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Canadianising the Holocaust: Debating Canada's National Holocaust Monument

This paper addresses Canada's first national monument to the Holocaust: the National Holocaust Monument (NHM) in Ottawa. I examine how public discourse surrounding the NHM constructs the Holocaust as a Canadian memory. Political spokespersons create connections between the Holocaust and Canadian history by drawing on themes of Canada's Allied role during the war, post-war Jewish immigration, and the narrative of None Is too Many. The discourse frames Canada as both a hero and villain in respect to the Holocaust. Whereas some nations seek to resolve such conflicting memories, Canadians seem content to remember their nation in both ways.

Cet article s'intéresse au premier monument national canadien de l'Holocauste : le National Holocaust Monument (NHM) d'Ottawa. Je souhaite analyser comment les discours entourant le NHM ont construit une mémoire canadienne de l'Holocauste. Les porte-paroles politiques ont tracé des parallèles entre l'Holocauste et l'histoire canadienne en insistant sur le rôle des Alliés pendant la guerre et l'immigration juive de l'après-guerre ainsi que sur le récit de None Is Too Many. Ce discours donne au Canada un bon et un mauvais rôle dans l'Holocauste. Alors que d'autres pays tentent de résoudre ses mémoires contradictoires, les Canadiens semblent accepter de se souvenir de ses deux façons.

While Holocaust monuments have been examined in a variety of national contexts, with the majority of studies focusing on the United States, Israel, and Germany, few consider them within the Canadian context. In 2011, the federal government of Canada established the country's first national monument to the Holocaust – the National Holocaust Monument (NHM) – which is currently under construction in downtown Ottawa. This monument will have a significant impact on Canada's national memorial culture. Monuments are catalysts for the 'rhetorical negotiation' of historical events, and public memorials play a significant role in the 'nationalization' of the Holocaust and its memory. Elsewhere in the country, this sort of negotiation can be witnessed in the debates surrounding the recently opened Canadian Museum for Human Rights.

The following paper considers how public discourse surrounding the NHM frames the Holocaust as a Canadian memory. I do this by examining the public debates surrounding the monument and identifying points where Canada and the Holocaust appear to intersect. This discourse includes parliamentary debates surrounding bill C-442 and the resulting *National Holocaust Monument Act* (NHMA), speeches by public spokespersons, media publications, as well as interviews conducted with individuals involved with the project.¹ I begin by providing some background on the NHM and considering the literature on public monuments and national memorial culture. I then turn to the discourse, considering how narratives of the Holocaust and of Canadian history weave into and out of one another. First, I demonstrate that a central purpose of the NHM is to integrate Holocaust memory into Canada's national consciousness. I then focus specifically on the way political actors use historical

themes to construct the Holocaust as a Canadian event. They create connections between the Holocaust and Canadian history by drawing on themes including Canada's Allied role in the Second World War, the immigration of Jewish refugees during the immediate post-war period, and Canada's history of antisemitism. This last theme draws heavily on the war and post-war narrative of Canadian history developed by Harold Troper and Irving Abella in *None Is Too Many*. Troper and Abella's narrative is especially useful to political spokespersons because it contributes to nation building by reproducing Canada's progressive national myth. Through this discourse, the NHM is resulting in a 'Canadianisation' of the Holocaust. In conclusion, I compare Canada's narrative with other nationalized memories of the Holocaust to identify some unique characteristics of this memory. Canada is framed as both a hero and a villain during the Holocaust, and whereas other nations seek to resolve such conflicting memories, Canadians seem content to remember their nation in both ways.

Public Monuments and National Narratives

In 2009, the federal government of Canada initiated the creation of the country's first official physical memorial to the Holocaust. The project originated with Laura Grosman who conceived of the idea for a national monument while an undergraduate student at the University of Ottawa. She approached her Member of Parliament (MP) for Thornhill, Ontario and asked that steps be taken towards formally establishing a Canadian memorial to the Holocaust.² The idea was well received and came to fruition as bill C-442, an Act to establish a National Holocaust Monument, which Conservative MP Tim Uppal introduced to Parliament as a private-member bill in 2009. Parliamentary support was strong and, on March 25th 2011, it received Royal Assent to become the NHMA. A National Holocaust Monument Development Council (NHMDC) was established shortly thereafter to fundraise and supervise the monument through to completion. As required by the NHMA, this council is composed of five members of the public. Unlike some state-sponsored memorials that are not easily accepted by the broader public,³ this monument has been a democratic and non-partisan affair that is receiving public support. In contrast, the Memorial to the Victims of Communism, another forthcoming Ottawa monument, lacks public support and has received heavy criticism in the media.⁴

During the National Holocaust Remembrance Day ceremony in April 2013, it was announced that the monument would be located at the corner of Wellington and Booth streets in downtown Ottawa, not far from Parliament Hill and directly adjacent to the Canadian War Museum.⁵ Six teams were selected to compete in a design competition, and in May 2014 the winning design was selected. The winning team is led by museum planner Gail Lord and includes architects Daniel Libeskind and Claude Cormier, photographer Edward Burtynsky, and historian Doris Bergen.⁶ The monument, which will resemble a Star of David from above, will have photographs

of Holocaust sites etched on its concrete walls and contain an assembly space for gatherings. Its layout is designed as a redemptive journey in which the visitor, upon exiting, is directed towards Parliament's Peace Tower.⁷ The NHMDC is expected to raise approximately \$4.5 million for construction and maintenance and the government has committed to matching private donations up to \$4 million.⁸ Although construction was initially expected to be complete by winter 2015 with the monument open to the public in spring 2016, construction was delayed due to over-budget estimates from contractors.⁹ The monument is now expected to open to the public in spring 2017.

