monument honoring the American dead, but rather it is their actual resting place. Ariès refers to the Arlington Cemetery as an example of a general change in the attitude toward death in the 19th century. Ariès argues that the proximity of the cemetery to the nation’s monuments exemplifies the way in which “today, the cult of dead is one of the forms or expressions of patriotism.” (Ariès 1974, 75) The location of the Cemetery in relation to the Mall means that what the National Mall stands for and what it symbolizes can only be



accomplished in the shadow of a cemetery that is dedicated to the sacrifice of American soldiers.

Furthermore, the case of the Arlington and Gettysburg cemeteries reflects a blurring between national cemeteries and national monuments. War memorials in the 20th century are inspired by funerary architecture in their design, particularly Christian symbols that are traditionally used at the gravesites. The most common Christian symbol is the cross, though it is also common to find angels and postures of crucifixion or resurrection.<sup>16</sup> The cross is especially potent in the context of national monuments because it establishes a link between the Passion and Resurrection of Jesus in Christianity and the way death is conceived in the nation. (Borg 1991, 7, Mosse 1991, 32) Using the cross in national memorials that commemorate war creates in particular a parallel between Christ and a soldier's sacrifice. The death of Christ and the soldier's death are seen as simultaneously necessary and painful. Also, the ultimate redemption becomes parallel to the life and triumph that a soldier's death granted the nation. The most salient example of this type of monument is the Spanish National Memorial at Valle de los Caídos (the Valley of the Fallen). The memorial is dedicated to all those who died during the Spanish Civil War and it consists of a cathedral built into the mountain with an oversized stone cross, 500 feet tall, on top of it. (See Figure 14.)

The funerary character of the Spanish National Memorial is further emphasized by the inclusion of the graves of Franco and Primo de Rivera within the structure. Such a

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<sup>16</sup> Alan Borg argues that “crosses were not widely used as war memorials before the 20th century, but this reflects the fact that individual or communal war memorials were not themselves common in mediaeval or early modern Europe.” (Borg 1991, 9)

combination of grave and monument is not unique to Valle de los Caídos; one can find traces of it in the National Mall as well. One of the early proposals for Washington's Memorial on the National Mall was the construction of a public tomb (despite Washington's desire to be buried in Mount Vernon), in the form of a "huge outdoor mausoleum." (Savage 1992, 10) The idea to incorporate Washington's actual dead body with his monument made his death, and not merely his achievements in life, linked to the nation. The proposal, like the Spanish National Memorial, brings the grave into the monument similar to the way the Arlington Cemetery brings the monument into the cemetery.

The appropriation of funerary architecture into national monuments can also be seen in the Jefferson Memorial. In the Jefferson Memorial, the interior and exterior dome mimics the Pantheon of Rome, a structure that has been used as a tomb since the Renaissance. (See Figure 15.) In the case of the Jefferson Memorial, the monument is also funerary without being an actual grave. The tendency to design monuments with funerary architecture has led Ariès to refer to such monuments as "'tombs' without sepulchers." (Ariès 1974, 78)

National monuments may encourage funerary *practices* as well. Here, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial is an exceptional example, because it was purposefully designed as a mourning space and not merely a memorial or national space. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial is famous for the practices that have grown around it, most notably the leaving of objects by the wall. Kristin Hass traces the memorial practices of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial to American funerary traditions. Hass argues that the memorial traditions of non-Anglo, non-Protestant groups, such as Latinos, African-

Americans, and Italians, have “an active, ongoing relationship between the living and the dead.” (Hass 1998) She shows how the different practices which already existed in these groups before the construction of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial found expression in the current practices seen at the Wall.<sup>17</sup> Hass’ account illustrates how national monuments may be sites for practices that are not only unofficial and private, but ones that indicate a blurring between tomb and monument.

### **Conclusion: Memorializing loss, not sacrifice**

So far we have seen how death in the nation becomes interpreted as an element of strength. Even death in war, which would seem on its face to be a tragedy, becomes recast as an assurance of life for the nation. It is not common to have monuments that commemorate a loss, as opposed to sacrifice, for the nation. A loss is often traumatic for the nation and therefore the nation and its members avoid an immediate confrontation with the event. For this reason, we find that “people often avoid building monuments soon after an emotional upheaval.” (Halbwachs 1992, 16) Monuments that address an event that was traumatic are not only uncommon but are often built when some time has passed after the event. This makes the Vietnam Veterans Memorial on the National Mall an unusual case. It was built only seven years after the end of the Vietnam War, and the process for its approval by Congress began even two years earlier.<sup>18</sup> Though it aimed to

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<sup>17</sup> On a recent trip to the National World War II Memorial, I saw a rose and a note left near one of the monument’s fountains. Perhaps the practices that developed around the Vietnam Veterans Memorial have begun to inspire similar practices in other monuments, particularly ones that address death and loss.

<sup>18</sup> In contradistinction, the National World War II Memorial was built 59 years after the end of WWII, the Korean War Memorial was built 42 years after the end of the war, and the Holocaust Museum was built 52 years after the last extermination camp was destroyed.

distance itself from any political message, its temporal proximity to the war as well as the political turmoil caused by the war made this monument unavoidably controversial.

In her writings about the design of her monument, Maya Lin distinguishes between viewing death in a war like the Vietnam war as a loss and viewing it a defeat. She writes: “[the memorial] was supposed simply to acknowledge the loss. I don’t think that it is about defeat, and I never will.” (Lin 1995, 45) For Lin it is important to distinguish between these two terms because thinking of death as loss allows for mourning, “personal reflection and private reckoning,” which is the focus of her design. Defeat, on the other hand, is problematic for Lin because it can invite such feelings as blame, regret, anger, or shame which threaten the apolitical character that the guidelines for the monument’s design specified.

However, despite Lin’s efforts to make the monument apolitical, the controversy that surrounded its construction demonstrates its failure to do so. Steven Johnston argues that the current memorial space of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, which includes both Hart’s figurative Three Soldiers sculpture and the Vietnam Women’s Memorial, represents the plurality of perspectives and approaches to the war. Johnston argues that the proliferation of monuments on the site “does not mean [the Vietnam Veterans Memorial] is flawed; rather it points to the need for memorial multiplicity.” (Johnston 2001, 33) For Johnston, the memorial space of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial aptly represents the political divisiveness caused by the Vietnam War and our inability to offer

a unified, unchallenged interpretation of what the war meant for the nation.<sup>19</sup> Death, in this case, is not smoothly folded into a cohesive national narrative. Rather, the concept of death remains contested and problematic, never settling down into a single national interpretation.

The difficulty of addressing death in the nation when it cannot be reinterpreted as an honorable sacrifice is also present when the nation is responsible for the death of its own people in an internal conflict. This can occur either during a civil war or, for example, in the extermination of a minority group within the population. The case of a civil war lies somewhat outside our discussion because this kind of war *de facto* splits the nation into two separate nations fighting with each other. In this case, death can be interpreted as being the responsibility of the “other” rather than of one’s own nation.

However, the persecution of minorities within the nation does not split the nation itself but rather it aims to strengthen (or purify) the nation through an internal killing (“cleansing”) of individuals. A nation that perpetrates a genocide among its own people, must confront the concept of death in an entirely different way. In the case of Germany, during the time of the killing of the German Jews, their death was presented as a necessary action aimed at saving the purity and life of the German nation as a whole. (Lifton 1986) In this case, the concept of death was not problematic for the German nation because it was justified within the national narrative. The problem arises when a nation like Germany recognizes after the fact that such actions are not only unjust but

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<sup>19</sup> Johnston does not, however, argue that an endless series of monuments would be the best way to represent the plurality of perspectives in a nation. Rather, he argues that the periodic replacement of monuments would be more fitting to a democratic community.

shameful. It is in the face of such recognition of wrongdoing that death is articulated in a new and different way.

Germany has led the way in the construction of monuments that confront the difficulties that the Holocaust presents to the definition and integrity of the nation.<sup>20</sup> As I discussed in Chapter 3, the movement of counter-memorials has sought to challenge the very possibility of memorializing such an event. Monuments that address the issue of absence are especially relevant here because they recognize the loss that the Holocaust has created in Germany. Death in this case is approached as something that ought to be mourned rather than glorified. This is different than the mourning that Lin seeks in her design of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, because she is interested in personal mourning, while in Germany the monuments invite collective, national mourning.

The way in which a nation addresses death, as in the case of the Holocaust, also depends on an ability and willingness to do so. In the United States, there has been a lack of memorialization of either the killing of Native Americans or African American slavery. The absence of such monuments can be the result of either a lack of consensus about how these events should be memorialized or about whether these events should be memorialized at all.<sup>21</sup> However, whatever reasons lie behind the absence of such monuments, what remains clear is that the death of Native Americans and African Americans has not been easily articulated within the American national narrative. To

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<sup>20</sup> This process was far from being unified and free of conflict. However, the process has nonetheless set Germany apart from other nations confronting the moral consequences of the Holocaust.

