CHAPTER 15

"You Had to Have Been There": The Importance of Place in Teaching Jewish History and Literature

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Which of my experiences in the 2003 NEH seminar "Representations of the Other: Jews in Medieval England," has most influenced my teaching? Was it the seminars with wonderful, distinguished scholars? The intensive interactions with smart colleagues? Perhaps it was the introduction to new sources or the chance to view manuscripts at the Bodleian? Nope. The most important part of my NEH experience was my room with a view. Had the seminar been held in say, Oxford, Ohio, instead of Oxford, England, I'm sure it would have been stimulating, but I would never have had the chance to read and think about medieval sources while sitting at a desk with a view to St. Bartholomew's Church, which has stood in Yarnton, Oxfordshire since 1161. This quotidian experience shifted how I approach medieval and modern texts more profoundly than I could ever have predicted.[1]

[1]I had originally considered writing this essay in the form of a letter to United States Senator Jeff Sessions of Alabama, whose attacks on seminars like the one I attended appear to have led to

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Fig. 15.1 St. Bartholomew Church, Yarnton, Oxfordshire, and Yarnton Manor, the former site of the Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies

Initially, looking out at the church from my desk was a pure delight. Yarnton Manor, where the seminar was held, was then the site of the Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies (Figs. 15.1 and 15.2). My postcards home all began, "Our seminar is in a sixteenth century manor house! I can see a 900-year-old church from my window!" After I settled into the seminar, however, the view, while still lovely, also became unsettling. There I was, a Jewish-American woman from California, studying the history of anti-Semitism in a manor built in 1611. In 1611, I thought, Jews weren't simply unwelcome in England; they had

their discontinuation. See David Perry, "Save the Overseas Seminar" and Sessions's letter to the National Endowment for the Humanities, at http://www.budget.senate.gov/republican/public/index.cfm/2014/4/sessions-questions-national-endowment-for-the-humanities-over-dubious-expenditures.

Fig. 15.2 St. Bartholomew Church, Yarnton, Oxfordshire, and Yarnton Manor, the former site of the Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies

been officially expelled for over 300 years. There I was living out my *Masterpiece Theatre*-fueled fantasies by daily traipsing through an early modern manor and its verdant gardens. My studies, however, were continual reminders that this gorgeous place was one where I really wasn't supposed to be. What would Sir Thomas Spencer, for whom the manor was originally constructed, have made of my presence, not to mention those who had constructed St. Bartholomew's centuries before? What, I wondered, would they make of the Jewess studying in the shadow of their church?

Despite its brevity, my stay was now also part of the layers of history at Yarnton, but I wasn't entirely sure how I should understand my relationship to this history. Any simple sense of place shifts with the people who lived in it and the events that transpired on it. As Bill Ashcroft posits, "[p]lace is never simply location, nor is it static, a cultural memory which colonization buries." He proceeds to argue:

> For, like culture itself, place is in a continual and dynamic state of formation, a process intimately bound up with the culture and the identity of its inhabitants. Above all place is a *result* of habitation, a consequence of the ways in which people inhabit space, particularly the conception of space

> as universal and uncontestable that is constructed for them by imperial discourse.[2]

If place is, as Ashcroft suggests, the *result* of habitation, how was my habitation of Oxford now a part of this place?

Belonging, place, and home had already been very much on my mind before I arrived at Yarnton, since I had just completed my first year of teaching at UC San Diego. The new job marked a return to Southern California, where I grew up, after over a decade away, including a total of nearly two years in Berlin, another location where working on Jewish history can be jarring, to say the least. Living in Oxford was, obviously, different from living in Berlin in many, many ways. The most significant of these was not, however, anything obvious, like, say, having to speak German. In Berlin, I had been daily confronted with the German-Jewish past, not just in the archive, but also on the street, especially in my apartment in the Schöneberg district. There the "Place of Remembrance" memorial project consists of signs that remind the passersby of the many laws restricting Jews in Nazi Germany. I could not ascend from the U-Bahn station late at night without seeing a plaque about the Jewish curfew or sit on the park bench around the corner without being reminded that such rest had once been forbidden for people like me.[3]

Yet somehow these reminders unsettled me differently from my experience at Oxford. Berlin was obsessed with its Jewish past; Oxford had amnesia. Jewish history came alive in the seminar room at Yarnton, but on the streets of Oxford it seemed nowhere to be found. This impression of Anglo-Jewish invisibility was not unique to me. Elisa Narin van Court's powerful 2008 essay, "Invisible in Oxford: Medieval Jewish History in Modern England," details her experiences of trying, often in vain, to locate physical traces of Oxford's Jewish past while part of that same 2003 NEH seminar, experiences that she shared with us in the classroom and as we lived and socialized together.[4]

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[2] Bill Ashcroft, *Post-colonial Transformation* (London: Routledge, 2001), 156.

