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Visual Representations of the Holocaust in Memorials in the Czech Republic and America

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Visual Representations of the Holocaust in Czech and American Memorials

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in the History Department from The College of William and Mary

by

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Accepted for ________________________________
(Honors, High Honors, Highest Honors)

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April 27, 2011
To Henry Greenbaum, who survived four years of imprisonment, ending in Auschwitz-Birkenau, before he was liberated by American soldiers. He now volunteers weekly telling his story to visitors at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum. We met in 2006 working together on a program teaching students about the Holocaust, using art as a medium for memory. His story inspires me to study the Holocaust so that I may teach others.

Together, we will never forget.
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Introduction

Sitting on a trolley in Prague during the summer of 2010, I chatted with my classmates in English. Hearing us, an older woman approached us, asking where we were from and what we were doing in the Czech Republic. When we told her we were studying the Holocaust, she replied quietly, “I was in that.” She told us about her time in Auschwitz, right there on the trolley. Not only had she survived the Holocaust, she triumphed over her persecutors. She beamed as she spoke of her grandchildren who were scattered all over the world, and how she still practices Judaism in her beloved Prague.

The Holocaust is not a dusty history, but current living memory. As Richard Lebow rightly points out in his recent study of postwar European memory, “an understanding of the past not only helps us interpret the present; it tells us who we are. Shared experiences and memories, and the values and commitments they create and sustain, provide distinctive identities to individuals and communities.”\(^1\)

I spent my summer in Eastern Europe, visiting Holocaust memorials in cities across the region. Following a similar experience, historian James Edward Young remarked, “In every country’s memorials, in every national museum and archive, I found a different Holocaust; and at times, I found no Holocaust at all.”\(^2\) Indeed each memorial presents the Holocaust in its own way. This thesis will address Holocaust memory and memorialization in the Czech Republic and the United States. I will compare the differences between three Holocaust memorials in the Czech Republic and the United

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1 Lebow, 3.
2 Young, Writing, 172.
States and how they visually present the Holocaust and how they teach the Holocaust to the public. I will not be analyzing whether these memorials and museums present the Holocaust well or poorly, but rather what implication the cultural and historical conditions of these locations have on their teaching and presentation of the Holocaust. My focus is on the memorial at Terezín, Czech Republic; the Jewish History Museum Holocaust Memorial in the Pinkas Synagogue in Prague; and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (henceforth referred to as the USHMM) in Washington, DC.

Holocaust memorials began springing up all over Europe as soon as the war ended and continue to appear all over the world. Liberators and victims put together stones, flowers or photographs to remember those who were killed in the war and who were never found. They set up these impromptu memorials in camps, battlefields, even mass graves. Memorials are a unique form of memory, encapsulating both individual and communal memory. In this sense, memory is used “in a double sense: to refer to what people remember—or more accurately, what they think they remember—and to describe efforts of individuals, groups, and states to foster or impose memory in the form of interpretations and commemorations of their country’s wartime role and experiences.”

These memorials stand as forums for remembrance, a gravestone for past events and a safe space for memories often repressed or overlooked, but they are also influenced by their creators, their visitors and their environment:

In their iconographic, architectonic, and textual organization, Holocaust monuments reflect particular kinds of political and cultural knowledge even as they determine the understanding future generations will have of this time…For what is remembered here necessarily depends on how it is remembered; and how

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3 Lebow, 7.
these events are remembered depends in turn on the shape memorial icons now lend them.⁴

In order to understand the different aspects of representing the Holocaust in memorials I will examine these different memorials’ architecture, location, historical significance, and their use of language, buildings and artifacts. I will examine and compare the different representative histories these memorials present. I will also examine the audience expected at each memorial, as well as the current preservation issues at the site. I will compare their different forms of outreach as an avenue of understanding the Holocaust within a greater historical and culture context, to which many museums owe their funding and audience.

After being nearly ignored for decades, Holocaust memory has become a popular issue in the history community today. Unlike Holocaust memorials, several years lapsed before critical essays were published about historical memory. Most books about the Holocaust written directly after the war were survivor’s testimonies, most famously Wiesel’s trilogy published in 1955. But Holocaust memory—open, critical works on memory of the Holocaust—did not become a popular topic until the early 1990s, a phenomena James Edward Young initiated with his popular work, “Writing and Rewriting the Holocaust: Narrative and the Consequences of Interpretation” in 1988. Even with this emphasis, the United Nations did not designate a Holocaust Remembrance Day, January 27, until 2005.

The Holocaust is rapidly receding from individual memory to second- and third-hand memory. Historian Hilene Flanzbaum explains, “One of the reasons for increased awareness of the Holocaust rises from an inevitable awareness of the advancing age of

⁴ Young, Writing, 173.
survivors.” With the passing of this generation, we’re left with memorials to teach future generations about the Holocaust. It is essential for us to critique and understand these memorials to be assured they are teaching the Holocaust in the most effective way possible. It is important to understand the necessity of physical memory and our communal memory, to understand that this is the place where the Holocaust happened, even when we no longer have the people. It is vital to understand these memorials, to be conscious of what and how we’re teaching the Holocaust, before they become our only form of physical memory.

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5 Flanzbaum, 10.
History

Terezín

Austrian Emperor Josef II founded the garrison town of Theresienstadt, or Terezin in Czech, on September 22, 1784, naming it after his mother, Empress Maria Theresa.\(^6\)

Terezín—the large fortress and small fortress—make up part of the Austro-Hungarian border defenses against Prussia. The sharp angular buildings surrounded by moats represented the height of Baroque fortress design. When tensions between Austria and Prussia subsided, Terezín’s smaller fortress became a prison and was considered the toughest in the empire. The most famous inmate was Gavrilo Princip, the Serb nationalist who shot archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo, sparking World War One (WWI).

Following the annexation of the Czech lands by Hitler’s Germany in 1939, the fortress began housing enemies of the Nazi regime. In 1941, the Nazis decided to convert Terezin into a transit camp. Terezín was specifically set up to house Jews over 65 years of age, disabled or highly decorated German WWI veterans, and victims who were famous enough in their fields to be noticed by the world community should they disappear completely.

In 1942, Terezín held approximately 60,000 prisoners, almost all of whom were Jewish.\(^7\) Supplies of food and medicine were often insufficient; in addition to overpopulation and poor living arrangements, the death rate in Terezín was comparable to the Nazi concentration camps of Dachau and Buchenwald. Indeed, the high death rate

\(^{6}\) "Theresienstadt: Establishment."

\(^{7}\) Chladkova.
motivated the Nazis to build a crematorium in October 1942 outside the camp capable of incinerating 200 corpses a day.\textsuperscript{8} The crematorium survived the war and now stands in the middle of a field of gravestones—meant to look like a felled forest—to the victims cremated there.

In 1944, two representatives of the International Red Cross and one representative of the Danish Red Cross visited Terezín. The International Red Cross later issued a bland fifteen-page report about the visit and allowed the concentration camp—and thus all camps—to continue running. Not until 1996 did “the International Committee of the Red

\textsuperscript{8} Chladkova, 26.
Cross [release] copies of its World War II files, some of which provided verification that it knew of the persecution of Jews in Nazi concentration camps but felt powerless to speak out. The full report is now held on microfilms in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Terezín was technically a concentration camp, but is often referred to as a “transit camp,” as most of its population was on its way from their homes or ghettos to death camps, usually Auschwitz-Birkenau.

