

The Anti-Classical in Daniel Libeskind's Jewish Museum Extension to the Berlin Museum

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Introduction: The 'timeliness' of the Jewish Museum extension to the Berlin Museum

Daniel Libeskind has produced a particularly 'timely' building with his Extension to the Berlin Museum with the Jewish Museum. I use the word 'timely' in two senses. Firstly, it is a complex, and self-consciously post-modern engagement with the institutions of history and the museum, through the language of architecture. In the context of Germany this necessarily involves the unique problems of postwar historiography, which centre particularly around the Holocaust, debating 'the exceptionality of the event, its representability, its (un)speakability, ...[and] its very (in)comprehensibility'.¹ This discourse questions the ability of architecture, or any expression of culture, to adequately represent and thus memorialise the systematic murder of the Jews of Europe.² The Jewish museum is thus emblematic of the state of social and cultural memory in contemporary Berlin, more than fifty years after the war's end.³ The complexity of this state continues to increase, rather than subsiding over time, since the initial trauma of the event has been gradually compounded by the impossibility of assimilating it in epistemological, historical, or theological terms.⁴

Secondly, the museum is 'timely' as an expression of a particular moment of postmodern thought. I use the word 'postmodern' here to refer specifically to a poststructuralist stream of critical thought, rather than the historicising, 'neoconservative' style that has been labelled 'postmodern' in architecture.⁵ I will use the terms postmodernism and deconstruction interchangeably, my intention is that they be understood as synonymous.⁶ I contend that the phenomenon which I will call the 'discourse of ends' is a primary symptom of critical postmodernism, and in the first half of the paper I will address Libeskind's building through the frame of this discourse.

In the latter half of the paper, I will address Libeskind's architectural response to a particularly loaded set of non-architectural circumstances by positioning his museum as an anti-classical gesture. I will argue that it is opposed to the negative associations of classicism, following its appropriation by the Nazis for explicitly political purposes. The museum also opposes the idealist doctrine that made classicism attractive to the Nazis in the first place: its aspiration to totalised unity, closure, and completion. I will argue that Libeskind attempts a subversion of the ideals of classicism by employing the practical and metaphorical associations of the fragment and the ruin.

Part One: The discourse of ends: a postmodern excursion

The phenomenon that I have called 'the discourse of ends' is the late twentieth century tendency towards the proclamation of the ends of things. Working its way through all of the great

metanarratives of the modern epoch, it culminates in the 'end' of the overarching discourses of history and philosophy. The discourse of ends is unified only by the common shadow of the historical, yet ultimately undefined event of a mythical 'end of modernism'. Following this severance, postmodernism is engaged in a protracted work of mourning, and the pathological thoroughness with which the discourse of ends evokes each modernist metanarrative in order to then proclaim it 'dead' can be seen as evidence of this process.⁷ The original 'loss' of modernism is thus indefinitely postponed, compulsively repeated in miniature with every other 'end' proclaimed. We have apparently achieved only a series of open-ended end-conditions, a state that might serve as a loose definition of postmodernism itself, characterised by Jean-François Lyotard as 'a vague, apparently inexplicable, end-of-the-century melancholy.'⁸ The discourse of ends is therefore not solely a manic or delirious *fin de siècle* fatalism, nor a nihilistic instance of the Frankfurt School's 'negative dialectics', but a protracted work of mourning for an absent totality, the end of certainty and meaning within the end of modernism.⁹ Derrida writes that 'this discourse ... this tone of the vigil at the moment of the end... is also that of the funeral watch, of the *Wake...*';¹⁰ and it is the various avant-garde positions gathered under the name of postmodernism which are assembled for the requiem.

The search for origins betrays nothing so much as a nostalgia for the certainty of absolutes, and the discourse of ends could be read as the surreptitious return of modernist ideals, a series of imperfect attempts to project an overriding meaning onto a history which, in the absence of metanarratives, appears terrifyingly chaotic, arbitrarily destructive, and 'meaningless'. The disguised return of modernism can also be discerned in the continuing success of the museum institution. As a bastion of modernist thought the museum had been announced dead and ruined by the discourse of ends, renounced along with history itself. Far from disappearing, however, the museum made an unprecedented resurgence in the 80's, a trend that continues today. Andreas Huyysen has drawn a direct correlation between the present international 'museum mania' and the discourse of ends, proposing that 'the success of the museum may well be one of the salient symptoms of Western culture in the 1980s: ever more museums were planned and built as the practical corollary to the "end of everything" discourse.'¹¹ The discourse of ends would thus be the broad cultural equivalent of planned obsolescence, hinting at a society which rapidly consumes and then discards history and 'high culture' at the same rate as commercial products. In this scenario, the museum stands as the last bastion of cultural memory in a society bent on amnesia. If the museum's traditional role has always been to subdue the bewildering heterogeneity of the world through the collection and classification of objects, it is now itself a historical relic, a monument to a particular view of history specific to the modern period.¹² The museum's function as a tomb, a monumental means of making present that which is past, has almost eclipsed its role as an archive for historical objects.¹³ The dire predictions of postmodernism, which saw the museum as a doomed institution, have thus been reversed. In spite of its apocalyptic ideals, postmodern history, picking hopelessly over the debris piled at the feet of Benjamin's Angel of History, can not abandon the compulsion to construct meaning from history's shattered objects.¹⁴

