

## PROGRESS REPORT

### MONUMENTS, MEMORIALS, AND THE POLITICS OF MEMORY

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#### MEMORY AND SPECTACLE: THE POLITICIZATION OF ART, AND THE AESTHETICIZATION OF POLITICS

All efforts to render politics aesthetic culminate in one thing: war.

—Walter Benjamin, 1968, p. 241

On September 11, 2001, two planes were flown into the World Trade Center in New York, causing the complete destruction of several acres of downtown property and the death of nearly 3,000 people. Was this a terrorist act aimed at human beings, at a pair of buildings, at a city, at a nation, or at a particular socioeconomic regime? How will this event be remembered? How will it be commemorated? Memorialized? Sanctified? Spectacularized? At what scale will memory reflect back on itself? In the aftermath of the attack, as the final debris was being cleared away, New York politicians, developers, architects, members of the public, and victim's families engaged in profound debates over the ways in which this now symbolic space would be handled. The ensuing (and ongoing) struggle over the future of the space reflects the age-old struggle over the memorialization of the past, and its imbrication in a deep and often unnamed politics of collective memory.

Exactly one year after the tragic occurrence in New York, the American president, George Bush, staged his own eye-catching event. On the anniversary of September 11, the Bush team of handlers set up three barges of enormous Musco lights around the base of the Statue of Liberty, and "blasted them upward to illuminate all 305 feet of America's symbol of freedom" (Bumiller, 2003, p. A1). Bush then delivered his speech about American freedom, patriotism and national resilience from Ellis Island, with the statue in the backdrop, completely illuminated by the power of a type of lighting generally reserved for use in sports stadiums or rock concerts. This type of spectacular image-making was continued months later with Bush's short flight and landing on the deck of the carrier Abraham Lincoln, as well as the staging of numerous speeches around the world. Said one ABC cameraman who covers events at the White House, "They seem to approach an

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event site like it's a TV set. They dress it up really nicely. It looks like a million bucks." And said Michael Deaver, Reagan's chief image maker in the past, "They understand they have to build a set, whether it's an aircraft carrier or the Rose Garden or the South Lawn. They understand that putting depth into the picture makes the candidate or the president look better... They understand that what's around the head is just as important as the head" (cited in Bumiller, 2003, p. A20).

The president's commemoration of the events of September 11 can thus be construed as not just a memorial speech concerning a political, terrorist act, but as an intensely political act in itself; an act building on the collective memory of the recent past, but also producing that memory's future through a highly particular form of aestheticized, spectacularized politics. In this we can see a number of processes at work: the social construction of memory and fixation of meaning through repetition; the semiotics of space, where the use of monuments (such as the Statue of Liberty) are of crucial importance; the use of commemorations as a "practice of representation that enacts and gives social substance to the discourse of collective memory" (Sherman, 1994, p. 186); the importance of technology such as lighting and film in memory's contemporary production and reproduction; and the "role of memorialization as an attempted agency of legitimization of authority and social cohesion" (Osborne, 1998, p. 432; see also Till, 1999; Foote et al., 2000; Forest and Johnson, 2002).

As Halbwachs noted several decades ago (1992) [1952], the past is social, and memory is socially acquired.<sup>2</sup> There is a deep politics to memory, and each age attempts to refashion and remake memory to serve its own contemporary purposes. Memory is sustained through the interplay between collective recollection and repetition. The repetition engaged in various commemorative events and rituals, for example, is crucial in blurring the differences between individual interpretations of events, and creating a single, highly idealized, composite image. This image then forms the generalized social framework for future recollections, and through time, individual memories tend to conform and correspond with this composite. Thus "no memory is possible outside frameworks used by people living in society to determine and retrieve their recollections" (Halbwachs, 1992, p. 43), and "images are remembered only when located in conceptual structures defined by the community at large" (Hutton, 1993, pp. 6–7). But more than this, the capacity for those remembrances to be sustained is vastly dependent on the socioeconomic power of the groups who produce and maintain them. Memory is bound up with power, and both memory, and its corollary, forgetting, are hegemonically produced and maintained, never seamlessly or completely, but formidably and powerfully nonetheless.

The "spectacular" memorial event is created in order to produce a certain kind of collective memory, generally at the scale of the city and in relation to the production of the nation. Examples from the past of spectacularizing and nation-building movements abound, and are often heightened through both technological innovations such as the multiple possibilities contained within the medium of film, and also through actual physical monuments and architectural grandiosity: "the word in stone" (Taylor, 1974).

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<sup>2</sup> He wrote, "It is in this sense that there exists a collective memory and social frameworks for memory; it is to the degree that our individual thought places itself in these frameworks and participates in this memory that it is capable of the act of recollection (Halbwachs, 1992, p. 38).

The grand spectacle or “monumental seduction” as Huyssen (2003) puts it, is frequently recoded through time, but always contains the interplay of the “fixed:” monument, stage, building, flags or lights, and the “mobile”: commemoration, ritual, march, pageant, meeting, event.