Soviet troops entered the camp on May 8, 1945 to liberate the over 30,000 victims still imprisoned in Terezín. In Terezín’s four years of operation, over 35,088 victims perished there.

The National Cemetery and Jewish Cemetery were sanctified immediately following the World War II (WWII), while the Memorial of National Suffering project began in 1947. Their self-stated mission is to “to commemorate the victims of racial and political persecution during the Nazi occupation, to develop the museum, research and educational activities as well as care for the sites connected with the suffering and death of tens of thousands of victims of violence.” There was no specific mention of the victim’s religion. The memorial was dedicated to all victims of Nazi aggression, despite the fact that almost all of the prisoners in Terezín were Jewish. This is just one example of Communist whitewashing of Jewish history, and their role in the Holocaust.

The Big Fortress—encompassing the whole town of Terezín—was returned to civilian residential and business use; the government established the Small Fortress for preservation as a memorial. The memorial consists of several dispersed sites: the Small

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9 Molotsky.
10 "Theresienstadt: Concentration/Transit Camp."
11 "Základní informace."
Fortress as a historical part of Terezín, the National Cemetery, the Ghetto Museum, the Jewish Cemetery, with the crematorium and the Russian cemetery, the memorial to Soviet forces, the memorial plaque by the former railway siding, the site of reverence on the Ohře where the Nazis threw the crematorium ashes, the columbarium where unclaimed urns are stored, a ceremonial space and mortuary, the former Richard underground factory at Litoměřice and crematorium and the Magdeburg Barracks. The memorial was renamed as the Terezín National Memorial in 1964 and has operated under that name since.

**Pinkas**

Aaron Horowitz built the Pinkas Synagogue in 1535 next to the Old Jewish Cemetery in the center of the Jewish ghetto of Prague. Until Joseph II issued the Edict of Tolerance in 1781, all the Jews of Prague lived, worshiped and were buried within the walls of the ghetto. The synagogue remained in use for centuries, even after Jews moved throughout Prague. In early 1923, a local building commission recommended that the synagogue become a museum, an idea which was steadfastly refused by the board of the synagogue.

The Nazi campaign to erase the Jewish people and their places of worship began following the German annexation of Czechoslovakia in 1939. In just six years, they destroyed over 60 synagogues and murdered more than a quarter million Czech Jews. Performing services at synagogues was forbidden, and the former board of Pinkas was

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12 Weiner.
deported. Through the war, Pinkas was used as a storehouse for the Central Jewish Museum, the forerunner of the museum which now owns the synagogue.\(^{13}\) It survived, unlike so many others, because the Nazis planned to use it to house a “Museum of the Extinct Race.” They even began renovations before the war turned sour for the Germans in 1944.

The Pinkas Synagogue functioned as a storehouse for the museum until 1950. As early as 1947, though, Pinkas was considered as a space for a memorial for all of the Bohemian and Moravian Jews who were killed during the Holocaust. “The Pinkas Synagogue,” as stated by Hana Volavková in the history of the synagogue, “is to fulfill a sacred purpose as a shrine.”\(^{14}\)

The names of the Jewish victims of Bohemia and Moravia, as well as their personal data and the names of the communities to which they belonged were inscribed on the synagogue walls, an idea which was designed and carried out by Václav Boštík and Jiří John, two Czech painters, between 1954 and 1959. To collect the data for the walls, the memorial staff used transport papers, registration lists and survivors’ accounts to compile card indexes on the Jewish victims. Many of the victims lack precise recorded dates of death, so the date of deportation to the ghetto or extermination camp was substituted. The memorial centers on the Jewish aspect of the Holocaust. Ruth Ellen Gruber, a historian of Eastern European Jewish history, writes,

In a sense, Jews and their physical traces become talismans that connect the present world to a “truer” world that existed before the catastrophe—“before communism” and “before the Nazi time.” Or simply “before oblivion.” Restoring or identifying the physical relics of Jews creates tangible bridges that link “before” and “after,” despite, or because of, what happened “in between.”\(^{15}\)

\(^{13}\) Volavková, 116.  
\(^{14}\) Volavková, 199.  
\(^{15}\) Gruber, 91.
The memorial was closed in 1968 to allow archaeologist Olmerova to research the mikvah ritual bath found in the synagogue. The memorial was closed for a year to repair water damage found during the excavation, but it was not reopened for the rest of the Communist period, ostensibly for further repairs. This closure appears to be related to the general indifference shown the Holocaust during the Communist era. As historian Randolph Braham explained: “During the Stalinist era, the Holocaust was virtually sunk into the Orwellian black hole of history. The Jewish martyrs were subsumed as part of the losses incurred by the population at large.”16 This official neglect caught the attention of dissident group Charter 77, who declared “the twenty-one-year closure of the memorial as a clear example of “the plainly anti-Semitic elements in the regime’s propaganda and policy.”17

During the Communist era, the roof of Pinkas Synagogue sprang several leaks, severely damaging the memorial. Repairs were repeatedly delayed and the original inscriptions were removed. Some of the original inscriptions are still visible on the second floor, detached from the modern inscriptions. They show visitors that Holocaust memory has not always been guaranteed, but that the Jews of Prague have had to struggle even to remember their own.

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16 Braham, 6.
17 Heitlinger, 53.
In 1990, the “repairs” were finally declared finished and starting in 1992 the 80,000 names of the Jewish victims were rewritten on the walls. The names are now inscribed on wooden panels attached to the whitewashed walls rather than directly on the walls in case of further building damage. In the end, the Pinkas synagogue was reopened to the public only after the fall of communism, and full reconstruction was completed in 1996.

**USHMM**

On 1 November 1978, President Jimmy Carter established the President’s Commission on the Holocaust, chaired by Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel. Its mandate was to investigate the creation and maintenance of a memorial to victims of the Holocaust and an appropriate annual commemoration to them. Unlike the Holocaust museum in Israel,
Yad Vashem, which was established in 1953, the idea for a national Holocaust Memorial on this side of the Atlantic Ocean did not appear for over thirty years after the Holocaust.\textsuperscript{18} In perspective, the first Holocaust museum, housed on the fourteenth floor of the Jewish Federation Building in Los Angeles, California, did not open until 1961.\textsuperscript{19} The first Holocaust memorial built on public land in the United States was dedicated in 1977 in New Haven, Connecticut.\textsuperscript{20}

On 27 September 1979, the Commission presented its report to the President, recommending the establishment of a national Holocaust memorial museum in Washington, D.C. with three main components: a national museum/memorial, an educational foundation, and a Committee on Conscience. Young, in his study of Holocaust memorials around the world, explained:

The motives for memory of the Holocaust in America are as mixed as the population at large, the reasons variously lofty and cynical, practical and aesthetic. Some communities build memorials to remember the lost brethren, other to remember themselves. Some build memorials as community centers, others as tourist attractions...All such memorial decisions are made in political time, contingent on political realities.\textsuperscript{21}

Congress voted unanimously in 1980 to establish the museum on federal land near the Washington Monument. “According to the legislation passed by Congress, the federal government was authorized to provide land for the Museum, whereas the funds for its construction had to come from private donations.”\textsuperscript{22}

The architect, James Ingo Freed, drew inspiration from a number of Holocaust sites, concentration camps, and ghettos. Unlike the memorials of Eastern Europe, the

\textsuperscript{18} "The Holocaust History Museum Overview."
\textsuperscript{19} Lowenfeld.
\textsuperscript{20} Fok.
\textsuperscript{21} Young, \textit{Texture}, 32.
\textsuperscript{22} Weinberg, 20.
U.S. attempted to utilize the latest scholarly research and a wider definition of who were victims of the Holocaust. The government mandated that while the massacre of the Jews was an important story to tell, the museum must also remember the millions of other victims who suffered at the hands of the Nazis. America is a nation of immigrants and the Holocaust effected millions of people—Jewish or not—so the United States Memorial Museum must pay tribute to the mosaic of victims, not just the Jewish ones. As historian and former director of the USHMM Jeshajahu Weinberg argued, “This was a wise approach, since to portray the Holocaust truthfully, the Museum had to present it in its totality, in its full historical context, which did not solely consist of the mass murder of the Jews. Moreover, it was impossible to emphasize the universal, human significance of the Holocaust without being inclusive of all victims.”