[3] On this memorial, see Ian Johnson, "Jews Aren't Allowed to Use Phones: Berlin's Most Unsettling Memorial," *New York Review of Books Daily* 15 Jun. 2013; Web.

[4] Elisa Narin Van Court, "Invisible in Oxford: Medieval Jewish History in Modern England," *Shofar* 26 (2008): 1–20.

Teaching Brit. Lit. in So. Cal.

I still teach at UC San Diego; and at least some of my students continue to be, like me, born and raised in California. For the most part, they bring to the classroom many of the same notions about medieval England that I did as an undergraduate, drawn largely from popular films and novels. Very few of my students have ever visited England or Europe. Our classrooms are located within walking distance from the Pacific on a campus founded only in 1960 and medieval England can seem, at the outset at least, like another universe. Medieval Anglo-Jewish history is almost without exception a complete unknown to my students when they begin my classes, playing no part in their preconceptions of medieval England or Europe.

My experience as part of a group that together became aware of how Jewish history was "invisible in Oxford" is foundational to how I teach these students in my upper-division Literature courses: "Jews and Gender in Early English Literature," "Anti-Semitism in English Literature," and "Jews, Christians, and Muslims in Medieval Literature." In these courses, I introduce the concept of place as a palimpsest: "a kind of parchment on which successive generations have inscribed and reinscribed the process of history."[5] How is our experience of a place, of its history, of whom it "belongs to" and of our sense of belonging (or not belonging) there shaped by what is visible to us and by the relative prominence or centrality of certain features of our lived environments? I relate my experiences at Yarnton manor and tell students about what the centrality of the village church meant to me, asking them to consider what it might have meant in past centuries and to think about how architecture shapes or marks a landscape.

I also introduce the concept of "collective memory," first put forth by Maurice Halbwachs.[6] Halbwachs uses insights about time and memory gleaned from Henri Bergson and Émile Durkheim to develop a theory of

[5] Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, ed., *The Post-colonial Studies Reader* (London: Routledge, 1995), 392.

[6] Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, trans. Lewis Coser (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992). For a useful overview of the field of memory studies, including the concept of collective memory, I sometimes assign the introduction to Jeffrey Olick, Vered Vinitzky-Seroussi, and Daniel Levy, eds., *The Collective Memory Reader* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), esp. 16–18, as well as the selections by Halbwachs (139–49) and Yerushalmi (201–08).

memory that acknowledges and explores its social nature. We may typically think of memory as individual and private, but Halbwachs's work reveals how memory is fundamentally shaped by social context and social interaction. In discussing "collective memory," we consider that the collective sharing of memory can occur within a very small group, but that it can also encompass an entire culture. After exploring some examples from the contemporary United States, we consider how collective memory may have functioned in both Christian and Jewish communities in medieval England. I typically provide this information in lecture form, introducing Halbwachs as well as Yerushalmi's *Zakhor*. This provocative volume, the title of which uses the Hebrew exhortation to "remember," explores differences between ancient and medieval Jewish practices that approach the Jewish past through ritual and liturgy, where the past and present may seem inseparable, and a modern Jewish historiography that examines the Jewish past within a secular temporal frame. We use Halbwachs and Yerushalmi to explore how religious culture, including liturgy, can shape collective memory.[7] I also introduce the concept of memoricide (*el memoricidio*), the active destruction of cultural memory through the annihilation of its places and artifacts. This term was coined by the Spanish novelist Juan Goytisolo in an essay on the eradication of Muslim culture in Bosnia, as typified by the destruction of the Sarajevo National Library in 1992.[8]

For the remainder of this essay, I want to discuss how I use concepts such as palimpsest, collective memory, and memoricide both when I teach a medieval text, the thirteenth-century Anglo-Jewish poem, "Put a Curse on My Enemy," by Meir ben Elijah of Norwich, and when I teach a nineteenth-century novel of medievalism, Sir Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe*. I will conclude by looking at how these concepts come into play in a class I teach on modern U.S. literature.