<sup>21</sup> There have been efforts to memorialize these events through the recent inauguration of the American Indian Museum and the future construction of the African American Heritage Museum. These, however, are not monuments and they are not *exclusively* dedicated to the tragedies that these groups suffered.

address these deaths would imply a willingness for not only introspection but also the potential for self-criticism. Such openness may be especially appropriate for a country that is committed to liberal values, and I return to this point in the next chapter.

However, a confrontation with traumatic events, such as death that is a result of defeat or genocide, can unsettle a nation's unity. Here I do not only mean that a confrontation is bound to be divisive. Rather, a willingness to include introspection and self-criticism in the way a nation deals with difficult cases of death in the nation can lead to a questioning of the merit of the nation itself. If a nation can be held responsible for unjust or unjustifiable acts, what incentive would one have to continue belonging to such a group? If a nation can be responsible for deaths that are not worthwhile, either for the nation or for our ourselves as members in the nation, why would one choose to link one's life to the life of the group? A willingness to answer these questions can shake the foundations of belonging in the nation.

Therefore, the challenge of a nation aiming toward openness and self-criticism is to accept responsibility for the nation's actions without rejecting the nation as a group that is still worth belonging to. This challenge is partially met by the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe in Berlin. The monument is composed of a field of square columns covering a large plaza near the Brandenburger Tor in the center of Berlin. What is significant about this monument is that while it acknowledges the German responsibility for the Holocaust, it does so without creating shame in its German viewers. The German responsibility is well documented in the underground visitor center beneath the monument. But the centrality of the monument as well as the prominence of its design reflect a confidence, if not pride, in the national reckoning with the Holocaust. The

monument stands not only for the acceptance of responsibility for the crimes committed by Germany but also for the efforts of a nation to make critical introspection a sign of strength rather than a catalyst for disintegration. The Monument to the Murdered Jews of Europe shows how death that cannot be classified as sacrifice (the usual interpretation of death within the national context) can, nonetheless, be made part of the national narrative—in the case of Germany, a narrative of openness and responsibility.

In the chapter that follows, I expand on this argument by looking into the way monuments can participate in the construction of an image of a nation that upholds liberal values. As the case of Germany shows, some monuments are able to reflect an alternative view of the traditional conceptualization of death in the nation, and by extension, alternative images of the nation. Therefore, this last chapter of the dissertation is dedicated to examining, first, how monuments might be made more liberal without losing sight of their national contexts, and second, what these more open monuments tell us about liberal nationalism in general. The chapter aims to draw out the relationship between *what* is imagined, in this case a liberal nation, and *how* one might do so.



## Chapter Five / Liberal Monuments

So far we have seen how monuments function as national practices. They form a part of the national narrative by contributing to the construction of an image of the nation. However, the particular image of a nation that results from these practices can vary considerably. Thus far, my discussion of monuments has not made this particular point explicit, that is, that monuments can construct different types of national images. In Chapters 3 and 4, I have alluded to this point by discussing, for example, the ways in which monuments can incorporate a more “open” view of memory, thus making some monuments more responsive than others to the inclusion of personal memories in the national narrative. Or, as I explored in Chapter 4, some monuments distance themselves from the traditional idea of death as “sacrifice” and lean instead toward death as a basis for “reckoning” and “responsibility,” thus making the values upheld by the nation more open to debate. In this final chapter, I pick up on these threads and discuss the ways in which monuments may construct a particular image of the nation. Specifically, I am interested in a *liberal* nation.

At the heart of my discussion is the assumption that if monuments are national practices, they must operate not only in a traditional (e.g., ethnic) national narrative, but also in a liberal national one. Like other national narratives, a *liberal* national narrative is

also composed of a variety of national practices that both support and construct an image of the nation. In the case of a liberal national narrative, this image will be that of a *liberal* nation—a nation that melds together national and liberal values. The task of this chapter is to explore the ways in which monuments may operate as national practices in a liberal national narrative. The chapter is guided by the following questions: What does it mean for a *national* monument to be liberal, as well? What, indeed, would make a national monument *liberal*? How can such a monument speak both to traditional national values *and* to liberal ones? And, finally, what does the discussion about these monuments tell us about liberal nationalism more generally?<sup>1</sup>

### **I. The illiberal tendencies of monuments**

Monuments in a liberal context cannot be limited to fostering traditional national values, such as loyalty and belonging, but must also foster liberal values. However, the extent to which they can do that, and more generally, the extent to which monuments can (at all) be national practices in a liberal context, is not without its problems. There are aspects in the construction and design of monuments that can make them fundamentally antithetical to a liberal nation. As I have shown in previous chapters, monuments seem to be naturally coupled with traditional nationalism: their massive structures attribute permanence and grandeur to the nation, the treatment of death subsumes the individual in the nation, and the creation of a national memory silences the multiplicity of personal

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<sup>1</sup> For the sake of simplicity, in the rest of the chapter I will use the term “liberal monument” to mean a liberal *national* monument. Likewise, I will use the term “liberal narrative” or “liberal context” to mean a liberal *national* narrative and a liberal *national* context. Since the whole dissertation is about nationalism, the reference to “nation” should be understood. The meaning of a “liberal nation” is based my analysis of liberal nationalism in Chapter 1.

memories. The place of monuments in a nationalistic environment seems almost intuitive, but the place of monuments in a nation that upholds liberal values alongside national ones is neither immediate nor obvious. In the following section I discuss the possible problems of monuments in a liberal context, namely their illiberal tendencies.

### ***Permanence***

The static nature of monuments seems to run counter to the dynamic nature of a healthy liberal state. In an environment that is rooted in the ability to debate, change, and negotiate, a monolithic monument can be incongruous at best, if not, as some have argued, downright dangerous. Monuments seem to be problematic in a liberal context because they require a certain degree of permanence. In order to serve as reminders, monuments must be able to exist long enough for us, the living, to remember the dead, and long enough for future generations to remember us. Therefore, most monuments aim to exist beyond a single generation and in so doing monuments give the illusion of an eternal existence. This illusion is not, however, fantasy: it is rooted in an actual permanence of the monument.<sup>2</sup> In a liberal nation anything that declares itself to be permanent and unchanging can pose a direct threat to the nation's ability to enact the debate and self-reflection that its values demand. For this reason, Steven Johnston argues that "given the likely fate of diminishing returns with each passing generation" we should allow for the periodic destruction of monuments. (Johnston 2001)

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<sup>2</sup> It should be noted that this is precisely why the *actual* destruction of monuments serves as a direct political blow to the promises made by the nation that erected it.

Furthermore, the permanence of monuments can also be seen as a hindrance to the representation of pluralism in the nation. The physical structure of the monuments, which by its very essence is limited and bounded, cannot contain or reflect a plurality of ideas or identities. The monument is often restricted to one, often authoritative, representation of the past. As I discussed in Chapter 3, this aspect of monuments is especially salient with respect to the representation of a singular national memory. A monument is traditionally responsible for capturing a collective memory, a notion that assumes that memory is in some way independent from the personal memories of individuals.

The problems of monuments and memory is based on Pierre Nora's argument that monuments are a last resort for the diminishing organic memory. Whereas organic memory allowed for personal reflection and interpretation, and was based on personal interactions, the monument freezes (if not archives) memory in monolithic form. Although monuments safeguard memory from total annihilation, they also fundamentally transform it. Memory in monuments cannot help but be out of reach for the individual—memory must be kept safe, after all. However, by keeping memory safe, monuments disallow the type of participation and plurality that we would expect in a liberal nation.

### ***Resort to emotions***

Permanence seems to be one of the key challenges that monuments pose to liberalism. However, there is also the mode through which monuments operate as a national practice that can trigger a suspicious eye regarding their place in a liberal context. Monuments, like nationalism, operate through an appeal to our emotions. As I have argued previously, national identity is born out of sentiments such as pride, fear, or humiliation. The role of

emotions in the national discourse is not new. Nationalism appeals to our emotions, not necessarily our reason. Similarly, monuments are predicated on our ability to have an emotional response to the object. If a monument makes us adequately sad or angry, for example, it means that the monument has been able to transport us to another place and time. Furthermore, the awakening of these emotions is important to monuments as a *national* practice, because these emotions ultimately serve to define, legitimize, and strengthen the idea of the nation. In so doing, the monument has the capability of harnessing emotions for the exercise of political—in this case national—power.

The use of emotions in the operation of monuments makes sense if we think of them as strictly national tools. However, this aspect of monuments is particularly difficult if we want to think of them in a liberal context. Since liberalism assumes that individuals use reason rather than instinct or passion to calculate their choices, the central role of emotions in monuments can be particularly unsettling.