During the groundbreaking ceremony in 1985, two milk cans containing soil and ashes from several concentration camps and killing centers were buried on the site, binding the memorial in DC to the camps in Eastern Europe in a tangible expression of solidarity. In October 1988, the cornerstone of the Museum was laid, beginning five years of construction, which ended in 1993.

Dedication ceremonies for the Museum took place on 22 April 1993, and included speeches by President Bill Clinton, Israeli President Chaim Herzog, and several other dignitaries. Four days later, on 26 April the USHMM officially opened to the public led by His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama.

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23 Weinberg, 159.
Location and Historical Significance

Terezín sits on the original site of the fort used by the Nazis to imprison victims. Walking the same streets, seeing the same surroundings, the trees in their summer splendor, the boiling hot sun in summer beating on the paving stones—a memorialized concentration camp gives the visitor an experience that no off-location memorial can.

The memorial at Terezín is at the original fort for one main reason: for visitors to feel connected to the past and the injustices served upon that site. Young goes on to explain:

Without a people’s intention to remember, the ruins remain little more than inert pieces of the landscape, unsuffused with the meanings and significance created by our visits to them … In contrast to memorials located away from the sites of destruction, the remnants here tend to negate the distinction between themselves and what they evoke. Crumbling crematoria and barracks invite visitors to mistake remnants of the past for events themselves.  

This memorial uses its strategic location—as the site of a concentration camp—to feature the life of those imprisoned there. Visitors are ushered through the front entrance of the camp, featuring the infamous phrase “Arbeit Macht Frei.”

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24 Young, Art, 23.
Its location in northwestern Czech Republic, an hour outside of the capital city of Prague, is an easy day trip from the capital, drawing curious day-trippers and tourists. The memorial itself is outside the city of Terezín, where the associated museum is housed. While the disconnected museum-memorial aspect does keep visitors from easily viewing both, it does highlight their different missions.
While the museum’s mission is obvious—to educate—the memorial’s mission is somewhat confused. There is much history to teach in one small place, as the camp had a previous history as an Austrian fort to defend against the Prussian army. Unfortunately for visitors, there are not two tour options to separate these two very different stories. The tour guide described the horrors of the Holocaust by the Nazis and the cruelty of the Prussians against the Austrians in the 1800s. With two hundred years only a breath apart, the history of the fort gets convoluted. Our tour guide attached each anecdotal story to the architecture, so each room or passageway was set up for one story: either the Holocaust or its history prior to the Holocaust. The Holocaust history is featured prominently, especially in regards to memorials within the fort walls. For example, a tree is set at the wall where the first prisoner was killed, a symbol of regrowth and life. Adorning it are several pebbles—the traditional token of memory and respect left by Jewish visitors. The largest memorial, pictured below, is dedicated to those who did not survive Terezín, those who starved and suffered. While many communities have Holocaust memorials, these are especially poignant because it is placed within the walls of the concentration camp.
Outside the camp stands a memorial to defiance and to the strength of the victims of the Holocaust. A young woman, her face shrouded to symbolize an inability to see the future, her hands tied behind her back to symbolize imprisonment, crouches on a stone, refusing to sit, refusing to give in to the circumstances. She represents Jewish defiance, even when blind to their future.
The memorials within the memorial lends a specific importance to the grounds on which they are laid. Memorials can be placed anywhere, but all seven of these memorials were placed within the walls of the Small Fortress, adding their message to that of the larger memorial area. These are not just memorials to the people, but marking the place in which they suffered.
The difference between Terezín and the other memorials under discussion appears to be much more significant to the victims of the Holocaust than to other generations. When I spoke to Holocaust survivor Erika Neuman née Eckstut, she was both shocked and disappointed that I had the gall to even compare the Terezín memorial with a memorial in the United States. As a Czech Jew, she was in total disbelief that any memorial in the United States would ever be as powerful as a memorialized concentration camp. Erika was born in 1928, and even though she was never forced into a concentration camp herself, her family and youth were disrupted by the Holocaust. Tears came to her eyes as I tried to explain that I was simply comparing them, not judging their worth, but she never consented to my assertion that both are valuable memorial resources. In her opinion, Terezín is a true memorial, but the building in Washington, DC is simply a museum and educational resource.

The USHMM attempts to fulfill both of these roles, to be a national memorial for Americans as well as a well-known research facility. Its position off the National Mall fosters the feeling the memorial is representing the American people, as it is on both federal land and funded by the federal government. This placement was controversial, and not at all lost on the tourists and officials of Washington. Located off the National Mall in the nation’s capital, the USHMM highlights the symbolic juxtaposition between this memorial and the surrounding memorials to democracy and famous presidents. According to Michael Berenbaum, a Holocaust scholar and former employee of the USHMM, this memorial “reflects the opposite—the disintegration of civilized values and the perversion of technological achievements.”

25 Berenbaum, 41.
In contrast to both the Pinkas Synagogue and the memorial at Terezín, a memorial on the opposite side of the Atlantic Ocean holds a different significance. In part because the United States is geographically isolated from the Holocaust, misconceptions—and even denials—of the Holocaust abound. While Terezín and Pinkas are focused on memorializing the Holocaust, the memorial museum in DC must serve as a substitute for the memorials across the ocean. In addition, it holds the insurmountable responsibility of showing the Holocaust to an audience relatively untouched by these events. This one building is charged with standing as a memorial for the victims of the Holocaust, but also with teaching the public about the Holocaust in its most basic form.

After sixty years of Holocaust history being repressed by the Communists in power, the Pinkas Synagogue now stands in the center of Prague as a memorial not only to the Jewish victims of the Holocaust, but also their struggles throughout the Communist regime. In addition to accessibility, being in the capital of the state lends prestige and significance to the message, and is no small aspect of this memorial. On the edge of the old Jewish ghetto and the bustling Old Town Square, the memorial is central to all tourists and students alike.

Being meaningfully situated in a former synagogue, the highlighted Jewish victims earn a reverence that is both appropriate, and difficult to maintain, for other memorials. To honor this setting, visitors are requested to wear a Jewish head covering, called a Yamaka or Kippot, during their visit to the memorial, no matter their personal beliefs.
During the Nazi occupation of Prague, the Nazis in power allowed the synagogue to remain standing, in order to use it as part of a postwar “Museum of an Extinct Race.” In addition to the Pinkas Synagogue, the Nazis hoped to eventually use all of the synagogues in the Old Jewish Ghetto in the center of Prague to create a museum complex to the extinct Jewish people. According to Rebecca Weiner, who writes for the Virtual Jewish History Library, “the Germans hired Dr. Karel Stein, a historian, to catalogue tens of thousands of confiscated items from more than 153 destroyed Jewish communities throughout Bohemia and Moravia.”