The classic case of the complete aestheticization of politics is evident in the architecture, monuments and mass annual rallies and public meetings and marches associated with Nazi Germany. In these grandiose spectacles, there was a constant concern with expressing inevitability and monumentality. Expressive lighting was also emphasized as an essential feature in imparting a pseudoreligious flavor to commemorative events.<sup>3</sup> Albert Speer’s infamous design for the future headquarters of the Third Reich in Berlin, for example, was to include a great domed assembly hall, with a holding capacity of 180,000 people, an interior diameter of 825 feet, and a height of 726 feet. If built, this structure would have dwarfed St. Peter’s cathedral in Rome. Similarly, at the Nuremberg party rally, Hitler’s architect created a dramatic series of powerful linear lights directed skyward, creating what Sir Neville Henderson called, “a cathedral of ice” (Speer, 1970, plate 11). In these plans, the scale, ornamentation, and lighting were all carefully designed to give a religious or sovereign monumentality to the “grand” leader of the glorious nation, and at the same time to point to the inevitability of empire. As Speer described one section of the domed hall:

In front of it, on a marble pedestal forty-six feet in height, perched the hall’s single sculptural feature: a gilded German eagle with a swastika in its claws. This symbol of sovereignty might be said to be the very fountainhead of Hitler’s grand boulevard. Beneath this symbol would be the podium for the Leader of the nation; from this spot he would deliver his message to the peoples of his future empire (Speer, 1970, p. 212).

Patriotism and imperialism were linked by Hitler and Speer in the formation of an aesthetics of the Third Reich’s imagined empire. Local, Germanic symbols, such as the eagle, were juxtaposed with “national” symbols of the political apparatus, such as the swastika, and formally merged in the vast, spare and awe-inspiring architecture of grand domes and boulevards. The production of public memory often relies on both official and vernacular cultural expressions in this way, with the vernacular element tied more to the local, often city scale, and the “official” or state element tied to the national scale. Patriotism is thus often central in the construction of public memory, “because such language has the capacity to mediate both vernacular loyalties to local and familiar places and official loyalties to national and imagined structures” (Bodnar, 1994, p. 76; see also Boyer, 1994; Edensor, 1997).

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<sup>3</sup> Connerton (1989, p. 41) writes, “Between the seizure of power in January 1933 and the outbreak of war in September 1939, the subjects of the Third Reich were constantly reminded of the National Socialist Party and its ideology by a series of commemorative ceremonies. The number, the sequence, and the performative structure of these festivals rapidly assumed a canonical form and they retained that form until the demise of the Third Reich. The impact of this newly invented canonic sequence pervaded all spheres of life, the festivals of the Reich being related to the feasts of the Christian calendar in much the same ways as the latter had been related to the seasonal celebrations of the pagan era. The calendrical liturgy of the National Socialist Party was regulated and total.”

*Of Monuments and Memory*

Monuments are nothing if not selective aids to memory: they encourage us to remember some things and to forget others. The process of creating monuments, especially where it is openly contested, as in Berlin, shapes public memory and collective identity (Ladd, 1997, p. 11).

In a study of the George Etienne Cartier monument in Montreal, Osborne (1998, p. 432) notes how “national history is rendered as a mythic narrative acted out on, bounded by, and bonded with, particular places.” These particular places are most often located in the central squares and intersections of cities, and aid in the establishment of memory, by materializing history and linking familiar landscapes, times, and selective memories in an inextricable embrace. The *lieux de mémoire* (places of memory) described by historian Pierre Nora (1989), are precisely these types of conflated spaces, where geography, history, identity and memory run into and through each other and are captured (and put to work) in specific sites. The linking of these local, urban sites with the national scale aids in the celebration and ongoing legitimization of the state, through the conflation of collectively perceived and remembered places, with the mythic narratives of national destiny.<sup>4</sup>

In his discussion of the Cartier monument, for example, Osborne documents how the original statue honoring Cartier, a French-Canadian who supported Canadian Confederation and promoted better Anglo-French relations, was specifically positioned in a section of Montreal between the English and French speaking populations. The statue and surrounding “refuge” was deliberately situated in the city to reflect the possibility of bridging the two antagonistic factions, while at the same time, the monument itself was designed to reflect the national aims of unification and harmony. “Designed by a Canadian sculptor, G.-W. Hill, the iconography of the proposed monument was a blatant exercise in mythologizing Cartier’s heroic role in the national metanarrative, at the same time as it refers to a putative melding of founding nations and imperial connections” (Osborne, 1998, p. 440). Thus the local politics of Montreal and the national ambitions for Canada were blended and cross-referenced through both the idealized image of the statue itself, as well as the blatant siting of the monument *in between* the francophone and anglophone populations.

With the passage of time, however, the original meanings and intents of the monument were reworked, and its national ambitions altered. The monument became a central rallying point for French protests against the Constitutional Agreement signed by Prime Minister Trudeau in 1982, and it was also the site of French protests (against appeasement and reconciliation related to Quebec) on Saint-Jean-Baptiste Day, June 24th. In recent years it has served as a rallying ground for a number of local struggles against multinational corporate inroads, such as the establishment of a MacDonald’s in the neighborhood, and as a place for alternative music and public gatherings (Osborne, 1998, p. 450–51). Thus while the monument continues to reflect and produce memories associated with

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<sup>4</sup>For a good summary of the large literature on “place and the sacralization of national imaginaries,” see Till, 2003.

the linkages between local, national and international scales, there is a shifting choreography of ceremonies which take place there, and which inexorably rework the types of linkages and meanings of the memorial through time.<sup>5</sup> As the spectacles change, the urban collective memory associated with the monument also changes, and the monument becomes something of a palimpsest, reflecting both “present pasts” (Huysen, 2003) and past presents.