### *Themes*

In addition to the challenges to liberal values posed by the permanence and the emotional appeal of monuments, one must also confront the traditional themes that they tend to represent. The representation of these themes can come into conflict with liberal values. The glorification of the hero, for example, is a routine subject of monuments. The memorialization of the hero attributes one person with the exemplary qualities of the nation, be it loyalty, sacrifice, or valor. It also, more importantly, elevates one person over all others as encapsulating the national traits that should be, if only imperfectly, characteristic of all the individuals in the nation. This type of memorialization is

problematic in a liberal nation, because the focus on an exemplary individual easily eclipses the importance, and voices, of all other individuals. This difficulty is well exemplified in the case of the intents to memorialize George Washington. Kirk Savage argues that the commemoration of Washington led to the questioning of “the very act of commemoration, for any monument—merely by signaling out the hero from the great mass—undermined [pure republicanism’s] basic assumption that virtue and power resided in the ordinary individual. The republicans were caught in a dilemma: how to commemorate Washington without reproaching the people.” (Savage 1992, 11) The debates that surrounded the construction and design of the Washington Monument illustrate the challenges that the memorialization of the hero poses to monuments in a liberal context.

However, there are other types of hero monuments that, unlike the Washington Monument, try to mitigate their illiberal tendencies by memorializing an anonymous but still exemplary individual. Here I have in mind two monuments which I have also discussed previously: the monument to the common soldier and the tomb of the Unknown Soldier. In both these cases, the hero memorialized is not specific to one person but rather through its abstraction any individual (at least any soldier) can see himself in the monument. While the monuments avoid commemorating one person at the expense of many others, they too, however, run the risk of being problematic in a liberal context. Since these anonymous-type monuments are based on a certain degree of abstraction, they risk becoming too abstract: that is, by memorializing *everyone* they could also be said to memorialize *no one*. What is missing from these monuments is an

attention to the particular individual voices of the nation. The abstraction that these monuments demand may overlook individual pluralism.

Another important and common theme in monuments is the memorialization of war. Johnston argues that war memorials are particularly problematic in a liberal democracy because monuments to war tend to narrate war and death in absolute terms. (Johnston 2001) In his discussion of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, Johnston shows that war memorials tend to focus on how the war affected the nation—bringing victory or defeat—but they do not address how the war affected the enemy. The memorial is singularly oriented toward the nation, leaving the “other” entirely outside of its discourse. This quality of war memorials, exemplified but not unique to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, is problematic in a liberal nation because, Johnston argues, a liberal nation has an obligation to reckon with its actions, whether at home or abroad. A traditional war memorial disallows this type of reckoning.

The absolute-like character of war memorials also tends to overlook any disagreements that occurred before or during the war. Even a memorial such as the Vietnam Veterans Memorial—known for the controversies surrounding it—does not address in its design the anti-war movement that has come to symbolize the war era as much as the war itself. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial overlooks, as most war memorials do, the varied voices of approval or criticism that any war is bound to create. And this is precisely what makes war memorials problematic—at least as far as a liberal nation is concerned: they tend to enshrine war as a totalistic national action rather than as the sum of coordinated—and maybe contested—actions of individuals. An adequate representation of the latter would be more than befitting to a liberal nation.

## II. What justifies the discussion of liberal monuments?

Monuments have illiberal tendencies because they hint at authoritarianism and invite closure. They seem to be completely misplaced in a liberal context. Why, then, should this chapter be dedicated to discussing them in light of liberalism? What justifies a discussion about *liberal* monuments if we know that, in some fundamentally ways, they are *illiberal*? There are two answers.

First, despite the illiberal tendencies of monuments, we do find monuments in liberal nations. Monument construction thrives today in liberal nations such as Germany, France, Israel, and the United States. All of these nations claim to uphold liberal values, and yet they participate in the continual construction and design of national monuments. The existence of such monuments, deeply entrenched in a liberal environment, implies that the question we ought to ask is not whether monuments *should* exist in a liberal context—since they obviously do—but rather *how* do these monuments operate in a liberal nation? And, more importantly for this project, what does the presence of national monuments in liberal nations teach us about liberal nationalism more generally?

The second justification for the study of monuments in a liberal context is based on the understanding that all nations need monuments. In Chapter 2, I discussed monuments as national practices. I argued that national practices such as monuments produce national meanings which are crucial for the definition of the boundaries and character of the national community. John Gillis draws a similar connection between commemorative practices and the construction of identity by arguing that both efforts are born out of “an intense awareness of conflicting representations of the past.” (Gillis 1994, 8) For Gillis, commemorative practices, in which he explicitly includes



monuments, are unique in their ability to construct meaning from the past. And although Gillis does not speak directly to *national* identity, he argues that the construction of identity is dependent on a representation of the past which gives meaning to the present. Hence, in the case of national identity, a nation needs commemorative practices such as monuments in order to frame the past and thereby define its particular national identity.

Therefore, a liberal nation, like any other nation, is in need of monuments. Their task is to provide a boundary for the imagined community—a community that is as present in a *liberal* nation as in any other. However, what indeed distinguishes the role of monuments in a liberal nation is their distinctly illiberal tendencies. These tendencies seem to fundamentally contradict the liberal values that the nation upholds. However, precisely because a liberal nation *needs* monuments, the potential threat that they pose to liberal values is not sufficient grounds to dismiss them as irrelevant. Rather, I would like to argue that what distinguishes the construction and design of monuments in a liberal nation is that they demand far more subtlety and care than monuments in other nations.

Furthermore, the illiberal tendencies of monuments does not mean that they cannot serve liberal values. Monuments can fit in a liberal context in different ways and each way offers a different solution for how to resolve the inevitable tension between the illiberal tendencies of monuments and the liberal context in which they are found. This means that a liberal monument cannot be one that completely undoes or avoids the illiberal dangers. Rather, a liberal monument can only be a representation of a particular solution and, often, it makes the conundrum of monuments in a liberal context explicit—it generates an awareness of the problem and subsequently demands caution.

### **III. Liberal monuments**

However, a liberal monument must go beyond being solely a representation of the tension between monuments and liberal values. Ultimately, a liberal monument must participate in the construction of an image of a liberal nation. To do so, liberal monuments need, first, to wrestle with defining a liberal nation, and, second, to match this idea with the design of the monument. Since I have already discussed at length (in Chapter 1) the idea of a liberal nation, here I expand my analysis to an exploration of the different ways that this idea is translated into the design of monuments. My analysis relies on the assumption that *what* a monument represents must affect *how* it is represented. So, in this case, I look into how a representation of a liberal nation (or at least, a contribution to its definition) has an effect on the design of liberal monuments.

I have divided my discussion into three different sections. Each section covers a different type of liberal monument. Naturally, these are not strict categories but rather they should serve as a way to give some order to the diverse ways in which monuments can be liberal. The first section discusses monuments that represent liberal values. These are monuments that, although they can look like traditional monuments, their themes are quintessentially liberal. The second and third sections describe monuments that move beyond the representation of liberal values. These are monuments whose design is a crucial component in their role within a liberal context. The second section discusses monuments that seek to embody liberal values by encouraging the actual enactment of liberal values, and the third section describes monuments that can accommodate liberal values by making the space around them also meaningful to the liberal context in which they are found.

### ***Liberal monuments representing liberal values***

Monuments that represent liberal values are those that give a physical representation to liberal values. The monument works as a symbol that as such *stands in* for something else. That is, the monument is not a liberal value in and of itself, but rather it serves as a reminder (or a teaching tool) for the liberal values that define the nation. Unexpectedly, the design of these monuments may seem entirely traditional and seem, for all intents and purposes, illiberal. Take, for example, the Lincoln Memorial. The design of the Lincoln Memorial can be easily interpreted as illiberal. Its large scale, likeness to a temple, and its centrality on the National Mall make the monument speak in a single, potentially authoritarian, voice about Lincoln. His image is untarnished, with no room for questioning his motives or the decisions he made in his political life. The design of the monument emanates absolutism. However, the *content* of what is being memorialized is profoundly liberal. Starting with the texts on the walls and ending with what Lincoln stands for (at least as he is shown in this memorial), what is memorialized are quintessentially liberal values: equality and freedom. The Lincoln Memorial shows that despite the illiberal aura of the monument's design, the values which it represents make it fit within a liberal context.