In architecture, the self-consciously avant-garde movement known as deconstruction is profoundly implicated in the discourse of ends, and its corollary, the 'apocalyptic tone'.¹⁵ Casting the postmodern condition as one of crisis and rupture, the experience of the contemporary metropolis as one of anxiety, schizophrenia, and spatial fear, deconstruction seeks a suitable crisis of experience from which to enact its own cathartic rupture in the history of architecture. There is a certain ghoulishness in this tendency, a trace of the ambulance chaser; the blithe appropriation of catastrophic events, and their translation into theoretical or metaphoric terms, could be read as an opportunistic search for a readymade profundity. And far from being 'original', it's all been done before. Marinetti, emerging unscathed from an automobile accident in 1909, was 'reborn' as a

Futurist; and thus the avant-garde artist emerges from catastrophe, violently renounces the past, and literally begins again from ground zero.¹⁶ The contemporary theorists who engage in a postmodern apocalyptic tone fail to agree on the 'real' beginning of the end, but each seeks a suitably 'spectacular' moment to symbolically mark the shattering of modernism, and the corresponding birth of the postmodern. The bombing of Hiroshima, and the moment when Mutually Assured Destruction was 'achieved' during the cold war, are each identified as such moments.¹⁷ The paradigmatic case, however, is Charles Jencks' choice of the demolition by implosion of the Pruitt Igoe scheme as the end of the modernist project.¹⁸ Symbolising tragic disillusionment and the failure of Utopian ideals, this event also indulged a certain sublime pleasure in the aesthetics of destruction.

Daniel Libeskind's Jewish Museum clearly adopts the apocalyptic tone, but with no need for appropriation; the commemoration of the Holocaust is legitimately positioned at the programmatic and philosophical centre of the project. More than simply deriving a moral significance from his subject, or using it to explicate a link between architecture and ethics, Libeskind reads the legacy of the holocaust as double edged, an instrument of both destruction and redemption. This double movement is captured in every level of the museum through the technique and aesthetics of fragmentation. Both Theodor Adorno and Walter Benjamin wrote of the strategic value of the fragment as a means to deny totality. Kurt Forster has neatly combined their positions in writing that 'the idea of the fragment arises not from the gesture of salvaging a piece of the whole, but from disregard or even denial of the value represented by integral works.'¹⁹ Libeskind's fragmented building is made philosophically 'accessible' by freezing and monumentalising the detritus of modernism, of history, and of the museum without attempting to reconstruct them into a new totality. In the words of Robin Evans, the 'psychotic ambivalence of the technique ... may either register a delight in smashing things up or sadness in displaying the shattered scene',²⁰ and I contend that the elegiac and the celebratory are both present in the Jewish Museum.

There is a cyclic elegance in Libeskind's enfolding the discourse of ends within the theoretical program of his museum. By explicitly identifying the Holocaust as the end of modernism, the end of the enlightenment project, and so the end of history, he collects all of the catastrophic pronouncements of the discourse of ends within one event. Gathering the apparently 'ruined' or declining institutions of architecture, museology and historiography into a profound meditation on the discourse, he may well have signalled its own end. At the time of the original museum competition the apocalyptic tone was at its peak, carried forward by a postmodernism bent on the philosophical and aesthetic application of post-structuralist concepts. Ten years later, with the building finally finished, the tide has retreated and left it high and dry, a stranded residue of eighties apocalypticism, already anachronistic. The Jewish Museum was a historical object before it was even complete, condemned by its very 'timeliness' to 'date' rapidly. Employing the apocalyptic tone against itself, it is tempting to declare Libeskind's extension to the Berlin Museum the culmination and so the end of the ends, or rather, a museum of the discourse of ends itself.²¹

Part Two: Deconstruction and the 'end' of the classical tradition

This brings us to the second section of the paper, where I address the question of why it have been unthinkable to adopt the architectural language of classicism in this building, and how Libeskind has employed deconstruction to oppose this classical tradition.

The events of the Second World War marked the moment when the Enlightenment model of linear progressive time suddenly diverged into before and after, the presentiment and the memory of the absolute event. After Auschwitz, the direction of history reversed and became allegorical, such that

every action following must be read through the veil of the catastrophe. Libeskind calls the project 'Between the Lines', and it is from the between the inextricably entangled lines of German and Jewish history that it speaks. The straight but fractured line of the history of Berlin's Jews exists within the continuous but violently disjointed line of German history.²² If the Jewish Museum is a 'delayed embrace of the victims by the culprits', as it has been described in Germany, its political complexities stem from the residual presence of those culprits, in personal memory, official history, and the physical palimpsest of architecture.²³ This is especially true in the city of Berlin, a primary example of the city as text, written and overwritten by successive waves of historical events.²⁴ In this historically charged context, it would have been unthinkable for the Jewish Museum to have resurrected any of the forms, ideas or ideals employed by National Socialism.