What makes this monument so significant is that the creation of national memorials is often an important factor in the 'nationalization' of the Holocaust – the process by which Holocaust memory is adapted to the social and cultural dynamic of a particular nation-state. The study of Holocaust memorials as products of their national milieus was pioneered by James Young in his 1993 study *The Texture of Memory*, where he argues that monuments are not static artistic objects but rather collective creations made meaningful through the multiplicity of competing interpretations that society projects upon them.¹⁰ Holocaust monuments become, for a nation-state, "indigenous, even geological outcroppings in a national landscape" which are "...invested with national soul and memory."¹¹ Edward Linenthal exemplifies this dynamic in his 1995 study of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM). Linenthal demonstrates that because of its location on Washington's National Mall, the museum must "behave itself" and be a "good neighbor" to nearby museums and government buildings.¹² That is, the USHMM must be ideologically consistent with American values and aesthetically harmonious with the Washington landscape. Efforts to achieve this resulted in extensive debate about "...the appropriate location of Holocaust memory in American culture."¹³ The outcome was not just a national museum, but an 'Americanized' memory of the Holocaust.

Peter Carrier provides a "definition of a monument as a social process"¹⁴ that explains why memorials are so integral to the nationalization of historical memories. Explaining that the aesthetic features of memorials are "largely meaningless if encountered in isolation from their accompanying public debates,"¹⁵ Carrier chooses to focus on the 'rhetorical negotiation' of monuments – the debates, disputes, and controversies surrounding their creation. He explains that "people do not identify directly with a monument, for its significance is contingent upon meanings acquired by its interactions with and translation via secondary media of speeches, rituals, reports, forums, conferences, exhibitions and political statements. Monuments are rather catalysts of complex social and political communication."¹⁶ A national monument is a rhetorical device that stimulates discourse about an event, generating a variety of interpretations and symbolic associations which shape how that event is perceived by the public, and enabling the ongoing negotiation of that event as part of national

memory. Thus, national Holocaust monuments stimulate public discourse on the Holocaust, which interacts with other national discourses to weave Holocaust memory into the national narrative. 'Rhetorical negotiation' occurs at the point where existing discourses intersect, and this intersection can be facilitated by monuments.

In Canada, rhetorical negotiation can be witnessed in the debates surrounding the Canadian Museum for Human Rights (CMHR). The intent, design, and subject matter of the CMHR have been hotly contested since before the museum opened its doors to the public in September 2014. Much of this debate has focused on the place of the Holocaust in national memory. When plans emerged to renovate the Canadian War Museum (CWM) in Ottawa during the mid-1990s, potential contributors expressed interest in including a Holocaust gallery as part of the new design. Critics emerged, however, lead primarily by war veterans who argued that the Holocaust had nothing to do with Canadian history, and plans for a Holocaust gallery were discarded.¹⁷ The idea resurfaced several years later in the plans for a national Holocaust and human rights museum.¹⁸ As this project evolved into the CMHR, the museum was seen to serve two purposes: to educate on human rights, and to commemorate instances of their violation. The focus on commemoration stimulated competition amongst cultural groups, particularly Jewish and Ukrainian, who sought to have their atrocities featured centrally. The debate converged upon the dilemma of whether to treat the Holocaust as a 'unique' event, as one comparable to other events such as the Holodomor, or to eliminate the museum's commemorative role altogether.¹⁹

These debates have helped to shape Canada's national narrative. The CMHR has become a site of an 'Oppression Olympics' where marginalised groups compete for recognition as the 'most oppressed' and, in doing so, create a hierarchy of suffering.²⁰ Such hierarchies are problematic because dominant memories have the potential to erase marginal ones. Dirk Moses suggests that the Holocaust's salience in Canadian consciousness threatens to conceal other genocides, particularly the genocide of Aboriginal peoples during the founding of the nation-state. The centrality of the Holocaust in the debates surrounding the CMHR thereby help to reproduce a progressive 'civilizing' narrative of Canadian history.²¹ This sort of erasure is especially problematic for a human rights museum if, as Tricia Logan suggests, memory is itself a human right. Suppressing discussion of Aboriginal genocide reinscribes Aboriginal peoples as a 'vanishing race' and reproduces a national myth based on *terra nullius* and Euro-Canadian superiority.²² While debates surrounding the NHM have not been as volatile as with the CMHR, they nevertheless function to negotiate and propagate a particular narrative of Canadian history.