Monuments constructed in the past can become static through time, then get re-energized as they are used ceremonially, as part of a spectacle or commemorative event. They frequently move from a passive space into a dynamic one, then back again. “Here, the public may experience mythic history through orchestrated commemorations and controlled spectacle” (Osborne, 1998, p. 435). How this orchestration of a mythic history plays out is reflective of the particular configuration of power relations operative in society at a specific moment in time. These types of relations are constantly shifting, following the processual nature of hegemony, which is never complete, or predictable, but always (re)constituted in particular contexts. Contemporary cultural geography is thus involved not in documenting and describing the “traces” left in the landscape or the contemporary nexus of economic and political forces operating to produce those traces, but rather engages in an archaeology of power that is polymorphous and protean, and must be researched in detail using a great variety of sources.

Crampton’s (2001) investigation of the Voortrekker Monument in Pretoria documents a particular configuration of power that converged to simultaneously produce an inauguration of a memorial space, the formation of a collective (Afrikaner) memory, and the initiation of an apartheid regime. In his examination of the monument and its immediate and long-term effects he locates the memorial and its commemorative festival in a rich, well-documented web of relations and processes, including those of agricultural change, rural-urban migration, proletarianization, the rise of a class of organic Afrikaner intellectuals, and structural economic crisis, as well as the more obvious issues of racial formation and nation-building. As with Osborne’s piece, Crampton describes the actual siting of the monument a few miles outside of Pretoria as significant, “because Voortrekker history was seen to culminate at Pretoria and because it is directly visible from Pretoria’s parliament buildings” (2001, p. 226).<sup>6</sup> The specific location in a specific city was crucial for the national enframing of Afrikaner legitimacy, and helped to produce, authenticate, and bind local images and memories of the Voortrekker “trek” to the larger claims to governmental control by whatever means necessary, including the segregative system of apartheid.

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<sup>5</sup> Agnew, 1998, describes a similar reworking of the popular meanings associated with the Vittorio Emanuele II Monument in Rome. Originally designed to evoke connections between imperial Rome as an eternal city connected to the transcendent empire of modern Italy, the monument failed to convince the populace, and, over time, reflected the “ideological incoherence, rather than popularity, of nationalistic agendas” (Till, 2003, p. 292). See also Atkinson and Cosgrove, 1998.

<sup>6</sup> The Voortrekker past is rendered heroic and suitable as a strong basis for a national narrative of Afrikaner legitimacy and authority largely as a result of its self-perceived “pioneering and civilizing” journey into the interior of South Africa, which culminated in Pretoria. The city of Pretoria thus represents the successful “conclusion” of this taming mission, and hence Afrikaner’s rights to the lands and peoples it pacified and civilized along the way.

A key moment in the production of nationalist sentiments and the seeds of collective memory formation was both the 1938 centenary celebrations (of the Trek), as well as the monument's inauguration in 1949. The inauguration festival aided in the formation of an imagined community, one that could be written into national myth as both modern, in a technological/organizational sense, and traditional, in the sense of a close, caring, affinity group writ large.<sup>7</sup> Crampton (2001, p. 235) writes of the importance of this type of participation:

In imagined communities, Benedict Anderson (1991) discusses the important role of pilgrimages in developing "national" communities and a national consciousness. Early pilgrimages inserted otherwise unrelated localities into a system of meaning, and those participating began to imagine themselves as forming some kind of (if not at this stage "national") community. Not only did these pilgrimages have the effect of imagining a community, they also mapped that community with a particular geographical scope.

Although the construction and inauguration of the monument helped to solidify and codify a new form of social dislocation based on ethnic groupings, Crampton is careful to note that there was "nothing natural about such ethnic groupings: the social dislocations could have been articulated in other terms" (p. 242). This particular form of segregation and domination came into play because of the convergence of specific historical and geographical forces in operation at a particular moment, including, for example the "poor white problem" of the Afrikaner proletariat of the 1930s. It was in confluence with these processes and through events such as the construction of the monument and its associated memories, that apartheid as a particular kind of "truth claim" became produced and spatially sedimented as the only possible mode of identification for the new Afrikaner regime.

In order to move beyond the rigid boundaries of systems based on claims to authenticity and moral righteousness such as those which upheld apartheid for so many years, Crampton argues we must move to a system of representation that resists closure and fixity, and encourages ambiguity. As an example of the type of remembrance not grounded in some form of discourse of truth or claim to authenticity, he offers the contemporary "counter monument movement" in Germany (see also Young, 1992). In this example of "the radicalizing of monuments and their relationship to public memory," (Crampton, p. 243) monuments are produced in which visitors are expected to participate actively in the construction of the thing itself, as well as the festivities surrounding its commemoration. They thus become active producers of plural pasts and multiple memories, rather than consumers for whom a single, collective memory is fashioned "in stone."

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<sup>7</sup> With respect to the community's self-perceived modernity, Crampton notes how the *Pretoria News* gushed favorably about the stellar crowd-control in evidence at the festival, which manifested the incredible organizational capabilities of Afrikaners. One reporter wrote, "A primary indicator of the nation's modernity is the sheer scale of the festival and newspaper coverage dazzles the reader with festival facts and figures regarding its enormous size, popularity, and the planning involved in organizing such an undertaking" (cited in Crampton, 2001, p. 236).