The problem with classical architecture is immanent in the term itself: both the classical and classicism are disqualified. *Classicism* as an architectural style has been permanently damaged through its appropriation by the Nazis. Even if Hitler had chosen some style other than classicism for the official buildings of the Reich, it would still be inappropriate in a monument to the victims of a totalitarian regime. This is because it is a manifestation of the ideals of the *classical*, which strives towards total unity, completeness, and a timeless universality.²⁵ Libeskind's response is to 'ruin' these totalising effects in a calculated strategy of transgression, of the classical tradition, the modern tradition, and especially of each of these as they led to or were expressed in the Nazi regime. While it would be naive to set up a straightforward dichotomy between classicism and deconstruction, the self-conscious incoherence, fragmentation, and temporality of deconstruction comes as close as any architectural discourse to manifesting 'the will to lose power'.²⁶ Furthermore, in its emphasis on individual experience and subjectivity, it defeats the trademark Nazi conception of the populace as a 'mass'.²⁷

If it is true that Hitler 'ruined' everything he touched, then not only classical architecture, but all architecture after Auschwitz is, metaphorically, 'in ruins'.²⁸ Theodor Adorno's famous pronouncement that 'to write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric', defined 'after Auschwitz' as a new temporal state in which every cultural discourse should have been somehow transformed.²⁹ His statement has been widely interpreted as a definition of the limits of representation, and a questioning of whether the 'humanities', including architecture, would still be possible in light of the death of humanism. Since architecture has in fact endured, it must accept its compromised post-Auschwitz position, and continue in the knowledge of its own 'barbarity'.

Deconstruction acknowledges this barbarity by engaging in an endgame, or as Libeskind describes it, and end condition:

"I believe that architecture has entered its end. That is not to say that architecture is finished, but that architecture has entered an end condition. I think that all those who practice architecture, whether knowingly or unknowingly, feel in some way that something has come to an end, but what it is, it is very difficult to say since it is not in the realm of objects."³⁰

This endgame is an exploration of the end of the tradition of architecture, as it originated in antiquity with the Vitruvian ideals of function, structure, and beauty and continued without interruption through classicism to the modern movement.³¹ By revealing the abyss on which this tradition was built, deconstruction uses the discourse of architecture against itself, speculating on the limits of architectural possibility. The architectural endgame of deconstruction is therefore partly a play on the end of the game of architecture as it was constructed by modernism, but also an autonomous game of the discourse of ends, a process of 'playing' for its own sake.

Classicism as an emblem of power

Of the four major ways in which Libeskind opposes the tradition of classicism with that of deconstruction, the first is simplest. At its most basic level, classicism is tainted by association; it bore the emblems of Nazi ideology, and thus became an emblem of power itself. All architecture is conceived and exists in a political and ideological context, and classical architecture has been widely employed as an accepted monumental style by Democratic as well as Totalitarian political systems. The difference is that Nazi architecture was systematically engaged in intimidation, and the exercise of power over individuals. It can not be simply depoliticised by removing the incriminating insignia, and the difficulties facing Leon Krier in his attempts to rehabilitate the reputation of Albert Speer as a mainstream Neo-Classical architect are manifold.³²

Libeskind has described his own building as an 'emblem', and on a very literal level he presents the Star of David, albeit in a broken and abstracted form, as an answer to the swastika and the Imperial eagle. The unbroken tradition of Jewish religion and culture may have been horribly scarred by the events of the Second World War, but it was far from destroyed, and there is a grim affirmation written into the very plan of the museum. Libeskind has described four starting points for the scheme, points which are themselves a series of unrelated fragments from outside the discipline of architecture.³³ The star was generated by plotting the addresses of prominent Jewish and German citizens on a map of pre-war Berlin, and joining these points in an 'irrational and invisible matrix'.³⁴ This irrationality is itself a transgression of the ideals of classical architecture, compounded by Libeskind's three other external 'texts': the libretto and score of Arnold Schönberg's unfinished opera, *Moses and Aaron*; the *Gedenkbuch*, the two books containing the names of Jews deported from Berlin to the camps, and finally Walter Benjamin's *One Way Street*.

The architecture of historical legitimation and absolute rule

The second reference or association of classicism is with Imperialism, the idea of absolute rule, inherited from the Roman Empire. Hitler's plans for the city of Berlin, the bureaucratic and administrative capital of the Third Reich, are illustrative of this. After the Nazi's victory Berlin was to be renamed 'Germania' and redesigned according to Albert Speer's megalomaniacal urban plan, with its North-South Axis, Reichschancellery, and Great Hall.³⁵ Germania was to be the new capital and seat of government of the world, its dominance expressed and reinforced by the gigantic, stripped classicism of its buildings. The classical stream of Italian Fascist architects were attracted to the style for the same reasons, and like them Hitler saw the Thousand Year Reich as the natural continuation of the age of the Roman Emperors, and himself as the heir to the absolute power of Caesar and Augustus.³⁶