Canadianising Holocaust Memory

Holocaust memory has to some degree already entered the national sphere through legal²³ and educational discourse²⁴. It has become such an acceptable topic that there are few complaints about the government's proposal to erect a monument in its memory. However, the discourse surrounding this monument confirms that it has yet to fully enter national consciousness. Perhaps the clearest indication of this is clause 5(i) of the NHMA which indicates that the NHMDC be selected from "members of the public who possess a strong interest in, connection to, or familiarity with the Holocaust."²⁵ These parameters suggest that currently only a subset of Canadians have a direct connection of the Holocaust. While the Act itself does not specify who these 'members of the public' are, it is clear from other contexts that this clause refers to *Jewish* Canadians. For example, during the clause-by-clause study of bill C-442, Conservative MP Brian Jean and Liberal MP Joe Volpe argued about which party is "listening to the Jewish community."²⁶ Both MPs wanted a bill that would satisfy the memorial needs of the Jewish community, and each contends that he is the true champion of the Jewish community.²⁷ This attitude is dominant throughout most of the discourse, and it is only on rare occasions – such as during Joe Volpe's 'filibuster' during the clause-by-clause study²⁸ – that the Holocaust is framed as something that already belongs to all Canadians. Apart from these exceptions, Holocaust memory is almost unanimously seen as a Jewish concern that is not yet of interest to Canadian society.

The purpose of a national monument is to make its subject matter a national concern, and a main purpose of the NHM is to integrate Holocaust memory into Canadian consciousness. In its preamble, the NHMA states directly that a national memorial is required "to ensure that the Holocaust continues to have a permanent place in our nation's consciousness and memory."²⁹ As part of the original bill, this phrase was echoed almost verbatim in both Houses of Parliament, such as in MP Glenn Thibeault's response speech in the House of Commons³⁰ and in Senator Yonah Martin's sponsorship speech to the Senate.³¹ While the word 'continues' suggests that the Holocaust is already a Canadian memory, this may only indicate that it has been given 'a permanent place in our nation's consciousness' through the visible trials of Holocaust deniers and its subsequent inclusion in some provincial school curricula. Through legal and educational discourse the Holocaust has indeed become a part of Canadian consciousness, although its position is still only peripheral. One function of the monument is to advance this discourse and thereby give the Holocaust a more central role in Canadian society. This is confirmed by Martin's speech in which she modifies the bill's phrasing by conspicuously leaving out the word 'continues' and instead demanding "The Holocaust *must have* a permanent place in our nation's consciousness and memory."³² Other supporters rely less on the actual phrasing of the bill, arguing that the 'gravity' of this memory requires the monument to sit at the

nation's gravitational centre in Ottawa.³³ Bloc MP Roger Gaudet goes even further, suggesting it should be located as close to Parliament Hill as possible.³⁴ The goal of making the Holocaust into a Canadian memory is a dominant theme surrounding the NHM, and many sponsors, endorsers, and other supporters unambiguously identify this as one of the monument's chief purposes.

At the most superficial level, a number of parameters have been set to ensure that the monument becomes a truly national memorial. The NHMA states that the Minister responsible for the National Capital Commission (NCC) – as a representative of the Canadian people – is ultimately responsible for the monument's creation.³⁵ Beyond this, the public was consulted regarding the location, design, and purpose of the monument by means of an online questionnaire,³⁶ and the realised monument will stand on a piece of public land.³⁷ Perhaps most significant is the fact that the NHM comes into existence via a piece of federal legislation which was voted on democratically by both houses of Parliament. As Joe Volpe and others observe, the legislative process is not the only way to have a national memorial erected by the NCC and, in fact, it is exceptional when a monument is brought into existence through an Act of Parliament.³⁸ By passing through the various readings, debates, and studies in both the House of Commons and the Senate, the NHMA and ensuing NHM may appear more Canadian than if it had been implemented through the kind of bureaucratic process that produced many other memorials in the National Capital Region.

At a deeper level, the legislative origin of the monument facilitates the entry of Holocaust memory into national consciousness. It is through the sort of public debates that take place in Parliament that events such as the Holocaust are discussed, contested, consolidated, and ultimately integrated into a national narrative.³⁹ It is with the dialogue surrounding a monument, rather than the aesthetic design that is given to it, that a nation truly makes a memory its own.