*Transforming the Image*

What is clearly of interest to many contemporary urbanists and cultural geographers and historians is not just the original constructions of these innumerable commemorative sites of collective memory, but the contemporary struggles over the *transformation* of these old markers and their associated meanings: the rewriting of history and memory and the translations of the past (e.g. Gillis, 1994; Foote, 1997; Dryer, 2000). As historians of memory like to point out, memory is a profoundly unstable category of analysis (e.g. Sherman, 1994, p. 206), and an archaeology of memory and its physical manifestations in the landscape, can never seek to simply “show” the reflexive workings of collective memory in a given epoch. Rather, the traces of memory left in the landscape point to the political, cultural and economic forces which cohered at that moment to produce a vision of the way a (dominant) society perceived and represented itself to itself. As Hutton (1993, p. 10) notes, “Places of memory, viewed as wellsprings by the memorialists of the 19th century, are regarded by historians today as mirrors in which people once tried to see themselves (See also Young, 1993; and Sturken, 1997).

In the Soviet Union during the Cold War, for example, there was a reliance on a grandness of scale and on spare, abstract and highly symbolic forms. The use of towering ideal-type figures were emblematic of the “new man” and new woman” who were valiantly engaged in creating the perfect world of communism. This style represents the ultimate politicization of art, where every detail of artistic design is abstracted and generalized in order to better represent a particular political ideology. In addition to these ubiquitous “laborers,” recurring motifs in Soviet monuments and memorials included the USSR victory over Nazism, and the cult of the “charismatic communist leaders”: Marx, Lenin and Stalin.

In a recent article on the transformation of public monuments from the Soviet era, Forest and Johnson (2002) analyze the profound struggles over these places of memory that have occurred during the past decade. With the break-up of the U.S.S.R. and the end of the Cold War, the politics of memory has become a vicious battleground in the former satellite states, and in Russia, as the political elite in each region attempt to wrest control over the symbols and meanings of “the nation” at this critical historical juncture. Forest and Johnson (2002, p. 525) argue that during moments of major political disjuncture, when national and individual identity is challenged in fundamental ways, the politics of memory rises to the fore, and monuments, in particular, become sites of great conflict. As such, they believe that “the analysis of *lieux de mémoire* (places of memory) provides an ideal way to trace underlying continuities and discontinuities in national identity politics.”

A good example of the ways in which places of memory can reveal a changing conception of the nation, they claim, is through an examination of the fate of existing monuments. During periods of historical disjuncture, monuments often suffer one of three possible fates: co-optation and glorification, disavowal, or contestation. In Moscow, during the period from 1991 to 1999, the four monuments which they examine manifest all three of these “fates,” as rival political elites grasped every opportunity to impose a particular vision of Russian national identity on the city (Forest and Johnson, 2002, p. 525). In their study, as with the Voortrekker Monument and the Cartier Monument, the location of these monuments in particular symbolic, urban sites is crucial, reflecting the

ongoing dialectic between local, city-based meanings and memories, and those associated with collective memory formation at the scale of the nation.<sup>8</sup> They write, “The most intense and rapid change usually happens in a state’s core cities, and especially the capital. Elite-driven changes in the symbolic landscape will, therefore, tend to occur earlier and more radically in core cities, and less or occasionally not at all in smaller towns and rural areas far from the center” (p. 527).

Perhaps the most contested monument of the post-Soviet period is the Lenin Mausoleum on Red Square. With its placement in the symbolic center of the capital city, and with Lenin’s body, the “single most sacred artifact for Russian Communists” (p. 532), interred within, this monument represents the apotheosis of symbolic capital for Russian political elites. Forest and Johnson show how the potential transformation of this monument remains a bitter struggle between those for whom the mummified body of Lenin serves as an embarrassing reminder of a failed Soviet past, and those for whom the body and the mausoleum are also strongly associated with the Russian Revolution and certain positive aspects of communist rule, and are revered with a near-religious fervor. As different elites have come to power, they have sought to wrest control over this, and other Lenin-inspired sites in the name of a new Russia. But the collective memory of the tomb and what it represents is gravid with contrasting and conflicting feelings. In this case, elite disavowal is insufficient to wipe the slate clean and begin again. The past is problematic, but it remains.

One of the many felicitous partnerships between state desires and the logic of the market occurs in the erasure of these types of divisive and “problematic” monuments and their associated memories, and/or in the production of new ones. In an historical study, Sherman (1994, p. 186) examines the rise of commemoration in France as a “practice of representation that enacts and gives social substance to the discourse of collective memory.” This memory is actively produced in the context of both market and state-building processes. In the commemoration of the 1870 war (with Prussia), for example, an organization called “Souvenir français” arose that was dedicated to preserving French war graves and memorials that were “lost” in the lost provinces of Alsace. This organization arose in a period of heightened French nationalism of the 1880s and 1890s, and served as a constant reminder of Franco-Prussian conflict and French national identity. French monuments of this period were dedicated to the dead of a *particular town*, and aided in the evocation of a national community unified in mourning. At the same time, the production of these markers and monuments became a lucrative industry, which provided a commercial justification for their continued deployment around the nation.