The monumentality of this architecture served several functions. It was massive enough to endure into the future, or at least to appear capable of this, and Albert Speer's construction ensured that even in its eventual decay it would deteriorate into picturesque ruins. It fulfilled the simultaneous demands of political legitimation, by association with the past, and subordination of the individual into the mass; 'Hitler and Speer were fascinated by monumental architecture - the architecture of death - because such architecture stresses the totality, the whole party, the whole people.'³⁷ Postwar architects were faced with the problem of refiguring monumentality itself, after the abuses it suffered in the 'pseudomonumentality' of National Socialism.³⁸ After the massive death and destruction of the second world war, the monumental function of architecture, in the creation of edifices dedicated to preserving the memory of things gone and people dead, was more urgent than ever.

Libeskind's denial of monumental 'totality' is also evidenced in the lack of a vantage point, anywhere in the museum, which provides a panoptical view.³⁹ On the ground the museum can never be understood as a whole, either from inside or out, and the 'zigzag plan', much touted in the press, is not apparent to the visitor. It is ironic that architectural critics, myself included, resorts to aerial photographs and plans to demonstrate the building as a totality, thereby defeating its fragmentary intentions. The building is entered from the original museum via an underground tunnel, an experience that exacerbates the disorienting lack of any point of orientation. The 'line' running through the centre of the building, which would have been the logical spine of circulation, is in fact a deliberately empty space, a void accessible only from the ground floor, and overlooked by a series of bridges. By projecting an individual experience, albeit a fragmented and schizophrenic one, on each visitor, Libeskind achieves what one commentator has described as an 'antimonumental monumentality', where 'spatial monumentality is undercut by the inevitably temporal apprehension of the building.'⁴⁰

The museum clearly retains a memorial function, since the moral imperative of Holocaust historiography demands that it never be 'resolved', but kept present to each new generation. The fact that it is a museum, rather than a freestanding, monolithic commemorative object, suggests an active and meaningful engagement with history, rather than the traditional monument's passive contemplation. Of course, a Jewish museum in Berlin is faced with a particular dilemma, since the Nazis destroyed many of the objects of Jewish history. All that remains are 'small things, documents, archive materials, evocative of an absence rather than a presence.'⁴¹ Libeskind's Jewish museum is an empty museum and a museum of emptiness, a monument to the absent presence of Berlin's Jews. Harboured at the spatial and metaphorical centre of the museum is a void, which represents the tragic failure of the modern project, simultaneously as it memorialises its human victims. This space is devoted quite specifically to absence, and 'the museum proposal is to evoke and particularise an absence more than a presence: the unnameable of the voice of God, but also absence as an accusing form of presence of an incinerated culture and community, in whose cremation modernism was burned as well.'⁴² The representation of absence is a recurring theme in the theory and practice of deconstruction, but Libeskind's Jewish Museum is its most poetic, and at the same time most literal, manifestation.⁴³

Architecture as the embodiment of reason

The third association of classicism is a philosophical one, which was refracted through the Enlightenment and endured into modernity: the dream of Reason. Classical architecture was believed to literally 'embody' the ideals of reason, and to celebrate the uniquely human capacity for rational thought. Hidden within this transcendent project, however, is the possibility of a dark apotheosis, and the Holocaust can be seen as the apocalyptic culmination of the Western tradition, the negative corollary and counterpart of the Enlightenment.⁴⁴ In this conception Auschwitz represents the worst possible outcome of the classical tradition, with Nazism compounding its corruption of this tradition by exploiting one of its best products, classical architecture, to represent its own political program. Yet the universal order of classical architecture, its precision, proportion, and symmetry, always bore the seed of its applicability to totalitarian regimes, as an ideal model of the totalised worldview it proved irresistible not only to Hitler, but Mussolini and Stalin as well.

According to one stream of thought, the Western Enlightenment tradition, with its ultimate faith in progress via rational thought, was implicated not only in reinforcing existing Nazi ideology, but also in formulating it in the first place.⁴⁵ To speak of the Holocaust as a metahistorical event is not to say it lies outside history, on the contrary, one of the tenets of Holocaust historiography is the rigorous historicising of the event, including the interrogation of pre-Auschwitz history for

precursors. Thus, even though the Holocaust may have been the absolute negative of Western thought, it must be conceived as neither a freak historical accident nor a random outbreak of pure evil. Such a historicisation of the very event which 'shatters' history itself also threatens to shatter the museum institution.⁴⁶ It works in direct opposition to the linear, progressive view of history propagated by the traditional, which is to say modernist, museum. As the institution engaged in constructing and disseminating an official, teleological representation of history, this museum is predicated on the incremental advance of civilisation through technological, scientific and cultural progress. Such a Utopian faith in the power of progress is irrevocably compromised in a Holocaust museum. Rather than carrying the West forward to an ever more sophisticated civilisation, progress brought it to its lowest possible point.⁴⁷ Any museum engaged in commemorating the holocaust must therefore acknowledge the failure of its own view of history, and mourn its own passage along with that of the modern project.