I teach Meir ben Elijah of Norwich's "Put a Curse on My Enemy" in two of my upper-division classes, "Anti-Semitism in English Literature" and "Jews, Christians, and Muslims in Medieval Literature," both of which fulfill the pre-1660 literature requirement for English majors

[7] Yosef Hayyim Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1982).

[8] Juan Goytisolo, *Cuaderno de Sarajevo: anotaciones de un viaje a la barbarie* (Madrid: El País/Aguilar, 1993); translated by Peter Bush as *Landscapes of War: From Sarajevo to Chechnya* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 2000).

and also attract students working in other departmental majors, such as Spanish literature and Literatures of the World.[9] To a lesser extent the courses also draw students interested in Jewish Studies, as well as some fulfilling general education and writing requirements from across campus. In preparation for our discussions, I ask students to read Susan Einbinder's "Meir b. Elijah of Norwich: Persecution and Poetry among Medieval English Jews" as well as Miriamne Ara Krummel's "Meir b. Elijah of Norwich and the Margins of Memory."[10] Einbinder's article provides both the poem in its original (for the one or two students who may be able to read the Hebrew original) and in an English translation. I also lecture on the background of the general history of Jews in England between their arrival with the Normans to the 1290 expulsion.

In our discussion, we analyze numerous aspects of the poem, including form and imagery, as well as the poem's rich biblical influences. The students typically are most interested, however, in considering Meir's work as a poem of persecution and a reflection of memory and identity. These questions are especially urgent in my "Anti-Semitism in English Literature" course. UCSD is on the quarter system and in our ten-week course we survey the representation of Jews in canonical English texts, including Chaucer's *The Prioress's Tale*, Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta*, Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*, Scott's *Ivanhoe*, Maria Edgeworth's *Harrington*, and selected poems by T.S. Eliot. Because the class primarily reads representations of Jews by non-Jewish authors, I feel it is important to begin with a work by a Jewish author and to have a basis for understanding what the expulsion and its impact has meant for the place of Jews in English literary history. The class concludes with Emanuel Litvinoff's 1952 "To T.S. Eliot," a Jewish poet's response to Eliot's anti-Semitism. The class is thereby framed, at least, by Anglo-Jewish voices. We know from reading Einbinder that, while there is a relative abundance of archival evidence of the material and economic life of pre-Expulsion Anglo-Jewry, there is much less evidence of

[9] UCSD has a Department of Literature that encompasses a wide range of literary and linguistic traditions.

[10] Susan Einbinder, "Meir b. Elijah of Norwich: Persecution and Poetry among Medieval English Jews," *Journal of Medieval History* 2 (2000): 145–62, and Miriamne Ara Krummel, "Meir b. Elijah of Norwich and the Margins of Memory," *Shofar* 27 (2009): 1–23.

literary culture.[11] We use Einbinder's and Krummel's articles as springboards for considering the place of Anglo-Jewish literary voices within the broader English canon. What does it mean for a literary voice to be "English"? I introduce the students to the range of linguistic variation found across medieval England and the implications of inclusion and exclusion of Welsh, Gaelic, Anglo-French, as well as the Hebrew used by Anglo-Jewry in our idea of "medieval English literature." From there we also consider what it might mean to include Meir ben Elijah as an *English* literary voice, despite the fact that he writes in Hebrew, and how that inclusion might shape our vision both of English history and identity and of Jewish literature and identity. We then relate this discussion of the place of Jewish voices in the English canon to a discussion of the presence, both actual and imaginary, of the Jews in England. The issue of displacement, for example, comes up across the texts we read. In Chaucer, Marlowe, and Shakespeare, for example, Christian-Jewish relations are imagined in foreign locales: Chaucer's "Asie," Marlowe's Malta, Shakespeare's Venice. We discuss the "absent presence" of the Jew in these texts but then also consider this absent presence in relation to actual Jewish presence and its memory. The discussion here is supported by a lecture that presents Narin van Court's readings of Jewish invisibility in Oxford, Anthony Bale's insights in "Afterword: Violence, Memory and the Traumatic Middle Ages" as well as the important work by James Shapiro about actual Jewish presence in *Shakespeare and the Jews*.[12] I present material on some excavations of medieval Jewish sites in England and Europe and explore how the presence or absence/invisibility of medieval Jewish sites might shape English collective memory and English identity. I also ask students how learning about these sites changes, if at all, their sense of "England" and "the English."[13]

[11] Susan Einbinder, "Meir b. Elijah," 147–49.