Surviving to become the Holocaust memorial solely because the Nazis also had museum plans for the structure, gives Pinkas a standing similar to that of Terezín—a memorial housed in a site of Nazi atrocity. The Jewish staff

26 Weiner.
who ran the museum during World War II mostly perished in the Holocaust, but one, Hana Volavkova, survived and returned to Prague after war to become the director of the Jewish History Museum, which runs the Pinkas Synagogue Memorial.

As such, the synagogue is not simply a house of Jewish memory, but a memorial to the Jews of Bohemia and Moravia; this is a site of direct defiance to the Nazis attempt to end the Jewish people. Instead of being a museum to an extinct race, it stands as a memorial to the “mere” 80,000 Jews who perished, as opposed to millions. It is a site of triumph as much as a site of memorial.

These three very different memorials all reflect their specific environments in their attempts to represent the Holocaust “because every nation, every culture, recalls events accordingly to its own traditions, experiences, and political understanding.”\(^\text{27}\) The home in which each of these memorials is housed lends great weight and influence to the story they are trying to tell. Terezín represents the Holocaust from a first-person point of view. Inside the memorial, several smaller memorials breach the atmosphere of frozen time, and follow in the steps of most memorials with abstract representations of the Holocaust. The USHMM struggles to be less abstract to the general public, but being on the other side of the ocean from the event creates a certain amount of difficulty. The weight of the American Holocaust memory lands on the shoulders of the USHMM, and they are charged with representing the Holocaust for the whole of America. The public expectations of a museum standing on federal land is quite high; a claim they have strived to live up to. Also in the capital city, Pinkas has the same draw. Attracting not only Jewish tourists, but international tourists of all faiths, Pinkas utilizes both its location in the city and its neighboring synagogues to deliver its message to as many.

\(^{27}\) Young, *Art*, 21.
people as possible. Since the Pinkas Synagogue is owned and operated by the greater Jewish History Museum, all of the synagogues work together to attract visitors, keep entrance fees reasonable and maintain an atmosphere of Jewish history throughout the former ghetto. As the only Holocaust memorial centrally seated in the capital, and located in a Jewish house of worship, Pinkas seems to present the Czech view of the Holocaust as only validating the Jewish suffering and losses. After 60 years of Jewish victims being marginalized as only some of the “victims of Fascism,” the recognition may be well deserved.
Terezín is memorialized in two different places. The Small Fortress today is as it was left after the war. Its partner, a museum about the ghetto, resides a short ride away in the town of Terezín, which was known as the Big Fortress. Both housed prisoners in World War II, but the Big Fortress has been re-opened to civilian use.

The memorialization efforts have been restricted to the former fort and concentration camp, whereas the officers headquarters built during WWII are utilized as office buildings. As a fort, prison and concentration camp, the architecture of Terezín has changed little since its creation. The thick walls, originally for keeping people out, worked just as well to keep people in. Today, these thick walls grow moss and grass, but have not lost the intimidating look of a prison.
Unlike many memorials, the architecture of Terezín holds no specific symbolic significance. The meaning is clear: this was not a place where people were meant to move around freely in. Every nook and cranny of the rooms is on view from the doors and windows. The above-ground cells are easily monitored from the outside, the underground cells are virtually impossible to break out of. Small, dark and poorly ventilated, the cells lack any semblance of comfort—even the wooden beds that victims were granted were not padded. The bulk of the living space is open to the elements, making both living there and preserving the space difficult. In summer, when I visited the weather was cloudy and cool enough to make outdoor working and sleeping bearable.
On the other hand, their winters would have been brutal. With little protection from the elements, the fort is ill-equipped to protect the victims from the cold.

Housed in this setting, to visit this space is to learn about the Holocaust. The fort presents a shockingly real representation of the Holocaust. Terezín sits frozen in time, stuck in 1945 immediately post-liberation. Visitors to the small fortress memorial feel as if the prison has only just been vacated, that the Holocaust is not an abstract or forgotten past, but rather chillingly recent. Young argues,

In the “memorial camps,” the icons of destruction seem to appropriate the very authority of original events themselves. Operating on the same rhetorical principle as the photograph, in which representation and object appear to be one, these memorials...are devastating in their impact—not just for what they remember but because they compel the visitor to accept the horrible fact that what they show is “real”...Guard towers, barbed wire, barracks and crematoria—abstracted elsewhere, even mythologized—here stand palpably intact. Nothing by airy time seems to mediate between the visitor and past realities, which are not merely re-presented by these artifacts but present in them. As literal fragments and remnants of events, these artifacts of catastrophe collapse the distinction between themselves and what they evoke. Claiming the authority of unreconstructed realities, the memorial camps invite us not only to mistake their reality for the actual death-camps’ reality but also to confuse an implicit monumentalized vision for unmediated history.²⁸

In a way no museum or book can teach, Terezín shows the visitor details that are jarring and personal, but often over looked when trying to represent the Holocaust as a whole: the rough hewn walls, the stalls too small for a human to sit in, rusty showers allowing no privacy, the closeness of the crematorium and the memory of its human smoke. Reading that a prisoner has three feet of floor space and observing those three feet adjacent to your body mass provide very different perspectives of the conditions of the Holocaust.

It is this sense, this closeness to the setting of the Holocaust that the memorial museum of Washington, D.C. attempts to capture with its industrial architecture. As the

²⁸ Young, Writing, 174.
only memorial that was intentionally constructed for the sole purpose of being a memorial, its architecture is entirely unique and symbolic. After interviews with James Freed, the USHMM website states: “Freed wants the visitor to experience the Museum building "viscerally." Just as the Holocaust defies understanding, the building is not meant to be intellectually understood. Its architecture of sensibility is intended to engage the visitor and stir the emotions, allow for horror and sadness, ultimately to disturb.”

At the beginning, Freed was unsure of how to present the Holocaust architecturally and openly admits he did not know enough about the Holocaust to do it justice. He recalled his childhood experience of watching his hometown synagogue—in Essen, Germany—burn to the ground, and from there went on a pilgrimage-style tour through several sites of Holocaust memory all across Europe.

From these experiences, Freed created the unique lobby that is today the “Hall of Witness.” The “Hall of Witness” is built to disassociate the visitor from the outside world. Unlike other museum’s sleek lines and modern architecture, the Hall of Witness is raw and industrial. Weinberg explained, “Like a cathedral, the Hall of Witness is awe-inspiring, overwhelming in its monumentality, making the individual feel small and insignificant.” The exposed steel trusses, bolts, and riveting speak to the time of the Holocaust, the brute construction in which the Holocaust happened. Art historian Mark Godfrey argues, “As much as [Freed] proposed overtly referential uses of the architectural structure and materials (such as brick strapped by iron—a feature he related to the ovens in the death camps), he also hoped to communicate through less symbolic and referential registers, creating awkward atmospheres with space and light, as with the

29 "Art and Architecture."
30 Freed, 95.
31 Weinberg, 26.
twisted skylight of the Hall of Witness.” The Hall is lit by unfiltered sunlight, which is broken up by twisted steel girders. Though the glass initially seems to be like any other glass ceiling, upon further inspection “it is warped, deformed, and eccentrically pitched,” adding to the sense of confusion and disorientation.