Classicism and the perfectibility of the body

Finally, the fourth way in which the tradition of classicism was tainted by the Nazis was in the exemplarity of the ideal human body, man (and it was a man) as the centre of all things, manifested in classical architecture as an idealised and stylised anthropomorphism. The anthropomorphic tradition appears equally in the proportional perfection of Vitruvian man and the overscaled gigantism of Nazi Neo-Classicism. The perfectibility of the body was also more deeply implicated in the formation of Nazi ideology, in the idea of racial purity, the perfectibility of an entire race through eugenics or selective breeding. From this basis it was a small but abhorrent step to the Nazi imperative of ridding the Aryan race of impure blood, of whatever kind.⁴⁸ The doctrine of the ideal body is evident in Nazi architecture just as it is in the Olympian propaganda films of Leni Riefenstahl, or its final, fatal application in the extermination camps.

Where deconstruction has adopted the bodily analogy, it has been a pointedly anti-humanist mutation, the representation of an inhuman body, in a distorted, dismembered, and mutilated state.⁴⁹ Allusions to the human body are otherwise conspicuously absent from deconstruction, in its most extreme form it not only abolishes reference to human scale or proportion, but effaces the presence of the human architect in the design process. Employing 'texts' from outside architecture, and using games, arbitrary processes, and the vagaries of chance, this practice abandons the traditional concept of 'design' as such.⁵⁰ Libeskind's building embodies neither the perfect nor the grotesque human form. It shifts the anthropomorphic analogy from the embodiment of human form within architectural form to the empathic projection of a psychological state from the building back to its users. It reconstructs individual subjectivity through the 'tragic' experience of the building, provoking a psychological disunity, a shattering of the ego equivalent to the formal fragmentation of the architecture.⁵¹

Conclusion

In Conclusion, then, Libeskind identifies the void at the centre of the scheme as its ultimate relevance to a wider cultural and historic milieu. Since, as he writes, 'the Jewish history of Berlin is not separable from the history of modernity, from the destiny of [the] incineration of history', the scheme 'joins architecture to questions that are now relevant to all humanity'.⁵² Through the evocation of absence, Libeskind is able to subvert totalised history from within the museum, itself the quintessential historiographic institution. Narrative history aims to locate human actions and events into a significant and progressive sequence, and accordingly, it demands a meaningful closure and conclusion. But there simply was no redemptive 'meaning' to the deaths of the victims of the Nazi regime, it was in no sense a martyrdom. The Holocaust unveiled no fundamental,

metaphysical truth, in fact it revealed the absence of any such truth; it was an apocalypse without revelation.⁵³ The Jewish museum acknowledges this, in the impossibility of closure and thus the defeat of a conventional 'retelling' of history. It can provide only the secondary consolation of a means of expressing the anguish of meaninglessness.

Since absence is what is left, spatial and temporal absence itself must be shaped into a monument. It is within the spatial and temporal void of this absence, folded within the centre of the Jewish Museum, that the sublime lurks. An apocalyptic, post-humanist sublime, it is characterised by terror, in the face of the inhuman complexity and chaos of historical events as they are glimpsed through the widening cracks in modernist historical representation.⁵⁴ The void of the Jewish Museum contains the tragic absence of the Jews of Berlin, simultaneously with the traces of all of those metanarratives pronounced dead by postmodernism. It is a physical manifestation of the discourse of ends, which make their uncannily absent presence felt in the fragmented space of an always already 'ruined' architecture.

¹ Peter Haidu, 'The Dialectics of Unspeakability: Language, Silence, and the Narratives of Desubjectification', in Saul Friedländer (ed), *Probing the Limits of Representation: Nazism and the "Final Solution"*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992, p. 277.

² There is a large body of scholarship on the representation of the Holocaust, much of it led by the Israeli theorist Saul Friedländer. See his seminal *Reflections of Nazism: An Essay on Kitsch and Death*, translated Thomas Weyr, New York: Harper and Rowe, 1982, and Saul Friedländer ed., *Probing the Limits of Representation: Nazism and the "Final Solution"*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992.

³ Contemporary German struggles with history and memory reached a climax shortly before the original museum competition, with the German and American controversy over President Reagan's visit to the Bitburg cemetery in 1985, and the so-called *Historikerstreit* or Historians Struggle in the summer of 1986. This latter was a high profile public debate, played out in Germany's major newspapers, and consisted essentially of a polemic between the liberal historical position taken by Jürgen Habermas and the relativising or normalising view of Nazi history held by some of his conservative colleagues. Since that time, and since the construction of Libeskind's museum, the situation has changed again with the fall of the wall, and Berlin's reinstatement as the seat of government for a unified Germany. See, for example, Geoffrey Hartman, ed., *Bitburg in Moral and Political Perspective*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986, and Charles Maier, *The Unmasterable Past: History, Holocaust and German National Identity*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988.