In monuments that represent liberal values, the content (rather than the form) are the focus of the monument. What is central in these monuments is the themes that are memorialized and not the different designs that are used to convey these ideas. It is not surprising that a main theme in liberal monuments is liberty. The celebration of liberty, or freedom, is often made explicit through the text that is incorporated into the monuments. The Korean War Memorial and the World War II Memorial are the most obvious

examples—the word “freedom” is a prominent component in both—but one can also find allusions to the concept in the Jefferson Memorial, the FDR Memorial, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial and, as I mentioned before, in the Lincoln Memorial. However, the memorialization of the concept does not only occur through texts. Naturally, it is much harder to make a representational sculpture of such a broad concept than to simply carve the words that describe it. But, Savage has shown that during the Reconstruction Era there was an effort, albeit a failed one, to memorialize the emancipation of slavery and, by extension, the concept of freedom itself. In particular, Savage discusses two examples of such efforts: one is a sculpture of Lincoln with an emancipated slave at his feet, and the other is of an African American soldier who sits high on a column while his emancipated family looks up toward him from the foot of the column. (Savage 1997) Both these monuments use representation to capture a particular moment in the history of the nation that is strongly linked to the idea of freedom and a nation’s willingness to defend it.<sup>3</sup>

### ***Liberal monuments embodying liberal values***

#### *The process*

Monuments that represent liberal values such as freedom tend to separate between their form and content. In them, the themes are liberal but the form can look remarkably similar to monuments in non-liberal nations. In this section I turn to monuments that do

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<sup>3</sup> Savage goes on to argue that the memorialization of emancipation was, in fact, problematic during Reconstruction. In a still-divided nation, he shows that it was more common to find monuments to the “generic citizen-soldier who had fought in the war on both sides” than to the emancipated slave. (Savage 1997, 19) Civil War monuments, he argues, opted to memorialize loyalty over freedom.

not only represent such liberal themes as I have discussed above, but whose design itself embodies liberal values.<sup>4</sup> These monuments respond to Robert Musil's call that we should "demand more of monuments." (Musil 1986) Rather than "stand quietly by the side of the road," these monuments depend on the active participation of individuals. Just walking past them is not enough. The monuments discussed here call upon the individuals to be involved in the process of memorialization and by doing so, the monuments reflect the idea that individuals are active participants in the definition and creation of their nation. The quality whereby a liberal nation understands individuals to have control and choice over their national identity is therefore emphasized in these monuments.

To start, the embodiment of liberal values in the design of monuments can sometimes be traced to the very process that precedes their construction. This process has often taken the form of public, open competitions. Competitions have been a popular way to choose a monument design because they tend to have a greater public presence and seem to enact liberal-democratic values.

However, there has been criticism of the competition process for being less than democratic. Some of the criticism centers around who is allowed to enter the competition. Far from being open, many competitions are limited to professionals or architect firms. This limited participation weakens the sense in which the competition process reflects an open engagement and debate among individuals in a liberal nation. Similar, the final

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<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, the themes in these monuments are not restricted to liberal ones. Their attention to design means that a monument, such as a war memorial (whose theme is not unique to a liberal nation), will look differently in a liberal nation than in an ethnic nation.

choice of design is often closed to the general population and is limited to the ruling of a jury. Here too the jury is appointed by a committee and is composed of professional or politically connected individuals. However, even if we concede that participation should be limited to professionals only and that the jury should be thought of as a “representation of the people,” the structure of the competition itself can be problematic. According to Shenglin Chang, the restriction of design proposals to the format of posterboards, and the lack of actual conversation with the artist, makes design competitions vulnerable to shutting down communication between the artist and the jury who are judging his or her work.<sup>5</sup> In order to alleviate this problem, Chang suggests the creation of some kind of grassroots organization that could work with architects and designers. And, in a similar vein, Jack Nasar argues that “competitions exclude the public and the users from the process.” (Nasar 1999, 38) He therefore suggests that design proposals should be more attuned to the opinions and needs of those who are meant to use the proposed design. Therefore, by encouraging a real dialogue with individuals, design competitions can regain some of their liberal democratic character.

*Counter-monuments: a second look*

Beyond the processes that precede the construction of a monument, one must look at the design of the monuments themselves. Here I want to discuss monuments whose very form calls for an engagement with liberal values. As I mentioned before, the themes that are memorialized in these monuments are not restricted to typically liberal themes, such

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<sup>5</sup> Prof. Chang made these comments in a conversation I had with her in Fall 2007 in Berkeley.

as freedom, but can also be dedicated to, for instance, the traditional memorialization of war. What distinguishes these monuments is the idea that the design itself should reflect a commitment to, or celebration, reminder, or instruction of, liberal values. Many of these monuments have filtered this concern through a re-evaluation of memory and its relation to monuments. As I have discussed in Chapter 3, most of these monuments are part of the counter-monument movement that tackles such questions as the memorialization of collected memories, vicarious memory, and absence.

However, the memory-related questions brought up by counter-monuments go beyond merely a discussion about memory. They illustrate the possibilities of having monuments in a liberal nation. Some of the design solutions seen in counter-monuments work to emphasize the way in which liberal values can be enacted *through* a monument rather than simply being represented *in* it. For example, the incorporation of an interactive component in some counter-monuments makes the participation of individuals part of the monument. That is, in these monuments, the design of the monument relies on the participation of individuals—the monument cannot function without them. The possibility of interacting with a monument (through etching or the leaving of objects, for example) brings the individual to bear on the meaning of the monument. The individual does not only make the monument come to life, but he literally gives it its meaning. This component of monument design can be thought of as the enactment of the liberal value of

deliberation and engagement.<sup>6</sup> The individual is not left to be subsumed by the nation, but he participates in its creation and definition. Or, alternatively, this design gives the individual control over the parameters of his identity. He is, in a sense, self-governing.

### *Ambiguity*

Similarly, the ambiguity of an unsettling effect, which has been used in some counter-monuments, can work to enact a certain aspect of liberal values as well.<sup>7</sup> Maya Lin describes the Vietnam Veterans Memorial as leaving “open the possibility of asking a question.” (Lin 1995, 46) For Lin the ambiguity of the monument is different than how it operates in counter-monuments. Whereas in counter-monuments ambiguity is often associated with the fluidity of memory, in the Vietnam Veterans Memorial the ambiguity is an invitation for an action: to question. This point is made explicit by Johnston who argues that the Vietnam Veterans Memorial represents an “ongoing moral and political conflict over *questions* of American national identity and institutions.” (Johnston 2001, 47 *Italics added*) Johnston pushes this idea further to claim that keeping such questions “permanent and perpetual ... befits a democratic polity.” The ability to question is important in a liberal nation because it makes explicit the idea that the existence and

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<sup>6</sup> Johnston argues that although the leaving of objects at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial has lost some of its original “authenticity” (because now it has become a self-conscious and non-spontaneous act), the deliberation involved in leaving an object continues to make this action (and monument) politically significant, particularly in a democracy. (Johnston 2001)

<sup>7</sup> Many counter-monuments avoid the over-use of text or recognizable symbols. They rely, instead, on the impact of the design itself. For example, the “Versunkene Bibliothek” (“sunken library”) by Micha Ullman, an underground chamber lined with empty bookshelves, is accompanied by only a small plaque with the memorial’s name and designer. The message of the monument and how one ought to read it are left vague on purpose. To some degree this occurs at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial as well, but the addition of text at the center of the Wall and the addition of the Hart sculpture undo some of the original open-ended effect.



meaning of the national identity is a matter of individual choice. Therefore, a monument whose design is geared to raise questions about the nation and leaves them open to debate embodies one of the fundamental values in a liberal nation.

### *Death and reckoning*

The way a nation relates to death is particularly interesting in this regard. Death, as I discussed in Chapter 4, is often memorialized as sacrifice. This conceptualization of death subsumes an individual's life into that of the nation. Sacrifice goes beyond an honorable death for a justifiable cause; it signifies the melding of an individual's life to that of the nation. Therefore, in order to avoid this subsuming of the individual, monuments must look for other ways to memorialize death in the nation. There are two ways I would briefly like to mention here. The first I have discussed previously in connection to Lin's Vietnam Veterans Memorial. In this memorial, Lin is concerned that the dead should be memorialized both as a public, national loss *and* as a private loss. The memorial plays the dual role of grieving for the dead as members of a nation and as individuals with close family members and friends. The wall, on which all the names are etched, serves as metaphor for the shared national belonging. And the individual names, which were purposefully etched so one can feel and touch them, allow for an intimate connection with the dead. A memorial that is able to capture both these levels of loss is able to distance itself to a greater degree from the total eclipsing of the individual by the grand national narrative and instead call attention to individual and personal suffering. Second, death can be memorialized in living memorials. These are memorials that serve a social function, such as freeways, parks or cultural centers. This type of memorial downplays

the narrative of sacrifice and emphasizes instead the service of those that died in order for our society to function the way it does. Here death is not converted into (national) life. Death is accepted as final but as valuable to the nation. In both these cases death is not denied, but reckoned with. This type of reckoning can be important if we are interested in critical thinking and the engagement of citizens.