The main staircase, which narrows unnaturally at the top, “like receding rail tracks heads to a camp” adds to the asymmetry. The opposites and dualities that make up the Hall of Witness defines the visitors first and last impression of the memorial, and wholly

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32 Godfrey, 205.
33 "Art and Architecture: Inside the Museum."
34 "Art and Architecture: Inside the Museum."
removes their experience from anything outside the memorials’ walls. The whole memorial works in dualities. Walls on either side of the Hall of Witness are white and black marble, respectively. When visitors enter the museum, they are forced left or right, a selection that does not result in death like the selection they are representing, but it does force the visitor through a discomforting separation nonetheless. On the floor of the hall a lighted glass fissure cuts through at an angle, symbolizing the timeline of the world with a gap in the middle where there was no hope, no light.

The symbolic architecture of the Hall of Witness includes a lighted “timeline” of the world.
This theme continues to the outside, where limestone, brick and steel foreshadow the architecture inside but also work to fit into the urban setting. At the 14th Street entrance, a bulbous façade with square windows but no roof shields the steel, angular entrance from direct view. This symbolism is especially poignant in the rain, when visitors scamper to the entrance seeking safety, but find sanctuary is non-existent.

The exterior of the museum is as symbolically crafted as the inside. Freed combined limestone and brick to fit the urban setting.
There are no windows to the inside of the memorial visible from the street—except a small almost imperceptible window to the Hall of Remembrance—giving the memorial a prison-like appearance. What visitors may not see is the roofline, which mimics a line of sentry towers, inspired by Freed’s visit to memorialized death camps in Poland.

Removed from the harshness of the Hall of Witness, the Hall of Remembrance is a softer shape. Forming a perfect hexagon—the symbolism of which is not lost on Jewish visitors—the Hall features high ceilings and straight lines. The hexagon shape was the only limitation placed on Freed by the Committee when he was chosen to create the USHMM. Soft lighting and areas to sit welcome visitors to relax their minds for the first time since entering the museum. Marble walls embossed with the names of killing and concentration camps, as well as sites of mass murders, are lined with candles for visitors to light.
The memorial manages to teach visitors about the Holocaust before they have ever seen an artifact or started a tour. The sense of foreboding and discomfort that pervades the Hall of Witness forces the public to feel the history, even if they cannot understand it.

The Pinkas Synagogue also utilizes their unique architecture to set the scene for visitors. The memorial is a synagogue, making the architecture both distinctive and beautiful. Pinkas was one of the first official memorials in Prague after the war, and is a distinctly Jewish memorial. As sociological historian Y. Michal Bodemann noted, “In the
early years, the commemorations were initiated and administered by Jews; Jews were, after all, mourning their own families and friends.”

The memorial is intentionally unchanged from its appearance as a synagogue. The space is open and bright, as any house of prayer would be and an altar stands in the middle of the first floor. Gruber argued, “Physical Jewish traces are solid symbols, powerful evocations of a lost, destroyed reality, monuments to an annihilated people. The process of discovery, recovery, documentation, and display imbues them with a broader cultural and emotional significance that transcends living memory.”

35 Bodemann, 211.
36 Gruber, 90.
The main aspect of the memorial is the list of names that covers the walls of the entire synagogue. The main nave features the names of people whose last address prior to the Holocaust was in Prague; the rest of the interior space commemorates victims from towns and villages outside Prague.

Outside the main nave, victims’ names are arranged according to the towns and villages where they were living prior to deportation and are presented in alphabetical order. The victims of the Holocaust are an overwhelming group that the casual observer cannot fathom, so the names of the Jews on the wall bring an individuality to these victims that would otherwise remain incomprehensible.
There are two floors in the Pinkas Synagogue. The ground floor and balcony are devoted to the list of the names of the victims, the second floor houses an exhibition featuring children’s art from the Terezín ghetto. Whitewashed and small, the upstairs is not built for museum-sized displays, but for small prayer offices. As Gruber notes, the setting of the Pinkas memorial in a synagogue is in itself significant:

The way in which synagogues are restored or reconstructed to house Jewish museums or as exhibits in themselves can give physical shape to radically different modes of memory as well as to the historical and other messages that are conveyed. The mere fact that a synagogue stands empty of Jews, used as an exhibit or housing an exhibit, may end up being the principal means of conveying a sense of loss: palpable absence may be the most important “exhibit” on the Holocaust and post-Holocaust period.  

Pinkas and Terezín both benefit from having such a unique space that is rich with history to host a memorial. Only the USHMM chose their space for this memory. Young notes, “In designing a museum for such memory, the architect is charged with housing memory that is neither at home with itself nor necessarily housable at all.” The rich symbolism of the USHMM affects the visitors, drawing them in, hushing them and making an uncomfortable space for them to feel the Holocaust viscerally if not intellectually. When I entered the USHMM for the first time, the jarring edges of brick on steel on glass left me cold and withdrawn. Holocaust memorials are not built to make you feel good, but rather they are designed to puncture the routine with the painful history of the Holocaust. In Terezín, there is no need for symbolism to manufacture this feeling, but rather the walls and heavy doors force the visitor outside of him or herself to a place where the horrors of the Holocaust are not long gone. Terezín shows what the

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37 Gruber, 165.
38 Young, Memory, 155.
USHMM is attempting to create: the rough, dirty, uncensored history. Terezin teaches the Holocaust simply by existing and allowing visitors to see it first hand. Where Terezín is rough, Pinkas is refined. As a memorial, Pinkas is breathtaking in its scope, but what is even more interesting is the synagogue in which the memorial is housed. Rich in its own history, the synagogue houses the memorial while still maintaining its own unique identity. As Gruber noted, the very fact that it is ‘empty’ of Jews and not used as a house of worship is in itself significant. Even as an exclusively Jewish memorial, the place teaches a remarkable representation of the Holocaust as a whole. It seems to ask, “This is just the Jews from Czechoslovakia—what about the millions elsewhere?” Visitors are often overwhelmed by the names, and by the names that are not there, showing not only the human aspect of the Holocaust in individuality but the sheer toll of the deaths to the community as a whole.
Audience & Language

The introduction to Terezín is presented only in Czech, German, English and Hebrew. Unfortunately, the only explanation of the buildings in Terezín is at the front entrance. Despite the lack of language diversity, over 300,000 visit the Terezín memorial each year. Each building is explained in all four languages but internal memorials are labeled with stone tablets only in Czech. Many look like they have been there for a few decades out in the weather, but have been re-labeled with numbers for the multi-lingual audience to look up translations in the brochure.

Internal memorials are scattered throughout Terezín’s Small Fortress and are denoted with Czech plaques. Translations can be found in the brochures corresponding with the number shown.

39 "Museum Programs."
The Terezín memorial costs 200 CZK for entrance or 150 CZK for students, which is about $11.50 or $8.60 for students. That price includes entrance to the memorial, documentary viewing, and explanatory brochure. In the brochure, the history presented is all Holocaust history. The history of the fortress is on the outside flaps, and is presented in a chronological order instead of by location. As Young explains, “Like photographs with captions, however, the memorial camps remain essentially meaningless: their significance derives both from the knowledge we bring to them and from their explanatory inscriptions.” 40 There were no museum-like tablets that explained what each sealed off room was or had been, or why each room was staged in the “Holocaust-era settings.” Officers quarters were furnished in period pieces, papers are arranged on desks and the rooms are closed off from the public with glass walls or wooden barriers. There is no explanation why some aspects of the memorial are devoted to Holocaust history, while others only reference older history.