An even clearer example of the selective re-imagining of place through the marketplace is given in Belanger’s (2002) study of the razing of the Montreal Forum and construction of the new Molson Centre. The Forum had existed for 75 years, and through that time had emerged as the heart and soul of Montreal and of Quebec. It was “a vital public

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<sup>8</sup> In a wide-ranging examination of public monuments from 1870 to 1997, the art historian, Michalski (1998), also makes note of the importance of the urban setting for nationalist monuments of the 20th century. In Chapter 5, on the monuments of the Nazi era in Germany, he describes the manner in which Third Reich leaders relocated statues from rural to urban environments, at least partly in the effort to employ public monuments as “visual symbols of power” (p. 107), and also as self-conscious methods of mass “education.”



space,” (p. 71) that had hosted political rallies and concerts, as well as the beloved hockey team, the Montreal Canadiens. In discussing the popular sentiment associated with the Forum, Belanger showed how these feelings had become deeply embedded in a collective memory of both the city and the province. He wrote (2002, p. 72): “Certain places and buildings, like the old Forum, have grown to express and embody popular memories of the city through a complex interplay of production, consumption, re-construction, interpretation, and diverse tactics of remembrance.”<sup>9</sup>

In 1996, however, the Forum was projected for demolition, with the Canadiens scheduled to move to a new high-tech arena completely financed by private capital and inserted into the Windsor block, a rapidly gentrifying sector of downtown Montreal. When the move to the new Molson Centre was proposed, there was a public outcry, which led to a strong corporate marketing campaign to persuade Montrealers that the popular traditions associated with the Forum could be effectively transported and transplanted to the new venue. In addition to the insistence that the memories of the Forum could “survive” the move, Molson also introduced the familiar corporate refrain of “the necessity of progress and the importance of companies such as Molson to Montreal’s civic and cultural life” (p. 75).

Belanger locates this kind of market-based effort to rework memory in a “political economy of urban collective memory.” Thus, in addition to the desires of political elites to earn symbolic capital by controlling the meanings associated with old monuments, a capitalist logic may also pervade the decisions concerning their disavowal or co-optation. In cases such as the Forum in Montreal, where certain memories can be exploited for profit, while others tend to retard capitalist “progress,” corporate discourse operates to encourage the retention of the former, while actively attempting to obliterate the latter.

In these processes of promotion and re-definition, local history and the local past have been made to sell the projects initiated by investors and promoters. Interestingly, these new dynamics require that urban centers pull their cultural history in contradictory directions: on the one hand they require that identity and history be valorized, on the other hand they require that selective aspects of the past are devalued. Typically, the past that is being marketed and sold is selectively embellished, involving a re-construction of chosen historical fragments and to use Connerton’s (1989) phrase an “organized forgetting” of other fragments. On such occasions, traditions, heritage, and the past become “things” that enterprise and government often exploit: they have become products (Belanger, 2002, p. 73; see also Robins and Conner, 1994, p. 40; Boyer, 1994).

Despite the seeming inevitability of a seamless hegemony, as the state and the market form strategic alliances in an attempt to control the formation and transformation of collective memory, this suturing cannot be total. The hegemony over memory is never complete, as memory remains multiple and mobile, with fragments that are not subsumable in a holistic logic. Although faux memories, produced through state and corporate

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<sup>9</sup> For similar discussions of the role of specific urban public buildings and key public sites in the formation of collective memory, see also Boyer, 1994; Hayden, 1995.

logics, might offer a warm sense of continuity and universality, falsely negating historical conflict; and “entertainment spectacle sites” may seem to obliterate former sites of public memory, such as the Montreal Forum, these faux monuments of entertainment and entrainment may also contain the seeds of difference and of resistance to dominant hegemonomies (Belanger, 2002). In understanding these seeds of difference and various forms of resistance, however, it is necessary to analyze the reception of the spectacle (as well as “counter-monument” movements), in addition to examining the context of its production.

### *Stonewalling Normative Memory Production*

Collective projects of resistance to normative memory production include those which refuse to accede to the scripting of history in the format of the dominant power. These are memories that evade the regulatory practices of the state and/or the market, with individuals and groups either forming “counter” practices associated with dominant monuments, or creating their own places of mourning or celebration. In these landscapes of “minority” memory, those groups that have been rendered invisible in the landscape, or who have been discredited or marginalized in mainstream memorialization, oppose normative readings and/or create sites which speak to a different interpretation of historical events.

Two examples of this form of resistance via public, counter-hegemonic monuments, are analyzed by Burk (2003), who investigated the construction of two recent monuments pertaining to violence against women. In her article, Burk examined the struggle over the right to public space that was engendered by each monument. The first memorialized the murder of 14 women and wounding of 13 others on December 6th, 1989, in Montreal. On that day, a male gunman entered a university building, separated the women from the men, and shot 27 women in a period of 20 minutes. In an effort to foreground the women’s lives and names, rather than the killer, who was rapidly becoming the center of attention in the media, a group of women in Vancouver, B.C. initiated plans to create a national monument which “named the monument and left his name unspoken” (Burk, 2003, p. 320). The women named the proposed monument, *Marker of Change*.