### *Experience*

In order to emphasize the centrality of the individual, some have argued that monuments must shed their materiality and be thought of as an actual *experience*. Recall, for example, Lin's distinction between memorial and monument. She emphasizes the importance of designing a memorial space that allows for "experience and for understanding experience." (Lin 1995, 13) For Lin, experience is necessary to achieve a "*personal* reflection and *private* reckoning." (emphasis added) In other words, a "memorial experience" is focused on the engagement of the individual rather than on keeping him at a distance as a passive passerby. Such a monument relinquishes "all appearances of objectivity, thereby forcing everyone to confront her or his own subjectivity." (Gillis 1994, 17) The monument does not only put the individual at its center, but it also allows the individual to think for himself and to make and control his own life choices. This, arguably, makes a monument conceived as an experience be more appropriate to a liberal context.

But, what would a "dematerialized monument" look like? There are three examples I would like to discuss briefly. The first is a hypothetical case introduced by Johnston. He discusses an episode from the television show *Star Trek* in which the shuttle

crew comes across a monument left behind by a now-forgotten civilization. The monument works through a virtual reenactment of a battle scene which ended in a tragic massacre. The visitors take an active part in the scene either as victims or as perpetrators of the massacre. The monument memorializes the event by making its visitors live through the experience. Johnston discusses this memorial primarily to discuss the ways in which a nation confronts its own wrong-doing—the memorial is built not by the victims but by those who were responsible for the atrocity. He thinks that a nation should be able to exercise “humility, self-effacement, [and] confession.” (Johnston 2002, 204) However, what is equally interesting about Johnston’s example is the idea that, as he phrases it, “people do not visit this monument; the monument visits people.” The memorial works through experience. It assumes that in order to adequately memorialize an event we must first live through it. Naturally, we cannot go back in time, so a virtual experience of the event works as a way to transport us to the past and therefore to gain a more complete understanding of what happened. Only through better understanding can we actually be said to memorialize the event.

However, incorporating experience into memorial design does not need to take the form of a virtual reality. A good example for an alternative might be the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. This is both a memorial and a museum. It is designed so that the visitor travels through a series of exhibitions before arriving at the memorial hall. Walking through the exhibitions often goes beyond education about the events of the Holocaust; it also leads the visitor to experience some elements from the event: at one point the visitor walks through a train cart used to transport Jews to the extermination camps, and at another point the visitor walks through a narrow hallway built as a replica

of the collection bins of shoes, hair and glasses collected at the camps.<sup>8</sup> The exhibitions are designed to make the visitor experience the Holocaust to a certain degree. It is this experience that later gives the arrival point—the memorial—its depth. Experience, once again, is used to draw the individual, in a more personal way, into the process of memorialization.<sup>9</sup>

Finally, the last example of a memorial experience that I would like to discuss does indeed lack any materiality (either virtual or physical). The experience here is one of debate. James Young argues in favor of thinking of monuments as “the never-to-be-resolved debate” surrounding their construction. (Young 1997, 879) For him, the act of debating constitutes the real memory-work. Young is not the first to see the processes that precede the actual building of a monument as the heart of the memorial process. In Savage’s discussion of the Washington Monument, he quotes one senator who in 1832 asked “Where is [Washington’s] monument? Our answer is, in our hearts.” (Savage 1992, 12) The idea that a built memorial is somehow inadequate, or at least incomplete, speaks to the understanding that in order to memorialize there needs to be active participation. And, furthermore, that participation can take the form of entering a debate. Encouraging and even enshrining debates about the event or person to be memorialized means that the individual has an opportunity to speak his mind, that is, he has a say about what and how his national identity is being defined. This makes the memorial-as-debate a memorial that uses experience as a way to enact liberal values.

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<sup>8</sup> The items in the bins are the original ones found at the camps.

<sup>9</sup> To a certain extent one could argue that the FDR Memorial does the same. Walking through the three spaces representing FDR’s three terms is akin to “experiencing” FDR’s presidency.

### *Liberal monuments accommodating liberal values*

The third and final type of liberal monuments that I would like to discuss are ones that work in a liberal nation not by virtue of their themes or design, but by virtue of the type of activities they allow or inspire. These monuments seek to mitigate some of the dangers of monuments (i.e., their illiberal tendencies) by encouraging an environment that, at the very least, does not get in the way of our living up to liberal values. What is striking about these monuments is that they do not necessarily challenge the traditional themes and designs of monuments, but rather, they tackle the way monuments work in space.

### *Monument multiplicity*

One of the challenges of monuments in a liberal nation is that they tend to express a single, self-contained narrative about the event memorialized. This is problematic in a liberal nation because it goes against the idea that the nation is constructed by and through a plurality of perspectives. Therefore, one way to make monuments more liberal is to open them up to multiple interpretations. As I have discussed above, this can be done by building into them an ambiguity of meaning. However, in this section I want to discuss a different way of encouraging multiplicity, one that does not resort to ambiguity or vagueness.

A multiplicity of meanings can be represented in monuments by building several monuments to the same event. Rather than make memorialization culminate in a single monument (no matter how liberal), it can instead be memorialized by a variety of monuments. Here I do not only mean having multiple monuments to the same event throughout the country—for example, the many memorials to WWI in the United States.

Following Johnston's idea of simultaneous "memorial multiplicity," I mean here the construction of several monuments in the same memorial space—a memorial complex, if you will. (Johnston 2001, 33) The Vietnam Veterans Memorial is a good example of this way of representing multiplicity. Johnston argues that the Vietnam Veterans Memorial should not be understood only as Lin's Wall, with Hart's sculptures and the Women's Memorial as tacked-on additions, but rather he argues that the Vietnam Veterans Memorial should be seen as a memorial complex that is constituted by these three memorials together. (See Figure 16.) The other two memorials are equally crucial to the memorialization of the Vietnam War because "each of the three memorials offers a contending interpretation or understanding of the War, the nation that fought it, and its proper place in American memory." (Johnston 2001, 27) By creating such memorial multiplicity, the monument (as a complex) can better represent the nation as embodying these contested and conflicting views of the war. The memorial complex serves, in other words, as a sculptural representation of the many and varied voices in a nation. And, furthermore, by giving each of these their space, it also signals a willingness to hear these voices and respond to them.<sup>10</sup>

However, even when we might manage to have a memorial complex that represents the plurality of voices in the nation, its permanence—like that of all traditional monuments—can once again threaten the liberal values for which it stands. Along with his discussion of simultaneous "memorial multiplicity," Johnston also argues in favor of

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<sup>10</sup> Johnston is not clear on the number of monuments that can exist simultaneously in one memorial space. He is also unclear on whether a limit should be placed and, if not, how to deal with the potential overcrowding of memorial space.

*sequential* “memorial multiplicity.” For Johnston the problem is not building monuments in a liberal democracy, the problem is leaving them in place for too long. He suggests that monuments can exist in a liberal democracy only if they are matched by a willingness to periodically destroy them:

What if the legacy represented by the Washington and Lincoln, among others, might be better served—and the millions allocated to their upkeep better utilized—by taking to them the wrecking ball? ... A democracy ought to demolish, intermittently, the monuments and memorials it builds for and to itself, recognizing the paradoxical character of architectural designs conceived in singularity and permanence and aimed at remote futurity. (Johnston 2001, 10)

However, Johnston’s suggestion does not make clear what continuity we might expect from one period of destruction to another. If there is no such continuity—that is, if there is complete renewal—then one might say that Johnston would like the nation to be completely reinvented every so often. This is not an entirely foreign idea. Thomas Jefferson argues that a nation should never be thought of as an entity that lasts for more than one generation. For Jefferson, “we may consider each generation as a distinct nation, with a right, by the will of its majority, to bind themselves, but none to bind the succeeding generation, more than the inhabitants of another country.” (Jefferson 1999, 599) Therefore, whereas a simultaneous “memorial multiplicity” would work to represent the current pluralism of a nation, a sequential “memorial multiplicity” is more likely to reflect changes in the image of the nation over a period of time.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Assuming, of course, that we maintain some kind of record of past memorializations, against which we can measure such changes.

### *Traveling monuments*

However, the antidote to permanence does not need to be destruction. A traveling monument, for example, can also unsettle the traditional way in which monuments are fixed to one place and, by extension, to one meaning. The AIDS Quilt and the Traveling Vietnam Veterans Memorial are instances of such a traveling monument.<sup>12</sup> These monuments are present in any given place only temporarily. The memorialization process that they entail is more fleeting and therefore more precious. But, more importantly, because they reveal themselves, so to speak, rather unexpectedly, they achieve a startling effect—an effect that is very good at grabbing our immediate attention. In this vein, Robert Musil went so far as to argue that monument-building should learn from the antics used by advertisers: “Why don’t the figures of a marble group rotate around each other, like the better figures in store windows, or at least open and close their eyes?” (Musil 1986, 322) If monuments would “make more of an effort” to grab our attention, then they could do their jobs better—they would distract us from our daily lives in order to contemplate an event or value that is meaningful to us.