[12] Anthony Bale, "Afterword: Violence, Memory, and the Traumatic Middle Ages," *Christians and Jews in Angevin England: The York Massacre of 1190, Narratives and Contexts*, ed. Sarah Rees-Jones and Sethina Watson (Rochester, NY: Boydell & Brewer, 2013), 294–304; and James Shapiro, *Shakespeare and the Jews* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996).

[13] Sites we have considered have included the "Jewbury" cemetery in York, referenced below as well as "Jacob's Well" in Bristol. I have found useful the following references: David Hinton, "Medieval Anglo-Jewry: The Archaeological Evidence," *Jews in Medieval Britain: Historical, Literary, and Archaeological Perspectives*, ed. Patricia Skinner (Rochester, NY: Boydell & Brewer, 2003), 97–113; Joe Hillaby and Richard Sermon "Jacob's Well, Bristol: *Mikveh* or *Bet Tohorah*?" *Transactions: Bristol and Gloucestershire*

In my lectures, I draw upon Toni Morrison's insights about the creation of a normative white American identity in the U.S. literary canon in her 1992 *Playing in the Dark*.[14] We draw upon her concept of an "Africanist presence" to develop an understanding of the imagined Jewish presence in post-Expulsion England, and I present to them the notion, via Morrison, James Shapiro, and others, that English identity itself may be constructed through a notion of Jewish absence. How can we think about the paucity of physical traces of the Anglo-Jewish past in contemporary England in relation to the paucity of Jewish voices in the canon? Meir ben Elijah's poems are not typically included in the category of "the literature of Medieval England." What might happen if he were included? Should he be? How is a "canon" established and by and for whom? What is the relationship between "the canon" and identity? Such questions allow students to consider the constructed nature of the canon and the role of marks of religious and linguistic identity in this construction.

These questions concerning English identity are also, of course, relevant to Walter Scott's 1820 *Ivanhoe: A Romance*, which famously explores tensions between Saxons and Normans.[15] Our discussions usually begin by analyzing the character Rebecca as what Hyam Maccoby has called a "delectable daughter," and as a character whose pairing with her stereotypical Jewish father, Isaac of York, borrows from the depictions of the Jewish family in Marlowe and Shakespeare.[16] We also consider how Scott drew not only on literary but also on historical works to create *Ivanhoe*, including Sharon Turner's *The History of England during the Middle Ages*. The novel is set in 1194, when the historical King Richard returned from Crusade just four years after the worst recorded case of anti-Jewish violence on English soil, the infamous *Shabbat*

Archaeological Society 122 (2004): 127–52, as well as the sections on cemeteries, mikva'ot and other sites in Joe and Caroline Hillaby, *The Palgrave Dictionary of Medieval Anglo-Jewish History* (New York: Palgrave, 2013).

[14]Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992).

[15]Walter Scott, *Ivanhoe* (1820; New York: Barnes & Noble Classics, 2005).

[16]Hyam Maccoby, "The Delectable Daughter," *Midstream* 16.9 (1970): 50–60.

ha-Gadol massacre in the city of York.[17] On Friday, March 16, 1190, the entire York Jewish community of 150, having sought royal protection, was trapped in Clifford's Tower by an angry mob. To avoid forced baptism, most of the community, including women and children, committed suicide, with fathers killing family members and then submitting to death at the hand of the community's rabbi, who finally took his own life. Those who left the tower hoping to avoid death through conversion were slaughtered as they exited. Members of the mob then went to York cathedral and burned documents pertaining to the Jews, notably records of Christian debt to Jewish lenders. These events were recorded by both Jewish and Christian contemporary chroniclers, and while it has only recently become an acknowledged part of modern English histories of York, Scott would have known of it through Turner, whose treatment of Anglo-Jewish history is relatively sympathetic.