Initially the monument received widespread support, but within a short period of time, the support turned to vilification and even bomb threats. Why the change? Burk delineates how the proposed inscription on the monument threatened established hierarchies of domination through the revelation of the “public secret” of male violence against women. The inscription reads: “To women, murdered by men/Women of all ages, all colours, all creeds, all races. We, their sisters and brothers, remember, and work for a better world.” This inscription, as Burk (p. 321) noted, “committed the taboo, in Clifford Geertz’s memorable phrase, of “telling the truth in a public place,” and hence was subject to widespread animosity. In addition, the proposed location of the monument, in Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside (DES), was opposed by activists and residents of the neighborhood, who felt that the local disappearances of numerous impoverished women, many of whom were First Nations/Aboriginal women, had gone unnoticed by police and media alike. Without a corresponding interest in the local women, local activists felt that the monument was inappropriately positioned in their neighborhood.

With time, and a massive educational campaign, and with the instigation of police activity in solving the crimes against local women, public sentiment began to shift, and the money and support for *Marker of Change* resumed. After this monument was

installed, and activism and awareness concerning the missing women was heightened, a second monument memorializing the disappearance of the local women was also erected, in CRAB park. This memorial was inscribed: "THE HEART/ In honour of the spirit of the people murdered in the downtown eastside Many were women And Many were native/aboriginal women. Many of these cases remain unsolved. All my relations/ HAS ITS OWN MEMORY" (Burk, 2003, p. 327).

Burk argues that these two monuments illuminate a number of crucial issues concerning memory formation in public space. The most obvious is the strong gendering of space, wherein male dominance in the social sphere is reflected in the constitution of monuments and in commemoration rituals (see also Nash, 1994; Sharp, 1996; Raivo, 1998; Till, 1999). This type of sedimentation of patriarchy in place, through the absence of women in the landscape, works to render events such as the actual, literal disappearance of the women in the Downtown Eastside, as insignificant—unworthy of public alarm or action. When both patriarchy and spatial absence were challenged, and conspicuously challenged in this case, with a monument that named male violence against women, and another which named the missing women and foregrounded their ongoing public marginalization as women and native, the normative structures of memory production in Canada were deeply disrupted.

The other key issue which these monuments call to attention is scale. The location of *Marker of Change* in Vancouver, which is neither the site of the Massacre, nor the national capital, is significant. The monument's physical presence in an active, urban neighborhood, made the abstract ideals of struggle against male violence seem tangible and permanent. According to Burk (p. 327), "this illuminates an interesting tension about public space between imagined, discursive and physical worlds. It was the permanence, visibility, and specificity in physical public space that so disrupted and disturbed the monument's detractors, and was so fiercely insisted upon by its proponents." Equally important, the monument's location outside of Montreal made the issue of violence against women generalizable and systemic, underscoring women's key refrain that the killings were not isolated events by a "madman," but were part of a much larger pattern of hate crimes against women.

The issue of absence and presence is also an important theme in Barton's examination of memory, architecture and race. Drawing on Ralph Ellison's novel, *Invisible Man*, Barton (2001) argues that black culture is largely invisible in the public eye because of where it resides. American history is the history of dual racial landscapes, and in order to interpret and comprehend black culture of the 20th century, it is necessary to understand the spatialization of memory (p. 1). Barton, along with Wilson (2001) and Weisser (2001) all describe a major impact of legalized segregation as one of removing the black population from the public gaze and thus effectively writing black history and black culture out of normative forms of memory production. In cross-disciplinary conferences and discussions such as are found in Barton's book, *Sites of Memory*, however, this invisibility is contested—through documentation, art, storytelling, architecture, and critical analysis. Weisser (2001, p. 106) asks, "can lack of place, or absence, be marked?" The answer lies in the question itself.

In another work on presence and absence, with a focus on the positioning of civil rights memorials, Dwyer (2002) investigates the political debates surrounding memorial landscapes in the South. He shows that while "the historic invisibility of African

Americans on the memorial landscape” (p. 33) is being redressed, contemporary monuments and memorials remain ambiguous and uneven. And while the absolute number of markers to the civil rights movement has increased considerably in the past two decades, the location of the monuments and plaques is rarely in the court house or at city hall or in any of the traditional spaces of civic commemoration, but rather in formerly segregated and often rapidly declining African-American neighborhoods. Further, because the memorials cost money to produce and maintain, those groups, particularly state agents, with financial means and political connections, have a far greater ability to influence the direction of the memorials and their associated histories. Dwyer (2002, p. 32) writes of these memorial sites:

They are appropriated by groups across the spectrum of racial politics as sites for political rallies and protests. As major attractions in the growing heritage tourism industry, the history represented at these sites has been tailored to appeal to a mass audience. Their reliance upon state funding and corporate largess makes them further susceptible to influence. Far from neutral, consensual renderings of the “past,” civil rights memorials are at once the product of and conveyance for contemporary politics associated with race, economic development, and social memory” (see also Savage, 1994; Foote, 1997).

Thus, even with these memorials to social movements, whose major purpose and challenge was the disruption of dominant hegemonies of race and space, the ability to continue this disruption through collective memory production remains fragmented and partial. As with Burk’s study of the monument to women’s suffering from male violence, both the financial means of producing the memorial, and a major part of its public reception via the tourist industry or the media, continue to reflect dominant systems of power and control. Nevertheless, progress has been made, and counter-hegemonic agendas are finding “a place” in many contemporary debates. As Dwyer points out, the civil rights movement has, through time, “been able to claim a place in public memorial space” (p. 48), and this represents a major difference from an earlier public landscape in which black culture and history were rendered completely invisible.