The nationalizing impulse of the NHM can be observed in the only major dispute surrounding the monument: the funding controversy. In response to a government amendment suggesting that the "planning, designing, construction, installing, and maintaining" of the monument be paid for with private funds, Joe Volpe objected by arguing that the entire project should be paid for by the government.⁴⁰ Volpe's argument was simple: if this monument is to be national, then it must be publicly funded by each and every Canadian. If Canadians as a collective do not contribute, then Canadians as a collective cannot commemorate.⁴¹ Brian Jean, the committee member who proposed the amendment, responded to Volpe by suggesting that private funds best allowed Canadians to be actively involved in the monument. He argued that by allowing only voluntary donations, Canadians could choose to become involved in the monument's creation; voluntary contributions would make Canadians active participants in commemoration.⁴² The controversy was sparked by a single problem:

which method of funding best allowed Canadians to be a part of the memorial process? Both Liberals and Conservatives sought the same end, but their respective left- and right-leaning ideologies reasoned that it should be achieved through different means. For the Liberals, the answer was public monies; for the Conservatives, private funds. In a way, the only significant disagreement was actually rooted in an agreement regarding what the monument should represent and how it should function.⁴³

Canada's Historical Relationship to the Holocaust

One of the easiest and most common ways to frame the Holocaust as a national event is to identify an historical relationship. This approach is effective because an historical connection is often perceived as a 'real' connection. The historical role that Canada played in the Holocaust is not immediately obvious. Canada was separated from the European atrocities by an ocean and, apart from those who fought overseas as part of the war effort, Nazism posed little direct threat to Canadians. Canada does not have the obvious sort of historical relationship that one finds in Germany and Poland, for example. There is no single historical narrative used to engage Canada in Holocaust memory, but rather a set of several – both positive and negative – overlapping narratives.

One of the positive roles that Canada is considered to have played in the Holocaust was as a member of the Allied forces during the Second World War. This narrative is not necessarily obvious because it relies on several assumptions: first, it requires that the Holocaust be viewed as an aspect of WWII (or vice versa), and second, it requires one to accept that the Allied forces were the ones who ultimately brought an end to the Nazi persecution of European Jewry. MP Dennis Bevington expresses both assumptions during the third reading debates when he states that the bill "speaks to the conclusion of the Second World War; to the role Canada played in the victory over the Axis to ensure that the Holocaust came to an end."⁴⁴ In the Senate, Yonah Martin expresses this attitude in greater detail. Like Bevington, she sees the Holocaust as an aspect of WWII, observing that "The atrocities of the Holocaust occurred during the 1930s and the Second World War in which our country took so active a part." After pointing out that Canada entered the war only "seven days after France and Britain" and "Canadians served in our own military forces as well as in the service of various Allied countries," she goes on to outline the sacrifices made by Canada as part of the Allied effort. She calculates "with a population of between 11 million and 12 million people at that time, approximately 1.1 million Canadians served during the Second World War... [and that] by the end of the war, more than 45,000 Canadians had lost their lives and another 55 thousand were wounded."⁴⁵ By quantifying these losses, Martin emphasises the sacrifice made by Canadians on the behalf of the war effort: approximately 1 out of every 10 Canadians joined the war effort, and 1 of every 10 combatants ending up dead or wounded. With these and similar statements,

a narrative is constructed in which Canadians not only fought to end WWII – and by extension, the Holocaust – but in many cases paid the ultimate sacrifice for the cause.

Martin's statements conflate the victims of Nazi persecution with the casualties of war. Alongside her tally of Canadian casualties, the senator mentions how “the Second World War became the most widespread and deadliest war in the world’s history, with at least 100 million military personnel and more than 50 million fatalities. A substantial number of these deaths resulted from Nazi ideological policies, including the genocide of Jews and other ethnic and minority groups.”⁴⁶ Here, the six million victims of the Jewish genocide – along with those victims belonging to other persecuted groups such as the Romani, homosexuals, and the disabled – are placed into the same category as the military and civilian casualties of WWII. This conflation of Holocaust victims with WWII victims appears elsewhere, such as in Tim Uppal’s statement that the monument “would honour all victims of the Holocaust and the Canadian survivors” as well as “the Canadian soldiers who fought and paid the ultimate sacrifice.”⁴⁷ When these victims are paired with the sacrifices made by the Allies, Canadian soldiers are presented as having both suffered with and suffered for the Jewish victims of the Holocaust.

What has had an even greater impact on Holocaust memory than the nation’s Allied status is the role that Canada played in becoming a home to survivors after the War. While the government’s post-war immigration policy does not necessarily reflect its inter-war attitude towards Jewish refugees, the fact that Canada ultimately became home to tens of thousands of survivors is used to demonstrate the country’s concern for the safety of persecuted Jews. In many instances, this is achieved by simultaneously placing as much or more emphasis on the survivors than the victims, as well as quantifying the country’s assistance with the relief of refugees and displaced persons. For example, Senator Mac Harb points out “Canada is [currently] home to some 16,000 Holocaust survivors.”⁴⁸ Likewise, no sooner does Tim Uppal mention the ‘six million’ than does he turn immediately to the fact that “With 40,000 Holocaust survivors settling in Canada after the war, our country has the third-largest population of these survivors in the world.”⁴⁹ Uppal’s observation that the country absorbed one of the largest populations of survivors is echoed by Senator Joan Fraser, who notes “Canada took in more of the refugees after the war, I believe, than any other country, except the United States and Israel.”⁵⁰ By highlighting that the overall number of survivors taken in was exceeded only by the United States – a modern mecca of Jewish culture – and Israel – the Jewish state – Canada is presented as a champion of the Jewish people and all those who suffered at the hands of the Nazis.