The horrific facts of the massacre, however, which would have been fresh in the memory of those alive at the time Scott sets the novel, haunt only the edges of *Ivanhoe*, which does not refer to the York massacre. In *Ivanhoe*, Rebecca and Isaac are persecuted and threatened with death, but they ultimately escape. I ask my students to read my analysis of *Ivanhoe* in *Medieval Literature and Postcolonial Studies*.[18] There I argue that Scott sublimates significant elements of Anglo-Jewish history, which then return to haunt one of the novel's most famous scenes, in which Rebecca is ready to throw herself from a castle turret rather than become the concubine of the Templar knight Brian de Bois-Guilbert. Her willingness to commit suicide recalls the *Kiddush ha-Shem* of the York Jews. In *Ivanhoe*, the "delectable daughter" stands up for her beliefs even as her father is portrayed as stereotypically concerned with money. In this, Scott's writings may seem to elevate the "beautiful Jewess," but his depiction of her father, interestingly, ignores Turner's relatively positive discussion of the medieval Anglo-Jewish, where it is a "venerated rabbi" who exhorts the York Jewish community to "disappoint the avarice of

[17] On the York massacre see Sethina Watson, "The Moment and Memory of the York Massacre of 1190," *Christians and Jews in Angevin England*, 1–14, as well as Barrie Dobson, *The Jews of Medieval York and the Massacre of March 1190*, rev. ed. (1974; York: Borthwick Institute of Historical Research, University of York, 1996), and Barrie Dobson, "The Medieval York Jewry Reconsidered," *Jews in Medieval Britain*, 145–56.

[18] Lisa Lampert-Weissig, *Medieval Literature and Postcolonial Studies* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), 56–64.

their enemies, by voluntarily destroying both themselves and their property."[19]

After examining Scott's depiction of two medieval Jews from York, we consider the city of York itself to explore further questions of collective memory. In the novel, the obscured details of the *Shabbat ha-Gadol* massacre seem to emerge like repressed memories through Scott's choice of narrative detail. In twentieth-century York, life has imitated art, and a hidden Jewish presence has returned to light. In 1982, a site thought to contain medieval Jewish remains was to be paved over to create a parking lot for a Sainsbury's supermarket. The York Archaeological Trust intervened, and the site was shown to be a twelfth-century Jewish cemetery. A small plaque at the entrance to the supermarket parking lot now commemorates the burial site.[20] Using the York example as a starting point, we discuss the purpose and place of physical memorials and also the question of how memorial sites are created and who determines what and where memorialization takes place. I draw again on Elisa Narin van Court's essay and we analyze the relationship of memorials to collective memory and memoricide. I also lecture on both medieval and modern forms of memorials, including how memories of the Passion functioned in material and imaginative ways in the medieval period and how these Passion memorials intersected with negative representations of Jews. Additionally we explore contemporary practices of memorialization, such as the *Stolpersteine* installations, a Holocaust remembrance project created by German artist, Gunter Demnig.[21]

Palimpsests "Over There" and Palimpsests "At Home"

These references to Germany and the Holocaust bring us back to some of the issues I mentioned in the opening of the essay and how my personal experience of space as a palimpsest has shaped my research and teaching. It is important to me that my students understand that the

[19]Sharon Turner, *The History of England from the Norman Conquest to the Accession of Edward the First* (London: 1814), 326.

[20]See Fig. 1.2 for a picture of the plaque. On the York excavation, see J.M. Lilley, *The Jewish Burial Ground at Jewbury* (York: Council for British Archaeology, 1994); a picture of the plaque can be found on 301.

[21]On the *Stolpersteine*, see my "The Vanished Stumbling Stones of Villingen," *Tablet Magazine* 3 Jun. 2015; Web.

concepts we are discussing, such as memoricide, are not only applicable to "those English" or "the Europeans." Memoricide is not something that only happened "over there"; it is part of American history as well. Considering place as palimpsest can lend insight anywhere, even as an individual's relationship to a place, either by inhabiting it, visiting it, imagining it, or even by longing for it, depends on an individual's subject position and experience. In the end, surprisingly perhaps, the impact of my view in Oxford actually has had the greatest impact on a non-medieval course I teach: "Comparative U.S. Ethnic Literature: Literary Responses to Trauma." This upper-division class is taken not only by majors but also by many non-majors, as it fulfills UCSD's campus-wide "Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion" requirement.