Resisting and/or transforming dominant forms of memory production in the landscape is somewhat easier when the city in which these forms are located is in a state of upheaval and flux. Both Till (1999) and Stratigakos (2002), among many others, have examined recent and ongoing contestations over monument and memory in the city of Berlin. Berlin, of course, is the most beloved city for memory historians because it represents the ultimate urban palimpsest, a “city text frantically being written and rewritten” (Huysen, 2003, p. 49). As Berlin engages with the widespread memorial obsession of the past decade, it must work through not just how to mark its presence as a newly rebuilding capital city, but also negotiate how to mark the many absences wrought by its Nazi and communist past.

In an article on the Neue Wache monument in Berlin, for example, Till (1999) outlines how resistance to the redesigned memorial in 1993 led to small, but significant changes in the interpretation of history and in the ongoing production of national (collective) memory in Germany. One object of contention in the redesign was the statue by Käthe Kollwitz (an enlarged copy of a 1937 piece) entitled, “Mourning mother with dead son.”

In addition to the religious symbolism of a mother holding a dead son, which many saw as a version of the Christian icon, the Pieta, the other objection to the statue opposed the “gender-biased depiction of this “universal” mother” (Till, 1999, p. 270). The idealization of motherhood framed women in terms of reproduction, and elided their central roles in the war, and afterwards, as citizens, warriors, workers, oppressors and victims. “The Pieta figure closed out the public memory not only of Jews, but of women who were sent to the gas chambers or who died in other ways during the war. Women, argued [the historian] Koselleck, were not victims simply because they lost their sons—“the reality was far worse”” (p. 271).

Although these objections did not lead to concrete changes in the memorial, a third set of objections, based on the commemoration of the dead, did have an impact. In addition to the Kollwitz statue, the redesigned memorial also contained a plaque to the right of the entrance which read: “‘The new guardhouse is the place of memory and remembrance of the victims of war and tyranny,’ a central German memorial dedicated to those who died during ‘the two World Wars and the two dictatorships.’” (p. 262). This plaque seemed to call for a remembrance of the dead that was universal and all-forgiving, one which “blurred the social boundaries between those persecuted and murdered under the Third Reich on the one hand and the SS officers and high-ranking Nazi functionaries on the other” (p. 272). This attempt “to represent all Germans as victims of war” was roundly criticized as part of an effort by the political elite, such as those in the Kohl administration, to “master” the past, control its meanings, and reframe collective memory in a manner beneficial to the state. As a result of collective resistance to this blatant form of memory production, another plaque was added on the entrance to the interior room. This plaque named the different groups of people who should be honored by memory, providing the key distinctions between perpetrators and victims that the earlier monument elided.

The question of Berlin’s voids and redesignations is also addressed by Huyssen (2003, p. 66), who reflects on both the physical voids in the architectural fabric of the city—those structures of presence and absence, memory and forgetting which haunt the city—but also “the historical void left by the Nazi destruction of Berlin’s thriving Jewish life and culture.” The most brilliant “monument” to these voids takes the shape of the new Jewish Museum, designed by the architect, Daniel Libeskind. The zigzag museum structure, which he calls “Between the Lines,” is a model of the type of ambiguity and plurality called for in the counter-monument movement, yet it is also replete with significance. The longitudinal axis of the building, which contains an empty space slicing through the zigzag structure at each intersection, and extending from the top to the bottom of the building, is an abyss that Libeskind calls, “the void.” This space, as Huyssen (p. 68–69) describes it, is both literal and conceptual.

And clearly, it signifies: as a *void* it signifies absence, the absence of Berlin’s Jews, most of whom perished in the Holocaust. As a *fractured* void it signifies history, a broken history without continuity: the history of Jews in Germany, of German Jews, and therefore also the history of Germany itself... But it also fore-closes the opposite view that sees the Holocaust as the inevitable telos of German history. Jewish life in Germany has been fundamentally altered by the Holocaust, but it has not stopped. The void thus becomes a space nurturing memory and

reflection for Jews and for Germans... His building itself writes the discontinuous narrative that is Berlin, inscribes it physically into the very movement of the museum visitor, and yet opens a space for remembrance to be articulated and read between the lines.

The Libeskind museum is a monument to memory, one that is open to multiple significations and to the changes wrought by time, but which nevertheless remains relentless in its profound, commemorative message. The void, and the building itself, insist on remembrance. Exactly how memory takes shape is unimportant beside the fundamental, core issue of remembrance itself. In this mission, it is a type of “counter-monument” to the nameless, soul-less buildings of global corporate architecture, many of which are rapidly filling in the other “voids” of Berlin. These latter voids were formerly the spaces of the Wall, of Speer’s wrecked neighborhoods, and of those sectors of the city obliterated in the bombing raids of WWII. The corporate-inspired buildings which are now being constructed to fill these other voids are the buildings of forgetting and of anti-memory. They are the architecture of a future without a past.

## CONCLUSION

Historical memory today is not what it used to be.

—Andreas Huyssen, 2003, p. 1

What is the relationship between history and memory, and how does place, or geography, play into it? The kinds of memory excavations that Proust initiated through taste,<sup>10</sup> geographers do through place and place-making. Writers and historians often have a strong abstract awareness of the interconnections of space, time, memory and recollection, but geographers tend to pursue doggedly, and in far greater detail, the precise ways in which memory becomes embedded in the actual, physical landscape, through the daily habits and movements associated with specific buildings, walkways, monuments, and vistas.<sup>11</sup> That this embedding is highly fraught, generally bound up with the processes of nation-building, social control, urban politics and hegemonic formation, becomes immediately evident with the initiation of geographical research in this genre.