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40 Young, Writing, 175.
As with any memorial on the site of the event itself, it is nothing without the interpretation and attendance of visitors. As Young remarked,

Only we can animate the stone figures and fill the empty spaces of the memorial, and only then can monuments be said to remember anything at all. In this way, we recognize the essentially dialogical character of Holocaust memorials, the changing faces of memory different visitors bring to them.41

41 Young, Art, 37.
Each visitor comes to the memorial with their own history, their own point of view and looking to draw their own conclusions. Each memorial is only what the visitor understands it to be, and it can only ever be as meaningful to the visitor as the history it presents. To this end, they must be able to understand what the memorial is offering to them in order to make the memorial meaningful. To visitors to Terezín, only those who read Hebrew, Czech, German or English may interact with the memorial. Rather than just whom the memorial staff is expecting as visitors, these language choices seem to show whom the institution feels should be visiting this memorial, for remembrance or penance.

Part of the history Terezín has to offer is the video the Nazis made there as propaganda. Visitors who have viewed this video—which has been partially recovered and is for sale in the gift shop—come to Terezín with high expectations about the history taught there. The film presents Terezín not only as a concentration camp built for propaganda, but as a tool of psychological manipulation of the Jewish victims sent there. Visitors who enter Terezín having seen the film are thus doubly struck with the horror of the actual living conditions of the victims. Those who see the film at Terezín—there is a viewing room on site where the film is screened continually—grasp this deeper understanding of the victims only after they have completed their tour.

All of these memorials must contend with vastly different viewers coming together to view these memorials. In addition to issues of language, relevance, and age appropriateness of these memorials, in the 21st century these places are subject to commercial influence. As tourist centers, the memorials draw both sanctioned and unsanctioned stands of goods around their doors. As Gruber noted:
For the fervently orthodox Jews, whose main purpose is prayer, and for the numerous Jewish groups and individuals whose overriding purpose...is to consciously mourn the victims of the Holocaust, the commercial presence can seem an irrelevant, even sacrilegious, intrusion; a souvenir shop in a cemetery. It represents, however, an important transition: rather than sanctify [memorials] as a place of mourning and remembrance, it signifies it instead as a place that can be 'enjoyed.'

At the Pinkas Synagogue, this includes a ‘gift shop stand’ outside the Old Jewish Cemetery. There are several stands outside the memorial, but only one inside the walls between the synagogue and the cemetery. Tourists utilized these stands while waiting in line to purchase tickets, or to purchase guidebooks before entering the cemetery.

Entrance to the Pinkas Synagogue is 300 CZK or 200 CZK for students—about $17.50 and $11.50—which includes entrance to several other museums owned by the Jewish History Museum of Prague. Yamakas are an additional 5 CZK (about nineteen cents) “suggested donation” at the door. Exact statistics on how many visit the Pinkas Synagogue in particular were unavailable. The first and most noticeable thing about the Pinkas Synagogue memorial is its use of language. By using names and dates and the hometowns of the victims in a mass textual overload, instead of photos or artifacts, the memorial is able to highlight the individual victims.

Brochures are available in a plethora of languages: Russian, Czech, Hebrew, Italian, French, Spanish, German and English. The international tourist influence on this decision is obvious. The brochure is an introduction to all six synagogues held by the Jewish History Museum of Prague and gives very little information about the Pinkas Synagogue beyond a superficial description.

42 Gruber, 130.
In the synagogue itself the use of several languages boosts the memorials accessibility. To a visitor who does not use the Latin alphabet, though, the memorial would appear totally confusing. The names on the walls are written in the Latin alphabet—the same used in Czech—however, they are headed by Hebrew letters, highlighting again the Jewish and Czech aspects of this memorial.

Names are in alphabetical order according to the Hebrew alphabet, but are written in Czech.

The names are in Czech and the dates are a combination of numerals and Roman numerals as seen below.
The quotes on the walls are in Hebrew, Czech and English—in that order. This order shows the hierarchy of guests who are anticipated at the memorial. The list of concentration and death camps that Bohemian and Moravian Jews were forced into are on the wall in Czech on either side of the former Torah Ark.

Last names are written in red, which first names and dates are written in black. Victims with the same last name are listed together.
The list is in Czech, but most are still recognizable to English speakers, so there is no translation in the memorial. The list is set in the middle of the only wall not covered by names and dates. The tall, vaulting walls lead the eye directly to the open space around the list of camps.

Though the American audience, even as tourists abroad, are geographically and culturally isolated from the Holocaust, Flanzbaum argues that “the Holocaust has assumed a permanent place in the historical consciousness of most Americans. In the national level, much of the discussion about the Holocaust on the part of educators, philosophers, theologians, and museum designers has emphasized the universal
significance of the event."  Unlike students in the Czech Republic, who were subject to sixty years of anti-Semitic Communist reign and historical whitewashing, students in the United States may have a more well-rounded education about the Holocaust, but the general public is still less informed. The memorials of the Czech Republic assume a certain base knowledge of the Holocaust from their visitors, the brochure for the Pinkas Synagogue does not even mention the Holocaust by name, but rather describes itself as “a Memorial to the Jews of Bohemia and Moravia murdered by the Nazis.” The memorial museum in the Washington D.C., however, presents the Holocaust with the assumption of no prior knowledge.

The USHMM is presented entirely in English, but the website maintains pages in French, Spanish, Italian, Russian, Turkish, Portuguese, Arabic, Greek, Indonesian, Chinese, Farsi, and Urdu. Approximately 1.6 million visitors, representing over 100 countries visit the USHMM each year. The memorial aspect of the museum in the lobby and the building itself, are not explained to the visitors unless they read the books in the bookstore or have a tour guide. It is meant to be a non-language experience to affect as many people as possible. At the front desk, guides are available in several languages. Customer Service representatives in burgundy blazers sport buttons saying “I can speak…” in their language of choice. When I visited, I saw several buttons in Spanish and even one in Russian on the woman at coat check. Even when trying to be internationally appealing, the USHMM provides multi-lingual services in a uniquely American way—by creating a mosaic of employees of all backgrounds working together to teach about the Holocaust.

43 Flanzbaum, 170.
44 “About.”
Unlike Terezín and Pinkas, the memorial in DC is free to visitors. With over $49 million in government funding matched with another $40 million in donations, the memorial fits in better with its Smithsonian neighbors than with other Holocaust memorials. As a result, their visitor pool includes not only those looking to spend the day learning about the Holocaust, but also tourists simply stopping in to see the Hall of Witness, or students there for a project skimming through the exhibits at top speed. Knowing this, the memorial communicates their message immediately, as discussed in the architecture chapter. In addition, they—like every Holocaust memorial discussed—prominently display the opportunity to donate to the memorial. Seated in the center of the Hall of Witness, in the Pinkas Synagogue and at the entrances of both the camp memorial and Terezín museum, these boxes are filled with monetary contributions—usually from a multitude of countries.

These Holocaust memorials all cater to an international audience because they are representing an international event. Despite the unique nature of all three of these memorials, they do not exist in a vacuum. All three must work with their international audience in order to teach the Holocaust, which includes having brochures and websites in several languages. There may be another motive to choosing which languages are represented, besides overall statistics of visitorship. Besides the obvious question of “Who visits Holocaust memorials?” there is the question of “Who should visit Holocaust memorials?” These brochures act as a window to the audience around you, whoever they may be. In addition, the use of language as a tool for exclusion is present. Though not overtly, the Terezín memorial discourages visitors by presenting a limited relationship with other cultures while the USHMM encourages everyone to learn about the Holocaust.
**Preservation: Artifacts and Buildings**

As the only memorial in this thesis that physically interacted with the Holocaust, Terezín has a very unique preservation struggle. Terezín, and all memorialized camps, are skeletons of the Holocaust. Unlike photos or even artifacts, the walls, rooms and walkways of formerly functional concentration camps are haunting. While walking the streets of a concentration camp that held victims is a unique experience that every Holocaust scholar should experience, may not be feasible for much longer. With the aging population of survivors, these memorialized camps have become even more important to the Holocaust story, but they are aging as well. Historian Alena Heitlinger noted:

> Several critical reports about the deterioration of the buildings and the generally unsustainable state of affairs at the memorial were issued by various organizations in the early 1960s, forcing the national government to address the issue at one of its meetings in 1962…the authorities were apparently also reacting to complaints from former prisoners and a growing number of both domestic and foreign visitors to the memorial.  