In the course we read novels by Jewish-American, African–American, Native-American and Asian–American authors.[22] The texts are connected by a number of elements. They respond to collective forms of trauma to entire peoples—slavery, genocide, and war—and many also contain elements of the supernatural or experiment with visual or literary form. Exploration of the relationship between place and memory also runs throughout these novels, and we examine these questions through the concepts of collective memory, post-memory, rememory, and memoricide. I bring in the medieval examples discussed above and my own study of the palimpsest and memory in relation to European Jewish history to explain the relationship between our readings and my scholarship in medieval and modern Jewish Studies.[23]

These connections are perhaps clearest when we read Jonathan Safran Foer's 2002 novel, *Everything Is Illuminated*. Combining a mix of narrative voices, styles, and forms, it follows a character who shares the author's name as he travels from the United States to Ukraine in search both of the shtetl where his grandparents had lived, Trachimbrod, and of a woman, Augustine, who appears in a photograph with his grandfather.

[22] In addition to the novels mentioned in the body of the essay we read Isaac Bashevis Singer, *Enemies, a Love Story* (1972); Octavia Butler, *Kindred* (1979); August Wilson, *The Piano Lesson* (1990); Art Spiegelman, *Maus I and II* (1991); and lê thi diem thúy, *The Gangster We Are All Looking For* (2003).

[23] "Rememory" is found in Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987; New York: Vintage, 2004) demonstrating that "literary theory" can be found in fiction as well as criticism; for post-memory, see Marianne Hirsch, "The Generation of for Post-Memory," *Poetics Today* 29.1 (2008): 103–28.

Questions of place and memory permeate the novel, culminating when the characters finally reach the place where Trachimbrod had been. In the passage below, Alexander, a young man who, along with his grandfather, are Jonathan's dubious guides, describes the remains of the shtetl:

> I implore myself to paint Trachimbrod, so you will know why we were so overawed. There was nothing. When I utter "nothing" I do not mean there was nothing except for two houses, and some wood on the ground, and pieces of glass, and children's toys, and photographs. When I utter that there was nothing, what I intend is that there was not any of these things, or any other things. "How?" the hero asked. "How?" I asked Augustine. "How could anything have ever existed here?" (184)[24]

The old woman they encounter, who is not the long-lost Augustine for whom the main character searches but who also has her own story of loss, relates the violent story of the destruction of Trachimbrod and its residents and leads them to a monument to them:

> It was a piece of stone, approximately the size of the hero, placed in the middle of the field, so much in the middle that it was very impossible to find at night. The stone said in Russian, Ukrainian, Hebrew, Polish, Yiddish, English, and German:
>
> THIS MONUMENT STANDS IN MEMORY
> OF THE 1,204 TRACHIMBRODERS
> KILLED AT THE HANDS OF GERMAN FASCISM
> ON MARCH 18, 1942.
> *Dedicated March 18, 1992.*
> *Yitzhak Shamir, Prime Minister of the State of Israel.* (189)

We use these two passages as the center of our analysis of place, memory, and history in the novel. What is the significance of the total obliteration of Trachimbrod? Can we call the destruction of Trachimbrod memoricide as well as genocide and how does the memorial plaque, literally placed in the middle of nowhere, fit into the preservation of collective memory in the face of violent obliteration? What does it mean

[24] Jonathan Safran Foer, *Everything Is Illuminated* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2002); cited parenthetically.

that the monument is "approximately the size" of Jonathan "the hero"? The story of the character Jonathan's search for Trachimbrod is interwoven with his own magical realist narrative of the town, braiding questions of memory, identity, and fictionality into the fabric of the novel. We consider the relationship between the novel's depiction of the fictional shtetl, Trachimbrod, to the actual village of Trochenbrod, which was decimated during the Second World War and which inspired the novel. Foer is depicting the effects of memoricide, of a leveling of place so complete that it seems impossible to trace the palimpsest of history, and yet, this is exactly what the novel accomplishes.