In this progress report I focused on the politics of memory surrounding monuments and memorials, emphasizing, in particular, the relationship between urban and national scales, as well as the role of commemoration in the attempt to suture these scales together. This emphasis, however, begs a more fundamental question, which is why there is a

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<sup>10</sup>Proust (1992) begins the first volume of the 13 volume collection, *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu* (Remembrance of Times Past) with the consumption of a madeleine cookie, which immediately transports the narrator back to the scene of his childhood.

<sup>11</sup>The historian, Richard White (1998), is a notable exception here, as his book, *Remembering Anahagan*, is a tour de force of memory and history, with place as its central axis. For a further discussion of the use of abstract spatial metaphors and the more general fetishization of geographical concepts in most historical memory work, however, see Johnson, 1999, and Till, 2003.

necessity for public memorialization in the first place. And why do the construction of these monuments and associated commemorative festivities now take place almost exclusively in cities, especially capital cities?

The memorialization of the dead with public monuments of some kind now seems natural and inevitable—an eternal practice. How could we, the living, *not* commemorate our dead in this manner? According to Nora (1989), however, this form of public memorialization is largely a 19th century invention. Although there have always been individual gestures to personal honor, the large-scale evocation of human worth, dignity, and sacrifice, and the connection of these emotions to the spaces of city, nation and empire, came together only in the last 150 years. These linkages rose alongside the imperial ambitions of nation-states, who were then grappling with identity formation on new scales, requiring national narratives of loyalty, timelessness, and belonging beyond the individual or local region. The relationship between “monumental,” culturally-inscribed ambitions and national narratives is well documented, with many scholars showing the links between the rise of imperialism, new relations to time and space, new forms of class consciousness and class struggle, and new constructions of nation and nationalism in the period of high modernity (See, for example, Harvey, 1985; Pred, 1995).

The shifting experiences of everyday life which characterized modernity were a major shock of the 19th century, leading to changes in almost every venue of social and political life. What then, is the trajectory for memory and politics as we move into the 21st century? Are new forms of time-space compression in late capitalism entailing new imaginations and memories of space? Which space? Which scale? What are the effects of globalization and postmodernization on the production of memory and memorialization? What types of monuments, memorials and spectacles will arise in the coming decades?

Huyssen (2003, p. 4) writes that “the form in which we think of the past is increasingly memory without borders rather than national history within borders.” Thus globalization has altered our memories and our imagined communities, expanding our knowledge and our interests beyond the national scale. “In certain ways, then, our contemporary obsessions with memory in the present may well be an indication that our ways of thinking and living temporality itself are undergoing a significant shift.” If this is so, then is the nation the only scale that will soon be subsumed to the supranational, or will the city also lose out in this paradigmatic rescaling of memory?

Even now, over the past several decades, why has the city remained so vitally important in commemorative events, in the formation of the spectacle, and in the ongoing performance of the nation? Is it because the nation is not a “natural” scale of affiliation? Is it because imperialism is clearly economically and politically irrational, and the local or “city”-scale monuments and commemorations are necessity to harness the hearts (and minds) of individuals and groups? Or are cities, particularly capital cities, potential sites of resistance and conflagration, self-confidently autonomous, often politically “left,” and generally insistent on democratic accountability and the equitable distribution of resources? Are cities, in other words, problematic sites that must be constantly appeased and coopted by the political elite and the bourgeoisie?<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>See, for example, Harvey’s discussion of Paris, in “Monument and myth: The building of the basilica of the Sacred Heart” (Harvey, 1985).

Following the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center, the conflation of the city (New York) with America was instantaneous.<sup>13</sup> What eventually happens with respect to the site of this attack will speak volumes about the relationship between the city, the nation and the globe in the contemporary era. Although generally aimed at scales larger than the city at the time of their commemoration, I believe that large-scale public monuments and buildings tend to “return” to the city through time. The life cycle of monuments is one of movement through scales of memory, even as the stone itself remains in place.

The architectural plan chosen for the World Trade Center site was designed by the studio of Daniel Libeskind, the same firm which designed the Jewish Museum in Berlin. Entitled *Memory Foundations*, the plan is composed of an office tower of 1,776 feet (marking the U.S. year of independence), and a number of smaller office towers, retail buildings, cultural centers and a memorial park. The final design will not include any reference to the tremendous struggle over the question of exactly how the memorial should harness the memory of those who died when the Twin Towers collapsed, especially with respect to the weighting of the loss of life versus the “necessity” to maintain the space as a site of capital accumulation. In this sense, the original discursive construction and struggle over the memorial is generally lost. Nevertheless, Libeskind’s brilliant articulation of memory and forgetting, presence and absence in the Jewish Museum in Berlin, bodes well for an open-ended, creative and profound space; a space where the politics of memory production can flourish in a counter-hegemonic vein, while at the same time following the inexorable imperative: to remember.

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<sup>13</sup>This conflation is perhaps best captured by the phrase, “We are all New Yorkers now” which was heard throughout the country following September 11, 2001.



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