⁴ It has proven similarly impossible to initiate the processes of collective mourning that Germany might have been expected to undergo after the war's end. Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich's groundbreaking psychoanalytic study 'The Inability to Mourn', applies Freud's theories on mourning to post-war German society. Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich, *The Inability to Mourn: Principles of Collective Behaviour*, translated Beverly Placzek, New York: Grove Press, 1975.

⁵ The term 'postmodern' has clearly become overdetermined with contrary meanings. Hal Foster has followed the varieties and mutations of these meanings over several decades, see for example his '(Post)Modern Polemics' in the special edition of *New German Critique* dedicated to 'Modernity and Postmodernity': *New German Critique* 33, (Fall 1984): 67-78, and Frederic Jameson's 'The Politics of Theory: Ideological Positions in the Postmodernism Debate', in the same edition, pp. 53-65.

⁶ This is also Peter Eisenman's position. Jacques Derrida quotes him as saying 'I believe poststructuralism is basically what I mean by postmodernism. In other words, postmodernism is poststructuralism in the widest sense of the word.' Derrida also emphasises here that he specifically disagrees with this position. Jacques Derrida, 'A Letter to Peter Eisenman', *Assemblage* 12, (August 1990): 12.

⁷ I am drawing here on Freud's theory of mourning, addressed most fully in 'Mourning and Melancholia', where he describes a process which is 'carried out bit by bit, at great expense of time and cathectic energy', involving a strategy where 'each single one of the memories and expectations in which the libido is bound to the object is brought up and hypercathected, and detachment of the ego is accomplished in respect of it' (p.244). Sigmund Freud, 'Mourning and Melancholia', in James Strachey (ed), *The Standard Edition of the Complete Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. 14, London: Hogarth Press, 1957, pp. 243-258.

⁸ Jean-François Lyotard, 'Ticket to a New Décor', *Copyright* 1, (Fall 1987): 15.

⁹ Anthony Vidler points out that the 'disease of ends' has a history of its own, but makes a distinction between early manifestations including Nietzsche's proclamation of the 'death of God' and Hegel's 'end of art', and more recent 'ends' which explicitly refer to the influence of postmodernist and poststructuralist thought. It is this reading of the phenomenon as a symptom of the postmodern condition that interests me here. Anthony Vidler, 'Art History *Posthistoire*', *The Art Bulletin*, 7, (1994): 408.

¹⁰ Jacques Derrida, 'Of an Apocalyptic Tone Recently Adopted in Philosophy', *Semeia: An Experimental Journal for Biblical Criticism*, 23, (1982): 85.

¹¹ Andreas Huyssen, 'Escape From Amnesia: The Museum as Mass Medium', in *Twilight Memories: Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia*, New York and London: Routledge, 1995, p. 14.

¹² Museums are, in the words of Donald Preziosi, 'social instruments for the fabrication and maintenance of modernity.' Donald Preziosi, 'Modernity Again: The Museum as Trompe L'Oeil', in Peter Brunette and David Wills (eds), *Deconstruction and the Visual Arts: Art, Media, Architecture*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994, p. 141.

¹³ Theodor Adorno noted that 'Museums and Mausoleums are connected by more than phonetic association', and metaphors of death and preservation abound in the historical literature on the museum. Theodor Adorno, 'Valéry Proust Museum', in *Prisms*, Translated Samuel and Shierry Webber, Cambridge: MIT Press, 1967, p. 175.

¹⁴ On postmodern history and the sublime, see Hans Kellner, 'Beautifying the Nightmare: The Aesthetics of Postmodern History', *Strategies* 4/5, (1991): 289-313.

¹⁵ See Derrida, 'Of an Apocalyptic tone...'

¹⁶ It is interesting to note that one of the Futurist's aims was to destroy all museums. The aim of deconstruction seems to be quite the opposite.

See Rosalind Krauss, 'The Originality of the Avant Garde', in *The Originality of the Avant Garde and Other Modernist Myths*, Cambridge: MIT Press, 1985, pp 151-170, and Manfredo Tafuri, 'The Dialectic of the Avant Garde' in *Architecture and Utopia: Design and Capitalist Development*, Cambridge, MIT Press, 1976, pp 78-103.

¹⁷ Mark Taylor takes Hiroshima as the end, while Derrida and Eisenman choose nuclear annihilation. See Mark Taylor, 'Nuclear Architecture or Fabulous Architecture or Tragic Architecture or Dionysian Architecture or...', *Assemblage* 11 (April 1990): 7-21, Peter Eisenman, 'The futility of objects: Decomposition and processes of differentiation', *Lotus International* 42 (1984): 63-75, and Jacques Derrida, 'No Apocalypse, Not Now', *Diacritics* 14 (Summer 1984): 20-31.

¹⁸ Charles Jencks, *The Language of Post-Modern Architecture*, London: Academy Editions, 1991. Part one, 'The Death of Modern Architecture', is a gleeful identification, to the exact second, of the moment when 'Modern Architecture went out with a bang' (p. 23).

¹⁹ Kurt Forster, 'Monument/Memory and the Mortality of Architecture', *Oppositions* 25 (Fall 1982): 11.