These Canadian survivors are presented as one justification for the erection of a national monument. In the preamble to bill C-442 and the NHMA – and repeated

in speeches, releases, and other statements – is the proclamation that the NHM will “honour all of the victims and the Canadian survivors of the Holocaust.”⁵¹ The monument is seen as a memorial not only to the six million Jews who died at the hands of the Nazis – none of whom were Canadian – but also to the thousands of Jewish survivors who made their way across the Atlantic to settle in Canada. The frequent reference to survivors serves two related purposes: first, it presents Canada as a defender of European Jewry for having accepted and integrated this group of formerly stateless people, and second, it obligates the nation to memorialise the collective experiences of that group.

Stressed as much if not more than Canada's positive historical role in the Holocaust is the way in which Jewish refugees were prevented from entering the country during the war, a course of action that indirectly contributed to the deaths of thousands of migrants. This counter discourse does not deny that Canada became a home to survivors *after* the war, but rather focuses on the country's reluctance to accept refugees – and thereby alleviate Jewish suffering – *during* it. The narrative that emerges from this discourse declares that “There is no question that Canada did terrible things to our Jewish friends by not letting them come here as refugees before [and during] the Second World War.”⁵² The country may not share the same degree of guilt as nations such as Germany, but Canada nevertheless “has its own guilt to carry.”⁵³ To historically situate the nation's complicity, MP Irwin Cotler places it within the context of the 1938 Evian Conference in which the wartime globe was “divided into two parts: those countries from which the Jews could not leave...and those that they could not enter,” with Canada falling into the latter category.⁵⁴ But while Canada's reticent approach to the conference may be an accurate reflection of its general attitude, the most frequently used symbol of the nation's guilt is the 1939 voyage of the *MS St. Louis*, a ship of Jewish refugees that was denied entry into numerous ports, including Canada. The *St. Louis* is almost unanimously accepted as a black mark upon the nation and is usually treated as though its message is straightforward and undeniable: the *St. Louis* is used to convey how little the Canadian government cared about European Jewry and, when given the opportunity to help even a few, callously turned its back. This interpretation is offered as a self-evident truth, and the ‘Voyage of the Damned’ usually receives no more exposition than that which is required to bitterly observe how the government's actions “forced [the ship's occupants] back into the inferno that was engulfing Europe.”⁵⁵ Although entry into Canada was never formally requested by those on the ship, the country's responsibility for the fate of those on-board the vessel is framed as an undisputed fact and the incident is perceived as the paradigmatic example of the country's underlying attitude towards European Jewry.

This narrative of Canadian history is primarily rooted in Irving Abella and Harold Troper's book *None Is Too Many*, in which it is referred to both directly and indirectly. The book, which documents the federal government's apparently systematic

attempt to prevent Jews from entering the country between 1933 and 1948, contains an almost uniformly pessimistic view of the country's wartime immigration policies. Given that this was the first and only major work addressing Canada's particular role in the Holocaust, and that it has received a wide popular reception in the last thirty years (it is one of few scholarly works to appear on Canadian best-seller lists), it is unsurprising that its negative outlook has become one of the most prevailing attitudes in the discourse. The influence of *None Is Too Many* can be traced to the monument's genesis when the memorial was no more than a dream for Laura Grosman. In an interview, Grosman reflected on her early attempts to gain political support for her project, recalling that the book "had a big impact on me... In every meeting I went into I carried a copy of that book with me, ready to whip it out if any MP ever said to me 'I don't think this is of importance.' I was ready to go: 'there it is, read this and tell me you don't think that Canada has enough of a role and has had enough participation in this dark time in history.'" ⁵⁶ *None Is Too Many* has since remained an important part of the discourse. In some cases, like the addresses made by Irwin Cotler, the book is not referred to directly (although it has clearly set the tone). ⁵⁷ In other cases, the book receives detailed exposition. One of the most extensive discussions was given by Senator Joan Fraser during her address to the Senate in which she provides three reasons to support bill C-442, with the final one being that "Canada has its own inglorious chapter in the Holocaust." ⁵⁸ She proceeds to anticipate how "Many of you will have read the devastating book by Irving Abella and Harold Troper," quoting the book's introduction and providing a summary of its key arguments. Fraser uses the work to deliver a criticism of Canadian history, concluding "The fact is that all through the Hitler years, Canada systematically refused entry to the Jewish refugees" and "This policy was not an oversight [but] was decided at the highest levels of the bureaucracy and confirmed in repeated cabinet meetings." For virtually every MP and senator who relies on it, the book is uncritically presented as a factual account of this historical period. *None Is Too Many* is not used to refute the claims that Canada was an important Ally or became a haven for survivors after the war, but it does insist that Canadians cannot neglect this aspect of national history.