The traveling monument is also an interesting liberal monument because, like the virtual memorial in *Star Trek*, the monument visits people and not the other way around. By appearing at different places at different times, the monument is more accessible to people. A wider exposure does not only mean that more people will see it (though this is certainly true), but more importantly, in each new location, the monument is seen through

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<sup>12</sup> For a good discussion of the AIDS Quilt see (Crichton 1992). For a recent article about the Traveling Vietnam Veterans Memorial see (Kim 2005).



different eyes. The local environment affects the meaning that individuals take, and give to, the monument. The traveling monument illustrates how the same monument can have different meanings depending on who sees it. Therefore, one can think of the traveling monument as responding to the local and cultural environments of individuals. These contexts are not only accommodated by the national narrative, but are actually integrated into it. It is this quality that makes the traveling monument work as a liberal monument.<sup>13</sup>

### *Memorial public space*

The monuments I described in this last section on liberal monuments share the idea that what makes a monument *liberal* is not only, or necessarily, its content or form, but the responses that the monument allows. Here, I continue with this idea but rather than look at what monuments can allow, I look into the space *around* monuments. I consider this space *memorial space* because it plays a role in the memorialization process of the monument.<sup>14</sup> It too, along with the object of the monument, constitutes a part of the construction of a national narrative. Therefore, in liberal monuments, one could expect the space around them to equally contribute to the construction of the image of a liberal nation.

The space around a liberal monument can be simultaneously attentive to the individual and his relation to the nation. It is a space that asserts neither the individual

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<sup>13</sup> A similar argument can be made about counter-monuments that are placed in neighborhoods. They too bring the monument to the people. But, whereas part of their motive for entering the neighborhoods is unsettling the separation between the sacred and profane space that I discussed in Chapter 2, the traveling monument does not necessarily do so.

<sup>14</sup> I avoid the term “monumental” space because it implies grandiosity. But if we could avoid that connotation, monumental space would, as far as my reading of the term is concerned, be as good a term as memorial space.

over the nation nor the nation over the individual. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial works, in this case, as a unique example. In Chapter 4, I discussed the funerary practices that surround the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. These practices are both personal—e.g., the leaving of things and the rubbing of the names—and national—e.g., wreath laying and official ceremonies. Lin was keenly aware that she wanted the space of the monument to be intimate (“the intimacy of reading”) but also that the space should operate as a national ground for remembering. (Lin 1995, 13) As one enters the space of the memorial, the silence that envelops the Wall makes one’s encounter with the memorial extremely personal. If one is looking for a relative’s name on the Wall, the sense of personal connection is augmented. But even as we focus on one name on the Wall, we are conscious of all the other names that are near it. The Wall allows for personal contemplation, but it does not close us off from the presence of others. As we enter the space around the memorial we enter both as individuals—individuals who have someone to mourn—and as members of a nation—members who have something, maybe a shared loss, in common.

But once we enter a memorial space, what do we do? Beyond our immediate reaction to the monument, there are the specific activities that the space around the monument allows or encourages. To begin with, monuments can create a public space that is conducive to public gatherings. Individuals can use the space to congregate and interact with one another. However, the character of these interactions is crucial to how the space operates in a liberal context. For example, North warns that the presence of people in memorial space can easily become a “mass-ornament”—such as the stylized and extremely choreographed marches in Nazi Germany. (North 1992, 16) He argues that

gatherings, or marches, around a monument can become themselves monolithic and serve as an extension of the already-existing illiberal tendencies. In other words, as mass-ornaments only our bodies matter, whereas North wants our minds to be engaged as well.

Therefore, North refers to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial as a successful memorial public space because “to view the piece is not simply to experience space but also to enter a debate.” (North 1992, 20) Johnston makes a similar point claiming that “the Vietnam Veterans Memorial is more than a public commemorative space in a democracy,” the activity that the monument inspires on its grounds makes the “space itself democratic.” (Johnston 2001, 35) However, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial is not alone in hosting such a public space. The Lincoln Memorial, for example, has been the host of many political protests and demonstrations. It functions as a stage, if you will, on which actors can put on any variety of plays. But, again, what is the character of these gatherings around monuments? Both North and Johnston imply, the former explicitly and the latter implicitly, that these are public spaces in the Habermasian sense. They are places in which individuals can engage one another in critical communication. (Habermas 1991, 32) The discussion, either among individuals or of a rally as a whole, goes beyond commentary on the monument itself—it tackles larger political question about national identity, the nation, its meaning and boundaries. A monument that can host this type of public space, i.e., one that allows for discussion and deliberation about foundational questions about the polity, fits in a liberal context because individuals can enter this space as critical citizens.

The public space that may surround monuments is different from other public spaces, such as public squares or gardens. The *memorial* public space links the meaning

of the monument with the activities that are done in its vicinity. Demonstrations or rallies are inspired by the meaning of the monument and use it to give weight or an added significance to themselves. For example, in Martin Luther King's famous "I have a dream" speech, he explicitly refers to the Lincoln monument that stands behind him.<sup>15</sup> The public space around a monument is never neutral, never meant to be neutral, and therefore any activity on its grounds necessarily comes into dialogue with the meaning of the monument.<sup>16</sup>

However, it is not simply the activities in the memorial public space that are affected by the monument. The monument itself becomes richer and more complex when it allows for a public space in its surroundings. Take, for example, King's speech once again. As I mentioned in Chapter 3, the speech itself has become part of the memories embodied in the monument. Today, the Lincoln Memorial stands for more than a memorialization of Lincoln, the Civil War, or the Emancipation Proclamation. Because of the famous speech delivered on its grounds, the Lincoln Memorial also memorializes the Civil Rights Movement. The example of King's speech shows how the meaning of a monument can expand thanks to the activities that occur on its grounds. But this does not need to be the case. Johnston argues that in the case of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, official ceremonies held at the site can be in complete conflict with the original design competition criteria, e.g., that the memorial should remain apolitical. There can be an

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<sup>15</sup> "Five score years ago, a great American, in whose symbolic shadow we stand today, signed the Emancipation Proclamation." (King 1992, 102)

<sup>16</sup> Granted, the "true" meaning of the monument can be nebulous, especially if it is a monument that sets out to be ambiguous. But, whatever meaning is read into the monument, it has an effect on the meaning of the activities that the public memorial space allows.

unexpected tension between the form of the monument and the space around it. But, for Johnston, “perhaps this is as it should be.” He argues that precisely because “the Vietnam Veterans Memorial . . . is made and remade through myriad ritual practices,” it “vindicates multiplicity and refuses monopoly.” (Johnston 2001) By allowing for a public space that encourages debate, the meanings of the monument become layered. Far from remaining static, the memorial practices of a monument in whose vicinity we find a memorial public space are continually changing and evolving. In other words, the monument opens itself up to multiple interpretations and interactions by allowing for a memorial public space around it.<sup>17</sup>

## **Conclusion**

There are different ways in which monuments can be liberal. Each way addresses, to some degree, the problems that monuments confront when they enter a liberal context. A liberal monument must respond, on the one hand, to the illiberal tendencies of monuments, and on the other, it must also contribute to the construction of a liberal national narrative. As I have shown, liberal monuments can do so either by representing, embodying, or accommodating liberal values. In turn, each of these paths offers an array of different solutions to the possibility of liberal monuments, whether it is through the selection of different themes and designs or through the configuration of space. The

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<sup>17</sup> And, consequently, this implies that monuments that disallow or at least discourage the creation or use of public space, have limited versatility. This is the case, for example, with counter-monuments that employ the effect of invisibility such as the Ashcroft-Brunnen memorial.

diversity of liberal monuments indicates that a liberal nation is not a cohesive idea but that it can be interpreted (and practiced) in a variety of ways.

However, despite their diversity, none of the liberal monuments I have discussed is perfectly immune to illiberal tendencies, and none can be considered to be a comprehensive construction of a liberal nation. A monument such as the Vietnam Veterans Memorial that in many ways opens up liberal possibilities remains a static memorial that risks losing its sense of intimacy and interaction in a generation or so, once those who knew the dead are no longer alive. Or, to give a different example, the Lincoln Memorial, despite memorializing liberal themes and offering a space for political deliberation, can easily be regarded as a traditional, if not an illiberal, memorial in another context. This chapter has sought to show, among other things, that there is not one perfectly liberal monument. Even as we expect monuments to carry meaning in a *liberal* nation, they are not foolproof to their own illiberal tendencies. Rather than reject liberal monuments because of their innate imperfection, the discussion in this chapter should convince us, I hope, that there are many tools that can help monuments mitigate their illiberal tendencies and, for this reason, allow them to function reasonably well as national practices in a liberal context.