²⁰ Robin Evans, 'In front of lines that leave nothing behind', *AA Files* 6, (1984): 92.

²¹ If this is the case, then it is also the beginning of the next round of the avant-garde, since in the nineties we have seen a procession of uncanny returns, the direct inverse of the discourse of ends. Not only is the museum back, but so is the Real, the autonomy of art, and high modernism itself, in architecture as in the other arts. Whether the ideals of humanism and the existence of God can re-emerge remains to be seen, since postmodernism buried them deepest. See Hal Foster, *The Return of the Real*, Cambridge, Mass: The MIT Press, 1996.

²² These two 'lines' are also 'the two lines of contemporary dichotomy, the lines which create the rift between faith and action, between political belief and architectural response.' Daniel Libeskind, 'Between the Lines: The Jewish Museum, Berlin', *Research in Phenomenology* 22 (1992): p. 86.

²³ Thomas Hoffmann, 'Death is a Master from Germany', *Daidalos* 38, (December 1990): 103.

²⁴ See Andreas Huyssen, 'The Voids of Berlin', *Critical Inquiry* 24, (Autumn 1997): 57-81.

²⁵ On the distinction between Classicism and the Classical, see Henri Zerner, 'Classicism as Power', *Art Journal* 47, (Spring 1988): 35-36. On the distinction between the Classical and the Neo-Classical, see Joseph Rykwert, 'Classic and Neo-Classic', *Oppositions* 7 (Winter 1976): 37-54.

²⁶ The expression is taken from Anthony Vidler, who uses it to describe the work of those erstwhile deconstructivists Coop Himmelblau. *The Architectural Uncanny*, Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1992, p. 76.

²⁷ The Nazis mastered the art of the public rally as spectacle, the unification of theatre and propaganda. Speer's 'Cathedral of Light' design for the 1934 Nazi party congress in Nuremberg was perhaps the most spectacular example, but the 1936 Olympic Games were equally a display of the populace as 'mass ornament'. See Siegfried Kraauer, *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays*, Thomas Levin (ed), Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995, pp 74-86.

²⁸ The idea that Hitler spoiled everything he touched gave rise to the now famous comment made in frustration by Hans Hollein in 1978; 'Fortunately Hitler didn't have too pronounced a taste for Wiener Schnitzel; otherwise they too would be forbidden in Germany today.' Ironically, it was only those styles that were persecuted under

the Nazis that were 'saved' for postwar artists and architects; the primary example being German Expressionist painting, vilified in the 'Degenerate Art' exhibition, and so preserved from the Nazi stain.

²⁹ Theodor Adorno, 'Cultural Criticism and Society,' in *Prisms*, trans. Samuel and Shierry Weber, London: Neville Spearman, 1967, pg 34. Adorno was later to broaden his attack on post-Auschwitz culture by writing that 'all post Auschwitz culture, including its urgent critique, is garbage.' *Negative Dialectics*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966, p. 367.

³⁰ Daniel Libeskind, *Countersign*, London: Academy Editions, 1991, p. 38.

³¹ See Peter Eisenman, 'The End of the Classical, the End of the Beginning, the End of the End', *Perspecta* 21 (1984): 154-173

³² The 1981 debate between Krier and Joan Ockman in *Oppositions* was a clear polarisation of the positions of deconstruction and reconstruction, with Krier protesting the immanent destruction of two of the last remaining Nazi buildings in Berlin with the line that 'architecture is not political, it is only an instrument of politics' (p.37). Ockman responded with the accusation that Krier believed 'one has but to remove the eagles and swastikas from Nazi buildings to make them pure again.' (p. 40). For Krier on Speer, see Leon Krier, *Albert Speer Architecture 1932-1942*, Paris: Archives D'Architecture Moderne, 1978. For the Ockman/Krier debate, see Joan Ockman, 'The Most Interesting Form of Lie', *Oppositions* 24, (Spring 1981): 38-47, and Leon Krier, 'Vorwärts, Kamaraden, Wir Müssen Zurück (Forwards, Comrades, We Must Go Back)', *Oppositions* 24, (Spring 1981): 27-37.

³³ Libeskind, 'Between the Lines...', pp. 82-87.

³⁴ Libeskind, 'Between the Lines...', p. 83.

³⁵ Vittorio Lampugnani, 'Architecture Under National Socialism', *Architecture and Urbanism* 268, (January 1993): 13.

³⁶ On the use of classicism in Italian Fascist architecture, in a paper which emphasises the similarities in the universalising aims of classicism and modernism, see Giorgio Ciucci, 'Italian Architecture in the Fascist Period: Classicism between Neoclassicism and Rationalism: The many souls of the classical', *Harvard Architecture Review* 6, (1987): 77-87.

³⁷ Peter Blundell Jones, 'Architecture and Political Legitimation', *The Architectural Review* 200, 1193, (July 1996): 68.

³⁸ The term is Siegfried Geidion's. See 'The Need for a New Monumentality', in *Architecture You and Me*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958, p. 28.

³⁹ See the published discussion between Libeskind and Derrida that follows 'Behind the Lines' in *Research in Phenomenology* 22, (1992): 98.