One key reason for the frequent invocation of *None Is Too Many* is that its narrative helps to reproduce Canada's national myth. The national myth is one of progress and civilisation wherein European settlers transformed a savage and empty land into a tolerant and civilised society. ⁵⁹ Histories of violence or state-mandated hatred can be easily integrated into this narrative so long as one demonstrates that Canadian society has since overcome this troubling past. In fact, it is necessary to commemorate histories of intolerance – the *MS St. Louis*, Indian Residential Schools, Japanese internment camps – because they allow Canadians to celebrate how far they have come. *None Is Too Many* presents a history of pervasive antisemitism in Canadian society that ultimately led to the suffering of many Jewish refugees. But it also suggests that, since reforms to immigration policy in 1948, the relationship between Canada

and the Jewish people has been transformed. Jews living in Canada have been safe since 1948 and today are visibly living the educated and secure Canadian dream. Politicians need not shy away from a history of antisemitism but, on the contrary, can instrumentalise it for the purpose of nation building by using it to reinforce the national myth. This narrative, in conjunction with the book's popular appeal and its status as the only major work on the topic, illuminates why *None Is Too Many* was so readily adopted in the discourse surrounding the NHM.

Though these two narratives of Canadian history – that of Canada the Allied hero and that of Canada the antisemite – are ostensibly at odds with one another, they do not seem to be in competition with each other. Each narrative is stressed at different times by different people, but it does not appear that anyone feels one interpretation must dominate the other. Both are necessary to reproduce the national myth because it relies upon contrasting who Canadians are with who they have been. Thus, both histories can be mentioned in the same breath. For example, Rabbi Daniel Friedman, Chair of the NHMDC, recalled in conversation how one of the problems facing the development council is “whether [the monument] should incorporate both Canada's role – or lack thereof – in the safety of World War II Jewry, or whether the focus should be on Canada's commitment moving forward to ‘never again.’ It remains to be seen which of these two will be the focus, if not both.”⁶⁰ Rabbi Friedman lists three potential focuses: Canada as a boon to European Jewry (their ‘safety’), Canada as a bane to European Jewry (the ‘lack thereof’), and the universalist moral of ‘never again’ (which is not specific to the Canadian context). Yet Friedman does not view these as mutually exclusive interpretations, preferring instead to consider them as potentially compatible with one another, even if not necessarily harmonious. Whereas some national memories attempt to manufacture somewhat more linear and less paradoxical narratives,⁶¹ it may be this capacity to contain several conflicting narratives – the ability to tolerate a hydra-headed memory that simultaneously views Canada as both the ‘good guy’ and the ‘bad guy’ – that makes Holocaust memory in Canada unique from those memories in other nations.

A Uniquely Canadian Memory?

This study demonstrates that the discourse surrounding Canada's forthcoming NHM has produced a memory of the Holocaust particular to the national context. Historical themes weave Holocaust memory into the national narrative to produce a memory that can be easily digested by Canadian society. But is the resulting memory distinctly Canadian? After all, similar debates have taken place in other nations to a similar effect.

A distinct feature of the ‘Canadianised’ Holocaust is that this memory is not homogeneous, but instead contains several conflicting – though not necessarily compet-

ing – narratives. On one hand, Canada is framed as a member of the Allies during the war and as a haven for survivors after it. On the other hand, a counter-discourse emphasises the narrative of *None Is Too Many* and the *MS St. Louis* which views Canada's wartime policy as exclusive and anti-Semitic. This is surprising because there appears to be no competition between these narratives and Canadians involved in the debate seem content to remember their nation as both a hero and a villain in the Holocaust.⁶² Jeremy Maron has observed a similar impulse in Canadian cinema, and he argues that Canadian Holocaust films embody a conflict between experience and inexperience that remains fundamentally 'unbridgeable.'⁶³

While many nations suffer from conflicting narratives of the Holocaust, Canadian rhetoric does not seek to resolve it. One clear example of this is in Austria where, based on its 1938 annexation by Nazi Germany, the nation has come to view itself as Hitler's first victim (*Opferstolz*). When initiatives were taken in the 1990s to shift this narrative towards one that also recognised the nation's complicity in the suffering of European Jewry, it was met with considerable backlash from the public.⁶⁴ Likewise in Germany and France, there were attempts (albeit unsuccessful ones) to achieve 'national consensus' and 'national reconciliation' by establishing unified and consistent memories of the Holocaust.⁶⁵ The American context is one of the most helpful points of comparison. American pluralism means that many groups instrumentalise many narratives of the Holocaust, and that Holocaust memory in the United States is actually a multiplicity. However, each memory seeks to become the dominant narrative and most of these memories are in competition with one another. For example, while the 'official' narrative of the Holocaust presented at the USHMM recounts a primarily Jewish genocide in which Americans were the liberators, other narratives conflict with this and seek to usurp it.⁶⁶ Whereas memory is conflicting in both the United States and Canada, it is competing only in the United States. In Canada, we do see competitions emerging from the debates around the CMHR. While the 'Oppression Olympics' concern whose genocide should be recognised by the museum and whether or not the Holocaust should be compared with other atrocities, they do not address which narrative of the Holocaust should be told.