Today, Terezín struggles with preservation issues. Though the furniture in the posed officers quarters is walled-off with glass, the victims quarters, fortress walls and internal memorials are not walled-off in anyway. I watched as visitors walked through the fort, either with a guide or alone, and they leaned on walls and bed frames, fingered faucets and kicked moss off of stones. No one stopped them. Even tourists who are not touching the furniture are treading through the rooms and tunnels. Compounding this

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45 Heitlinger, 55.
issue is the relentlessness of time and weather on the artifacts, causing rust and general disrepair.

The rooms of famous prisoners, like that of Gavrilo Princip, were closed off to public entrance but “normal” prisoners chambers were not. In addition to human preservation issues, Terezín allows birds to roost in corners of rooms, leaving piles of droppings throughout the prisoners’ former quarters.
Preserving Holocaust sites is a sensitive issue for many people, especially taxpayers in their host countries who support these preservation efforts at their own expense. Yet, without preservation of these sites the world would lose an anchor of the Holocaust story that keeps the history from becoming abstract and almost mythical. With this debate in mind, Terezín Memorial Foundation finds itself in a very awkward position, both financially and morally. Terezín is no longer funded through the federal government, but
rather through local government and private grants. Auschwitz-Birkenau, for example, had many of these same preservation issues. Subject to both natural and human-caused deterioration, Auschwitz-Birkenau faced irreparable damage and very little funding with which to manage the memorial until they were inscribed on the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization’s World Heritage List in 1979.46

On the other end of the spectrum, the Pinkas Synagogue has relatively few preservation issues. Despite being built over 500 years ago, the Pinkas Synagogue is well preserved, and has been remodeled recently. Guests are barred from touching the walls by short barriers. The Torah Ark and altar are roped off. The clean white walls and stark black writing create a sterile environment. The most important aspect of the building being preserved is the building itself; housing a memorial in a uniquely Jewish setting frames the Holocaust as a uniquely Jewish experience. The building—merely a shell of a synagogue now—changes how the memorial is presented. If the Jewish History Museum decided to create a whole new memorial on the same lot, using the space now occupied by the Pinkas Synagogue, but built a new building instead of using the synagogue, the memorial would not have nearly the same impact. Part of the memorials’ draw is that this is not simply a list of victims, but a list of Jewish victims symbolically interred in a Jewish space.

Preserving the synagogue has not always been an easy task. During the Communist period, maintaining synagogues was forbidden, complicating the memorials ability to remember both their Jewish heritage and memorialize the Holocaust. Heitlinger

46 "Auschwitz-Birkenau."
argues, “In contrast to other communist countries, the postwar Czech/Slovak Jewish community has been shaped not just by the Holocaust and by Stalinism at large.”\textsuperscript{47} As stated above, it was after the 1960s that the Pinkas Synagogue was closed for “renovations” for several decades. The new Pinkas Synagogue is technically the newest of all three of these memorials, reopening three years after the USHMM opened in Washington D.C.

The memorial aspect of the USHMM also has few preservation issues. Since the building has only been open for sixteen years, their issues are of maintenance, rather than preservation. In addition, the museum was built of steel meant to look rusted and glass meant to look warped. In terms of maintenance, neither requires much attention as they are built to age. One of the symbolic aspects of the Hall of Witness is the light pouring from the glass ceiling, which prevents the use of photos or artifacts in the Hall of Witnesses for preservation reasons.

The memorial aspect of the building utilizes neither artifacts nor photos from their collections. Instead, the Hall of Remembrance and the Hall of Witness are spaces for the visitors to prepare for or recover from those images. The Hall of Remembrance and the Hall of Witness both focus on symbolism to present their message about the Holocaust. Directly adjacent to the 14\textsuperscript{th} Street entrance stands the flags of the twenty United States Army Divisions active in liberating Nazi concentration camps. On the opposite end, outside the Hall of Remembrance stand the National Flags of the nine countries whose military took part in the Liberation of Nazi camps, accompanied by a placard stating which camps each country helped to liberate. While these flags require very little

\textsuperscript{47} Heitlinger, 4.
maintenance, their position flanking the Permanent Exhibition reminds the visitor that the Liberators are the window through which this museum memorial must be viewed, especially the American liberators.

Much of the museums world-renowned collections are housed in a climate controlled warehouse in Northern Virginia. The numbers in the collection are impressive, more than 10,000 artifacts in the warehouses, with another 900 artifacts housed in the museum.\footnote{48} It holds a wealth of information for the scholarly community, and is crucial to the furthering of Holocaust education. In a physical sense, Terezín and Pinkas have the buildings, but the USHMM has the papers that describe and document the Holocaust.

What we, as a culture, preserve shows what we consider important. By preserving Terezín, the Czech Republic and all of their funders are proving to the world that they think Terezín is worth maintaining for future generations. Those future generations though, may never see the inside of Terezín if it is, in fact, going to be preserved. The debate of whether or not to keep these historic sites open to the touring public, or preserve it for the sake of preservation, is one happening at sites all over the world. Even in the Auschwitz-Birkeneau memorial, the crematorium ruins, which were open to the public months before my visit, are now roped off to prevent further damage.

In Prague, the Communists were wary of preserving synagogues and Jewish sites all over the Czech Republic while they were in power, so Holocaust memorials were shut down to tightly control the state message. Preservation is not simply the act of conservation, but also the choice of one piece, or building, over another in importance. Each of these places show the Holocaust is an important aspect of our history to preserve.\footnote{48 “Collections.”}
By the time the United States stepped into the role of Holocaust preserver and
memory protector, it was clear how great an impact the Holocaust had on history—at
least to those paying attention to world events; almost exactly one year after the USHMM
opened, genocide swept across Rwanda.
Memorial Outreach to Greater Holocaust and Cultural Issues

The Terezín Memorial maintains very few outreach programs, save documentary screenings in their theaters on request. Since their memorial is only open until 3pm Monday through Friday, most tourists do not spend more their evenings there, leaving a vacuum where an audience for these programs would be. They do own an auditorium and stage, which is reserved for performances featuring the history of Terezín.