⁴⁰ Andreas Huyssen, 'The Voids of Berlin', *Critical Inquiry* 24, (Autumn 1997): 80.

⁴¹ Libeskind, 'Between the Lines...', p. 85.

⁴² José Luis González Cobelo, 'Architecture and its double: idea and reality in the work of Daniel Libeskind', *El Croquis* 80, (1996): 37.

⁴³ On the play of absence in deconstruction, see Charles Jencks, 'Deconstruction: the Pleasures of Absence', in Andreas Papadakis (ed), *Deconstruction Omnibus*, London: Academy Editions, 1989, pp. 119-131, and John Macarthur, 'Experiencing Absence: Eisenman and Derrida, Benjamin and Schwitters', in John Macarthur (ed) *Knowledge and/or/of Experience*, Brisbane: Institute of Modern Art, 1993, pp. 99-123.

⁴⁴ Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe is one of the leading exponents of the nihilistic view, that sees the Holocaust as the inevitable end of the Enlightenment tradition. He is joined in this thesis by Theodor Adorno and Jean-Francois Lyotard. The opposing argument, led by Andreas Huyssen, should also be stated here, and Huyssen writes that 'Auschwitz, after all, did *not* result from too much enlightened reason – even though it was organised as a perfectly rationalized death factory – but from a violent anti-enlightenment and anti-modernity effect, which exploited modernity ruthlessly for its own purposes.' Andreas Huyssen, *After the Great Divide*, p. 203, quoted in Jeffrey Nealon, 'Theorizing the Postmodern: At the End of Metaphysics', in *Double Reading: Postmodernism and Deconstruction*, Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1993, p. 77.

⁴⁵ Lacoue-Labarthe writes, 'In the Auschwitz apocalypse, it was nothing less than the West, in its essence, that revealed itself - and continues, ever since, to reveal itself.' Heidegger, *Art and Politics*, translated Chris Turner, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990, p. 35.

⁴⁶ Jean-Francois Lyotard has compared the holocaust to an earthquake, which 'destroys not only lives, buildings, and objects but also the instruments used to measure earthquakes, directly and indirectly.' For him, the apparatus of recording history was not simply struck into silence but actively destroyed by the magnitude of an event that exceeded the scale of all previous human actions. Since the discipline of history and the institution of the museum are the primary instruments of historiography, it is they that have been destroyed, or at least irretrievably compromised. Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988, p. 55

⁴⁷ 'The 'science' from which National Socialism claimed inspiration, and behind this, the idea it had of Europe and the West ...directly lead to Auschwitz.', Lacoue-Labarthe, Heidegger, Art and Politics, p. 50.

⁴⁸ The persecution of the Jews continues to dominate public perception of the Holocaust, but several other groups were also singled out for elimination from the Aryan race. Gypsies, homosexuals, the mentally ill, the geriatric, and those suspected of communist tendencies, were all victims.

⁴⁹ See Anthony Vidler, 'Architecture Dismembered' in *The Architectural Uncanny*, pp. 70-82. Vidler uses the work of Coop Himmelblau as a primary example, citing their prose poem 'The Poetry of Desolation' as an exploration of architecture and death:

'The aesthetic of the architecture of death in white sheets. Death in tiled hospital rooms. The architecture of sudden death on the pavement. Death from a rib cage pierced by a steering shaft. The path of a bullet through a dealer's head on 42nd street. The aesthetic of the architecture of the surgeon's razor-sharp scalpel. The aesthetic of the peep show sex in washable plastic boxes. Of the broken tongues and the dried-up eyes.'

from Coop Himmelblau, *Die Faszination der Stadt. The Power of the City*, with a foreword by Frank Weiner, Darmstadt and London, 1988, p. 93.

⁵⁰ Goldblatt, 'The Dislocation of the Architectural Self', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 49, 4, (Fall 1991): 337-348.

⁵¹ The tragic is 'that dramatic form that takes as its theme the ultimate destruction of the individual'. The experience of the Jewish museum is thus an experiential shadow of the tragic 'play' of history. Goldblatt, 'The Dislocation of the Architectural Self', p. 341

⁵² Daniel Libeskind quoted by Derrida, 'A Letter to Peter Eisenman', p. 12.

⁵³ For a provocative reading of the discourse of ends as the 'end' of metaphysics, particularly through the writing of Derrida and Lacoue-Labarthe, see Jeffrey Nealon, 'Theorizing the Postmodern: At the End of Metaphysics', in *Double Reading: Postmodernism and Deconstruction*, Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1993, pp. 72-106.

⁵⁴ Lyotard has written most frequently of this post-humanist sublime. See his 'Reply to the Question What is the Postmodern?' in *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984, pp. 10-18, and 'Presenting the Unpresentable: the Sublime', *Artforum* 4, (April 1992): 64-69. For its application to architecture, see Peter Eisenman, 'En Terror Firma: In Trails of Grotexes', in Andreas Papadakis (ed), *Deconstruction Omnibus*, London: Academy Editions, 1989, pp. 152-153.