Furthermore, the possibility (and reality) of having liberal monuments serves as a lens through which we can examine *liberal* nationalism. The tensions that I discussed in the first chapter of the dissertation, that is, between national versus liberal values, take form in liberal monuments as well. Monuments that are too traditional risk becoming inappropriate to a liberal context. Such monuments would, similar to illiberal nationalism, construct an image of the nation in absolute terms. The visitor would be

merely a spectator rather than an active participant in the process of memorialization. His membership in the national community would be announced by the monument as a *fait accompli* rather than as a matter of choice and deliberation. These monuments would shut down discussion, their message would appear to be immutable, and finally they would silence any personal or contesting voices in the nation.

On the other hand, monuments that challenge the illiberal character of traditional monuments are also confronted with challenges. These alternative monuments would bring into question their own existence—by, for example, disappearing into the ground. By making us aware that a monument's message is never absolute or final and that, consequently, memorialization must rely on people rather than objects, such monuments unsettle the very justification of having monuments at all. The monument becomes a vehicle for dialogue and deliberation rather than closure. However, such monuments, despite their efforts to open up possibilities, are still bound, first, to the monument-form and, second, to the national community that they address. A monument that no longer speaks to us through its articulation in space is no longer a monument. This does not mean that a monument must be built in order to affect us. As I have discussed before, the processes that precede the construction of a monument (the negotiations or competition) can be seen as part of the monument itself. However, these processes can only be considered as a monument if they continue to debate how the form of the monument and its articulation in space speak to the values being memorialized. If these questions are absent from the discussion, that discussion may be interesting (and important) but it is no longer an extension of what we consider a monument. Moreover, monuments that invite a debate about the character and nature of the boundaries of the nation must still do so

under the assumption that the nation exists. If the very existence and legitimacy of the nation is challenged, then the monument may be valuable but it is no longer a *national* monument. It may be, perhaps, an anti-national monument. Therefore, similar to liberal nationalism, liberal monuments must also tread the narrow path between distancing themselves from a chauvinistic nationalism without at the same time undoing national belonging altogether.

Although the tensions that I explored in Chapter 1 appear here in liberal monuments, they reveal to us something that the theoretical analysis did not: liberal nationalism can be practiced. If liberal nationalism is to be a nationalism at all it must have its own set of practices. These participate in the construction and maintenance of an image of a liberal nation. Liberal monuments are one such practice and although they do so imperfectly, their very existence has shown us that we can reconcile, or at least live with, the tensions between liberal and national values. Despite being theoretically oxymoronic, the overlap in liberal monuments between a nationalist and liberal discourse shows that at least in the practices that are situated in our everyday life—such as memorialization practices—there is a way both to attend to our national belonging and to secure our autonomy and individual liberty.

This means that liberal monuments do not only illustrate that liberal nationalism can be practiced; they also indicate that monuments have an important role in a liberal nation. Monuments are indeed a challenge to liberalism but, in a liberal nation, they can allow us (if not encourage us) to live the lives of liberal individuals—in addition to the easier task of fostering a sense of national community and belonging. In other words, liberal monuments have the surprising capacity of representing and enacting liberal



values—an element that strengthens, rather than weakens, a liberal polity. Liberal monuments do so in a variety of ways, many of which I have outlined in this chapter, and others to which I have alluded throughout the dissertation. Here, however, I would like to emphasize three of these avenues through which monuments can, as Gillis puts it, “remain useful” today. (Gillis 1994) First, a new and different approach to memory in the design and construction of monuments can give a venue for pluralism and introspection in the nation. By incorporating the notion that memories are not strictly social, as Halbwachs would have it, but that they are also intensely personal, monuments would respond to the *individual* need to remember and memorialize. Doing so would make monuments a practice that allows us to exercise our unique “experiments of living,” in this case our unique “memories of living”—and that makes space for critical evaluation of our political and social surroundings.

Second, a move away from a celebration of the past to a reckoning with the past would open the way to critical thinking and the taking of responsibility. A monument that approaches the past with room to question it, particularly the justification and legitimacy of death, can play an active role in allowing for self-criticism in the nation. By having monuments that self-consciously make us think and question the past, we would be encouraged to contemplate our actions—potentially even do so using our *reason*—and avoid following blindly and irrationally the path set out by some superior (patriotic, perhaps) force.

Finally, monuments can be a vehicle for the expression and exercise of pluralism in a liberal society. The most obvious way to do so is by integrating multicultural representation into monument design, as was done, for example, in Hart’s sculpture at the

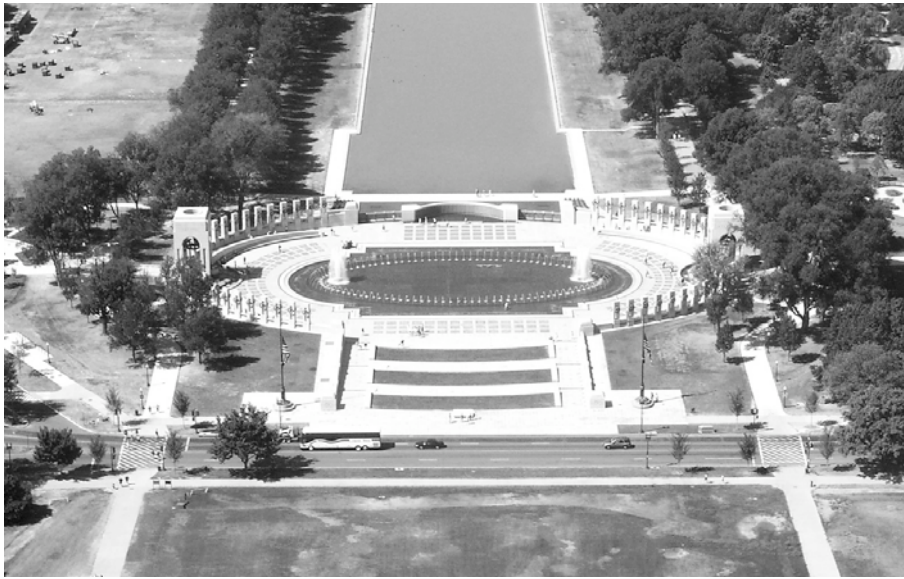
Vietnam Veterans Memorial.<sup>18</sup> However, for Andrew Shanken this attempt “to bronze multiculturalism” is insipid and quickly devolves into kitsch. (Shanken 2005) Its literalness closes, rather than opens, the field of possibilities. However, monuments can give voice to pluralism in another way. As I have discussed before, Johnston argues that a memorial complex with numerous memorial structures to the same event can express a *plurality* of views and interpretations. Such a proliferation of monuments does not need to be seen as an over-crowding or an obnoxious clutter. Rather it can represent, or more accurately *be*, an active playing field of ideas that is constantly changing and reinventing itself. This means that monuments can enact pluralism in a broader sense. They can provide us with the tools and the space “by which individuals and groups come together to discuss, debate, and negotiate the past and, through this process, define the future.” (Gillis 1994, 20) In this dissertation, I have sought to show that liberal monuments capture the dilemmas of liberal nationalism, and they articulate these dilemmas in space. As a tool of liberal nationalism, monuments go beyond merely representing an image of a liberal nation; they are a valuable practice for it to remain both liberal *and* a nation. In other words, liberal nations not only can tolerate monuments: they can benefit from monuments.

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<sup>18</sup> The three figures in the sculpture are each of a different ethnic background: White, African-American, and Latino.

## Appendix

**Figure 1. The National World War II Memorial, Washington, D.C.**

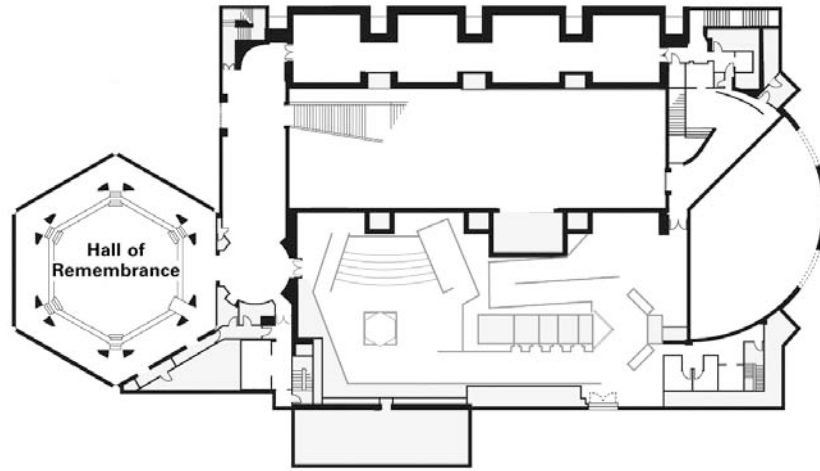


*a. Aerial view of WWII Memorial. (Photo: Jürgen Nagel)*



*b. The Freedom Wall: "Here we mark the price of freedom." (Photo: Aude Vivere)*

**Figure 2. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, D.C.**



*Floorplan of the USHMM, with the Hall of Remembrance at the end of the permanent exhibit. (From USHMM visitor's brochure)*