The issues of genocide, memory, and identity explored in *Everything Is Illuminated* run throughout the course and come closest to home when we read the 1996 novel by Louis Owens, *Bone Game*, near the term's end. Owens draws upon the murder mystery form to tell the story of a "mixed-blood" Native American UC Santa Cruz Professor, Cole McCurtain, whose life becomes intermixed with events that transpired in Spanish California at the beginning of the nineteenth century, and with a series of brutal murders of women based on an actual series of crimes in Santa Cruz in the 1970s. The novel portrays the very hills of Santa Cruz and indeed the entire North American landscape as spiritually inhabited by Native American collective memory. As the Choctaw medicine woman, Onatima, says of Santa Cruz:

> I've never felt a place so troubled by the past. And, that, of course, is the essence of our problem. We pretend that the past is over, that ten or thirty or two hundred years puts a distance between us and what we were. But we know in our hearts there is no such thing as the past. (176)[25]

Bone Game delves into the tensions between Native understandings of the past and present and those of dominant U.S. culture. The character Alex Yazzie, the only other Native American professor at UCSC, a Navajo anthropologist who is also a cross-dresser and a trickster, asks Cole, "Did you know that until 1867 it was legal to keep Indian slaves in California?" and Cole replies:

[25] Louis Owens, *Bone Game: A Novel (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press,* 1996); cited parenthetically.

> You're preaching to the converted, Alex. You should write an article for the *San Francisco Chronicle*, but of course they wouldn't publish it. Californians don't like to hear about their sordid pasts. No one's supposed to even have a past in California. It's considered in poor taste. (178)

We analyze these passages in relation to the concepts we have addressed throughout this course: post-memory, collective memory, and memoricide and then turn from the novel's depiction of UC Santa Cruz to think about our own campus, UC San Diego.

The relative youth of the UCSD campus, founded in 1960, sharply contrasts to venerable Oxford, whose roots can be traced back as far as 1096. The notion of place as palimpsest, however, and issues of invisibility apply to both universities. In 1976, an excavation at University House, the residence of the UCSD Chancellor, uncovered human remains estimated to be between 8977 and 9603 years old.[26] The local Kumeyaay tribe calls the area where University House is located Skeleton Hill and entered into litigation with the University over repatriation of the remains, which the Kumeyaay wish to reinter. University of California scientists claim the disputed remains are critical to research about early peoples in the America. The fight is part of a larger set of legal battles over the University of California system's treatment of Native American remains over many decades. We discuss the case and the claims of the opposing parties in relation to our readings, to questions of colonialism, war, and genocide and their impact on collective memory and identity.

We try to understand the palimpsest of our own location, thinking about San Diego history in relation to how issues of collective memory and identity play out globally. We consider the competing claims of the Kumeyaay and the assertions of scientific value made by UC faculty and debated on the pages of prestigious scientific journals such as *Nature*. In *Bone Game*, Owens explores Native American spirituality and its connection to a collective memory rooted in a specific place and manifest not only in its human-made elements, but also in its natural features, in the land itself. We consider the ways in which competing spiritual traditions may be given different weight when one culture dominates another and discuss the normative way that Christian traditions infuse U.S. culture.

[26]For an introduction to the controversy, see Matt Potter, "Native Americans Sue," *San Diego Reader* 17 Apr. 2012; Web.

These themes are portrayed in *Bone Game*, and we also consider the novel's portrayal of Native views of life, death, our connections to others and nature, and the world around us. How does *Bone Game* help us to see California and UC San Diego and to understand our own individual and collective places here?

Whether I am teaching medieval, modern, or contemporary texts, I want my students to consider how the elements that shape one's world view, including one's physical environment, contribute to a sense of identity, a relationship to history and to a sense of belonging (or not belonging). While my thinking about these issues has since been shaped by years of reading and conversations with colleagues and students, I can trace my interest in them directly back to my Oxfordshire room with a view.

Amos Oz writes powerfully about imagination as "a deep ability to imagine the other, sometimes to put ourselves in the skin of the other."[27] For me, my openness to how literature can help me to inhabit the point of view of another was strengthened by my experience of looking out day after day through my Yarnton window. Living at Yarnton was a daily experience of desiring to belong to a place to which I knew that I, for so many reasons, never really could. Living where the Jewish history I was studying was present yet invisible transformed the palimpsest of place from a theoretical concept into a lived reality. This understanding, the part of my NEH experience that I most urgently want to convey to my students and that I think may be most relevant to them, came not from my readings or my discussions but from my experience—from my having been there.

[27] Amos Oz, *How to Cure a Fanatic* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), 13–14.