The Pinkas Synagogue, as part of the Jewish History Museum of Prague, features outreach programs mostly centering on Jewish culture and Shoah history. Taking the high road and teaching hope, not revenge, the museum has several traveling exhibits including “Don’t Lose Faith in Mankind,” a program teaching the history of Bohemia and Moravia since 1938 through the eyes of six Jewish children. The museum makes collections and archival resources available to the public, though not in the memorial building. Part of their collections are dedicated wholly to the study and teaching of Shoah history. All of the lectures presented by the Jewish History Museum of Prague are

49 Shoah is the Hebrew term for the Holocaust.
available in both Czech and English. This speaks volumes about who the audience is for these lectures—tourists. This coincides with Gruber’s argument:

As institutions that can easily be visited by the public, Jewish museums play an educational role that is of particular importance. They often become the public face of Judaism…Both the tourism and the museum experience entail the creation of promotion of Jewish virtualities: physical spheres and representations that are often complemented by publications, lecture programs, classes, festivals and other activities. Bulletin boards, walls and hoardings in neighborhoods or at or near sites delineated as “Jewish” bear prominent notices and posters for these events. Tourists, many of the Jews, “repopulate” old Jewish quarters and onetime shtetls. Jewish cultural festivals draw crowds…Jewish music—klezmer or cantorial—serves as a background score for Jewish museums, exhibitions, and restaurants.50

The USHMM takes a different tack. While occasionally hosting programs featuring Jewish culture, their main outreach program is advocacy and prevention of future genocide. Their genocide-prevention outreach programs are run out of the Wexner Center, which includes exhibitions about the Nuremberg Trials, and the Committee on Conscience exhibit on the current genocide in Darfur, Sudan.

50 Gruber, 127.
The room is full of elaborate displays, bright colors and large photos of refugees, but is comparatively vacant of visitors. The Wexner Center’s mission is outside the walls of the museum in Washington, D.C., but in the several times I visited, the Wexner Center was notably empty. In part because of the center’s location in the museum—at the end of the three-floor Holocaust museum tour—and partially because of its nature the Wexner center sees very few visitors. Often emotionally exhausted from the museum, visitors are unable to sustain further interaction with genocide victims. As a result, their mission of
advocacy and education becomes somewhat diminished. Outside of that program, the USHMM works to spread their resources to any group who was affected by the Holocaust, or who could specifically benefit from the lessons of the Holocaust. For example, all FBI recruits and Washington, D.C. police officers must follow a tour through the museum to further understand their role in society, and to understand the balance between morality and following orders. In addition, they maintain programs for community building and teacher trainings in all 50 states, creating an atmosphere of partnership so important to public education. This community is a necessary aspect of Holocaust education, because when a community stands together to protect all of their members from injustice, extreme examples of injustice are more likely to be stopped before they can begin.

These memorials also reach a greater audience through the use of the Internet. In the age of instant information, these memorials must represent the Holocaust not only on location, but also with their online presence. Each memorial has their own website, covering their background, message, database and archives, gift shop and the memorial operations. The Pinkas Website—or rather the Jewish History Museum’s website—only features the synagogue insomuch as the brochure does. There is a short description of the synagogue’s history, with links to greater descriptions of both the memorial and the museum exhibit housed in the upstairs rooms. While brief, their site is accessible and available in Czech, English German, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Japanese, French, Russian, Hebrew and Polish versions. The Terezín memorial website is also available in English and Czech, but the website is difficult to use or to find information on. It’s chaotically organized and it lacks a search function. The USHMM website is much more
in depth. As discussed before, their website is available in a plethora of languages. More than just that, the website is obviously designed with international students and researchers in mind, rather than simply casual visitors. Their archive is world-renowned and sets it apart from any other memorial discussed. The USHMM website is meant to be both a resource for museum information, as well as a substitute for the real thing. Virtual tours, downloadable pamphlets and survivor’s video testimonials provide a Holocaust education for those unable to travel to Washington, D.C. This audience, who does not get the full experience of the architecture or symbolic location, can still learn about the Holocaust from this site.
Conclusion

In a history as multi-faceted, complicated, and personal as the Holocaust, there is no single story that shares the complete truth of those six years. The comparison of three unique physical sites of memory—Terezín, the Pinkas Synagogue and the USHMM—helps to understand each of these memorials as it exists individually in its own environment, but also in the larger scope of unified international Holocaust education. In part, the critique and study of these memorials help to define their ability to teach the Holocaust, and their continuing ability to share their unique message in the most effective way possible. All three memorials provide unique lessons to every new generation not personally involved in the Holocaust.

The location of these memorials is no small part of their message; Terezín’s location is the most important aspect of their memorial, and the USHMM’s location, while symbolically rather than geographically significant, crafts and centers their message of national commitment to remembrance and prevention. The USHMM utilizes its location in the capital of its country to reach a greater audience, as does the Pinkas Synagogue. For Terezín, it is more important to preserve the site as it was, where it is, than to manufacture a memorial for a greater audience. The comparison of a constructed memorial and a memorial on the site of Nazi atrocities highlights the need for both to ensure continuing international communal memory.

These memorials teach the Holocaust to an international audience, which requires having brochures and websites in several languages. All three memorials attempt to reach a wider audience through the Internet, to varying degrees of success. Pinkas and Terezín are both still struggling to utilize the Internet to its fullest capabilities. Recent technology makes these sites available in many languages with the click of a button, though the
translations are often difficult to understand and minimally informative. Language and accessibility are paramount to the USHMM. As a memorial meant to be available to the mosaic of Americans and international tourists visiting the nations’ capital, they highlight both an abundance of official translations as well as a mainly non-verbal representation of the Holocaust in the Hall of Witness. The Pinkas Synagogue also uses language to share their message in a massive textual memorial; even if the visitors cannot read each individual name, the significance there is clear. Of the three memorials, language is least important for Terezín because the visual and physical impact of the fort is the primary aspect of the memorial, not the descriptions therein.

Architecture is key to the representation of the Holocaust in these memorials; it illustrates the physical reality of Holocaust history in all three of these places, whether intentionally created to be relevant as it is in the USHMM, or connecting to an era prior to the Holocaust, thus influencing how the memorial is viewed. This prior history is the essence of two of the memorials—a Jewish house of worship and a prison fort—the Nazi influence on these places is simply a portion of what is taught and remembered in these spaces. The architecture mandates how the Holocaust is represented and understood in each of these places.

All three of these memorials are spaces for grieving and memory, but they are also resources for the scholarly community. The memorials of Terezín and Pinkas preserve sites of Nazi atrocities, maintaining the buildings for research and to reclaim these places as sites of triumph over the Nazis. The USHMM, on the other hand, preserves the documents and artifacts that tell the story of the Holocaust. Though each may only be a piece of the preservation puzzle, each memorial preserves parts of Holocaust history that the other is unable to provide. When examined together instead of
separately, each acts as an essential part of Holocaust preservation. Though issues of continued preservation plague all of these memorials, especially Terezín, their continued operation is more necessary now than ever, in light of the passing of the WWII generation. Understanding the international community’s need for both of these types of memorials is paramount, and part of what this comparison hoped to accomplish.

By comparing these very different memorials, we understand each of their respective strengths better and makes them more understandable than if they were dissected in isolation because they do not—and should not—stand alone in Holocaust history. For example, the abstract memorials inside Terezín are much more understandable when compared to the symbol-rich memorial Halls presented by the USHMM. Placed in a larger memorial where the Holocaust is still tangible, their abstract form can get lost when not understood in the greater sphere of Holocaust memorialization, which almost always veers towards the abstract. No one memorial can tell this history alone; for the most complete picture, they must be understood together.

Each of these memorials struggles to present a whole story of the Holocaust without sacrificing its own niche of remembrance. Whether the memorial presents the Holocaust from the point of view of its religion, country or history, it is important to look at it critically. Each contributes a highly specialized piece of the larger story, without which Holocaust history could be an inexpressive repetition of names, dates, and statistics. But we also must remember that these memorials do not exist in a vacuum. We should utilize them for what they provide: a place to grieve, to remember, to learn. Each memorial teaches a different Holocaust, their own Holocaust, and all are true in their own way.
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