**Figure 3. The Euston Memorial and the Memorial to the Men of Hull, London**



*The cross is a common symbol both to mark a grave site and in memorials. (From Borg, 1991)*

**Figure 4. Nixon at the Lincoln Memorial**



*Nixon honoring Lincoln's birthday, 1974.  
(Photo: Robert L. Knudsen)*

**Figure 5. The Washington Monument from Arlington**



*The obelisk, both as a funerary memorial at the Arlington Cemetery (foreground) and as a national monument (the Washington Monument is seen in the background).  
(Photo: Avital Shein)*

**Figure 6. The Lincoln Memorial, Washington, D.C.**



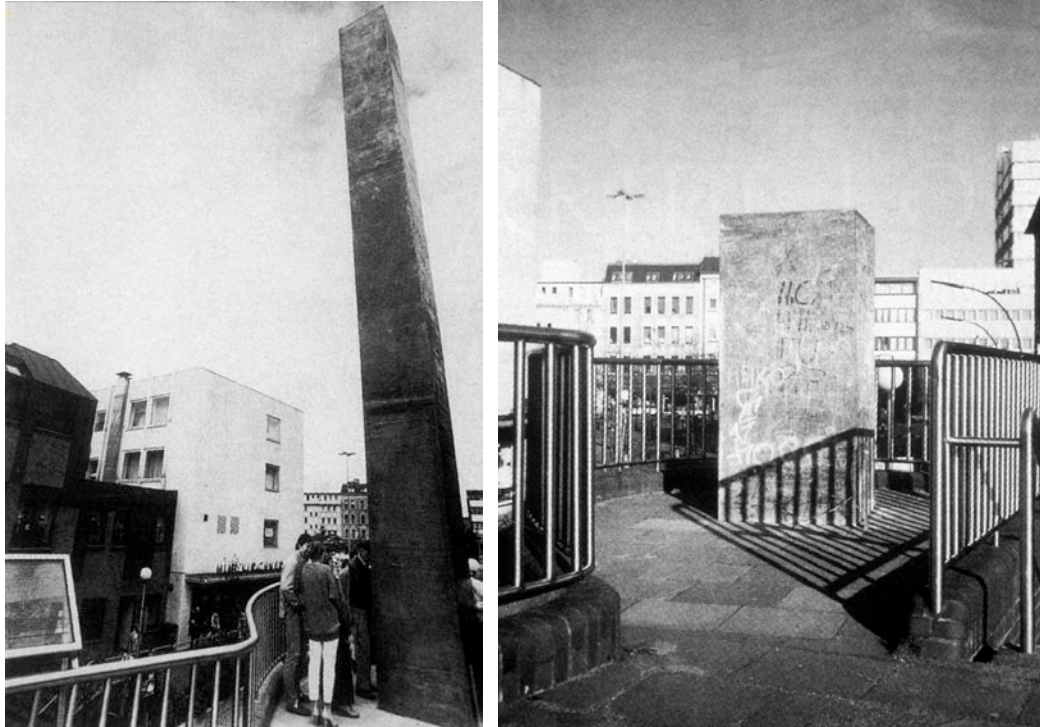
*“In this temple, as in the hearts of the people for whom he saved the Union, the memory of Abraham Lincoln is enshrined forever.” (Photo: National Park Service)*

**Figure 7. The Marine Corps War Memorial**



*Monuments are sacred spaces which prohibit play. (Photo: Avital Shein)*

**Figure 8. The Monument against Fascism, Harburg**



*The Monument against Fascism in 1986 (left) and 1992 (right). (From Art in America, April 2004)*

**Figure 8. Stumbling Blocks, Berlin**

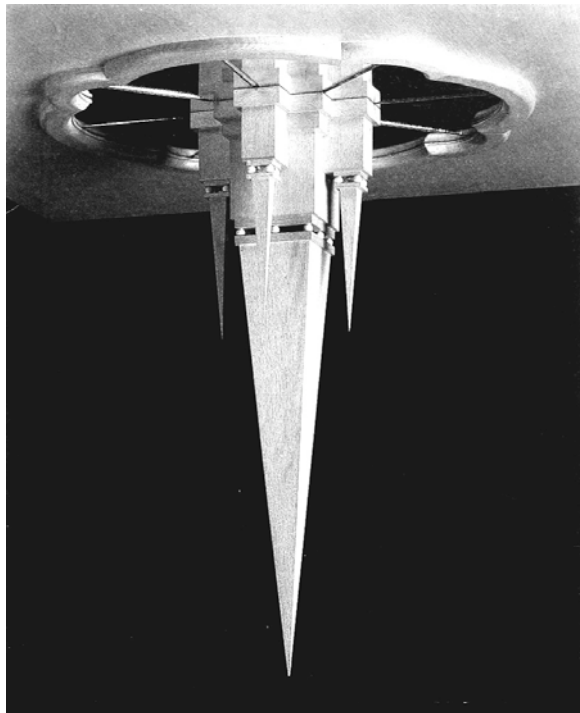


*A Stumbling Block in Berlin.  
(Photo: Georg Slickers)*

**Figure 10. The Aschrott-Brunnen Memorial Fountain, Kessel**



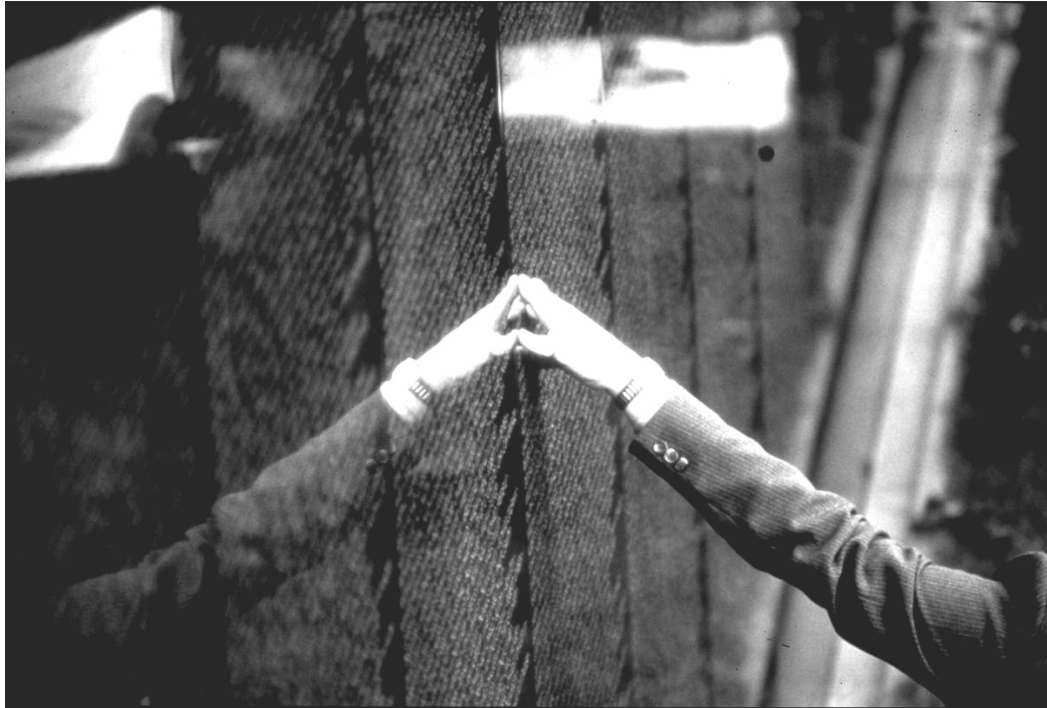
*a. Looking down into the Aschrott-Brunnen Fountain.  
(From Young, 1994)*



*b. The artist's model of the inverted Aschrott-Brunnen Fountain (From Young, 1994)*



**Figure 11. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial, Washington, D.C.**



*Reflections at the Wall. (Photo: Stephen Tobriner)*

**Figure 12. The National Mall, Washington, D.C.**



*The Washington Monument and the Lincoln Memorial located along the main axis of the National Mall, with the VVM oriented towards both of them. (Photo: USGS)*

**Figure 13. The Shaw Memorial, Boston**



*(Photo: Avital Shein)*

**Figure 14. El Valle de los Caídos, Madrid**



*(Photo: Håkan Svensson)*

**Figure 15. The Jefferson Memorial, Washington, D.C.**



*The dome of the Jefferson Memorial imitates that of the Roman Pantheon.  
(Photo: Jet Lowe)*

**Figure 16. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial, Washington, D.C.**



*Hart's Three Soldiers overlooking the Wall. (Photo: Library of Congress)*

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