The advent of Canada's NHM signals a significant shift in Canadian consciousness, particularly in relation to how national society constructs its historical identity in relation to the Holocaust. A memory has emerged from the debates surrounding this monument which, rather than conforming to an international archetype, has assumed a distinctly regional flavour. While Canadians may have once remembered the Holocaust only as a people living in a post-Holocaust world, it seems that now they are beginning to remember it as Canadians.

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I draw on discourse that focuses specifically on the NHM, but not necessarily the larger discourse about Holocaust commemoration in Canadian society. The latter has seen more dissenting voices than the former, such as the debates surrounding Jenny Peto's master's thesis. Bill C-442 was active in parliament before the publication of Peto's thesis in 2010, and I did not notice this debate intersecting with those about the NHM. The only voices I observed that objected to the monument in principle were the expected ones left in the comments section of online news articles.

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Lynne Cohen, "Former B'nai Brith Intern's Efforts Credited for National Holocaust Monument Bill," *Jewish Tribune*, 29 September 2009; Laura Grosman, interview by author, digital recording, Ottawa, 13 November 2012.

3

An example of this is Holocaust memorials in Austria, which I discuss later.

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Nadine Blumer, "Memorials are Built of Public Discussion as Much as Stone," *Ottawa Citizen*, 8 May 2015; Elizabeth Payne, "Most Canadians Oppose Communism Victims Memorial: Poll," *Ottawa Citizen*, 25 May 2015.

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Martin Knelman, "National Holocaust Monument Design Unveiled in Ottawa," *Toronto Star*, 12 May 2014; National Holocaust Monument, accessed 20 September 2015, www.holocaustmonument.ca.

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Martin Knelman, "Holocaust Monument in Ottawa Corrects 70-Year Mistake," *Toronto Star*, 14 May 2014; National Holocaust Monument, www.holocaustmonument.ca.

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Don Butler, "Tendering Problems Cause One-year Delay in National Holocaust Monument," *Ottawa Citizen*, 9 August 2015.

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James Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), vii-xiii, 1-15.

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Ibid., 2.

12

Edward Linenthal, *Preserving Memory: The Struggle to Create America's Holocaust Museum* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1995), 192-3.

13

Ibid., 15.

14

Peter Carrier, *Holocaust Monuments and National Memory Cultures in France and Germany since 1989: The Origins and Political Function of the Vél' d'Hiv' in Paris and the Holocaust Monument in Berlin* (New York: Bergahn Books, 2005), 22.

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Ibid.

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Ibid., 219.

17

Norman Hillmer, "The Canadian War Museum and the Military Identity of an Unmilitary People," *Canadian Military History* 19/3 (2010).

18

Catherine Chatterley, "Canada's Struggle with Holocaust Memorialization: The War Museum Controversy, Ethnic Identity Politics, and the Canadian Museum for Human Rights," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 29/2 (2015).

19

Dirk Moses, "The Canadian Museum for Human Rights: The 'Uniqueness of the Holocaust' and the Question of Genocide," *Journal of Genocide Research* 14/2 (2012).

20

Olena Hankivsky and Rita Dhamoon, "Which Genocide Matters the Most? An Intersectionality Analysis of the Canadian Museum of Human Rights," *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 46/4 (2013).

21

Dirk Moses, "Does the Holocaust Reveal or Conceal Other Genocides? The Canadian Museum for Human Rights and Grievable Suffering," in *Hidden Genocides: Power, Knowledge, Memory*, ed. Alexander Hinton et al. (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2014).

22

Tricia Logan, "Memory, Erasure, and National Myth," in *Colonial Genocide in Indigenous North America*, ed. Andrew Woolford et al. (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2014).

23

From the mid-1980s to early 1990s, Holocaust deniers James Keegstra and Ernst Zündel were tried for disseminating revisionist versions of history. Both trials ultimately went to the Supreme Court of Canada and became highly-publicised media affairs.

24

The visibility of Holocaust deniers in law and media stimulated a need to include the Holocaust in public school curricula. During the 1990s, provincial ministries of education and regional school boards began to include the Holocaust in significant ways. In Ontario, knowledge of the Holocaust is required of all high school students. In British Columbia, some history courses devote entire units to the Holocaust.

25

National Holocaust Monument Act, Statutes of Canada 2011, c.13, §5.1.

26

Canada, Parliament, House of Commons, Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, *Evidence of Proceedings* (3rd sess., 40th Parliament, Meeting No. 21), 25, 27-8.

27

Volpe repeatedly argues that it does not matter what the Jewish community wants because the NHM is a *national* monument, yet he continues to ask the committee chair to allow representatives from the Canadian Jewish Congress (Volpe's speech was before the CJC became CIJA, which occurred in 2011) to speak on behalf of the community.

28

Ibid., 8-10.

29

National Holocaust Monument Act, preamble.

30

Canada, *House of Commons Debates*, 27 October 2010 (Mr. Glenn Thibeault, NDP), 5454.

31

Canada, *Debates of the Senate*, 10 February 2011 (Hon. Yonah Martin), 1800.

32

Ibid., my emphasis.

33

Standing Committee on Transport (Meeting No. 17), 3.

34

Ibid., 6.

35

National Holocaust Monument Act, §6, §7.

36

Andy Levy-Ajzenkopf, "Ottawa seeks input on Holocaust memorial," *Canadian Jewish News*, 1 November 2011.

37

National Holocaust Monument Act, §6.b.

38

Joe Volpe, letter to John Baird, 14 May 2010; Canada, Parliament, Senate, Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology, *Evidence of Proceedings* (3rd sess., 40th Parliament, Issue No. 23, Report No. 17, 2011), 16. One reason the NHMA was realised through parliamentary process rather than another means is partly because it began with a private citizen, Laura Grosman. Grosman initiated the project from the bottom-up, introducing the idea at the local level – her regional MP – where it travelled upwards through the two houses. That is, it was a practical method for a private citizen. But it also suggests that a Holocaust monument was low on the radar for Jewish lobbyists who would have been able to expedite the process. I suspect that Jewish lobby groups were so focused on getting a Holocaust gallery into the CMHR that a national monument was not a priority.

39

Carrier, *Holocaust Monuments*.

40

Standing Committee on Transport (Meeting No. 21), 3-13.

41

Ibid., 6-7.

42

Ibid., 3, 10.

43

Most likely, this is the only disagreement because any objection to Holocaust memory is political suicide. The Holocaust has attained an almost sacred status in Western societies (Alexander 2002) so that any criticism of it opens one up to allegations of hate speech and antisemitism. Politicians cannot openly criticise it, and can only challenge it on technical grounds such as funding.

44

House of Commons Debates, 8 December 2010 (Mr. Dennis Bevington, NDP), 6984.

45

Debates of the Senate, 10 February 2011 (Hon. Yonah Martin), 1800.

46

Ibid.

47

House of Commons Debates, 8 December 2010 (Mr. Tim Uppal, CPC), 6986.

48

Debates of the Senate, 17 February 2011 (Hon. Mac Harb), 1858.

49

House of Commons Debates, 27 October 2010 (Mr. Tim Uppal, CPC), 5450.

50

Debates of the Senate, 22 March 2011 (Hon. Joan Fraser), 2081.

51

National Holocaust Monument Act, preamble.

52

Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, 9.

53

Debates of the Senate, 17 February 2011 (Hon. Mac Harb), 1857.

54

House of Commons Debates, 8 December 2009 (Hon. Irwin Cotler, Lib.), 7816.

55

Ibid.

56

Grosman, interview by author.

57

House of Commons Debates, 8 December 2009 (Hon. Irwin Cotler, Lib.), 7816-7; *House of Commons Debates*, 27 October 2010 (Hon. Irwin Cotler, Lib.), 5456-7.

58

Debates of the Senate, 22 March 2011 (Hon. Joan Fraser), 2081-2.

59

Angela Failler, "Hope without Consolation: Prospects for Critical Learning at the Canadian Museum for Human Rights," *Review of Education, Pedagogy, and Cultural Studies* 37 (2015); Tricia Logan, "National Memory and Museums: Remembering Settler Colonial Genocide of Indigenous Peoples in Canada," in *Remembering Genocide*, eds. Nigel Eltringham and Pam Maclean, 112-130 (London and New York: Routledge, 2014); Paulette Regan, *Unsettling the Settler Within: Indian Residential Schools, Truth Telling, and Reconciliation in Canada* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010); Lairssa Wodtke, "A Lovely Building for Difficult Knowledge: The Architecture of the Canadian Museum for Human Rights," *Review of Education, Pedagogy, and Cultural Studies* 37 (2015).

60

Daniel Friedman, interview by author, digital recording, Ottawa, 6 December 2012.

61

Carrier, *Holocaust Monuments*, 45-153.

62

In some ways, this is an ideal way to remember the Holocaust given that it is often viewed as a rupture in historical time.

63

Jeremy Maron, "Unbridgeable Barriers: The Holocaust in Canadian Cinema" (Ph.D. diss., Carleton University, 2011).

64

Rebecca Comay, "Memory Block: Rachel Whiteread's Holocaust Memorial in Vienna," in

Image and Remembrance: Representation and the Holocaust, eds. Shelly Hornstein and Florence Jacobowitz, 251-71 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003); Abigail Gillman, "Cultural Awakening and Historical Forgetting: The Architecture of Memory in the Jewish Museum of Vienna and in Rachel Whiteread's 'Nameless Library'," *New German Critique* 93 (2004): 145-73; Eva Kuttnerberg, "Austria's Topography of Memory: Heldenplatz, Albertinaplatz, Judenplatz, and Beyond," *German Quarterly* 80, no. 4 (2007): 468-91; Young, *Texture of Memory*, 91-112.

65

Carrier, *Holocaust Monuments*, 49-153.

66

Linenthal, *Preserving Memory*; Young, *Texture of Memory*, 283-349.