

THE MONUMENT

INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter considered issues of representation and the gendering of space. This chapter investigates the role of the monument, whether statue, memorial, or public sculpture, in maintaining the ‘order’ of western, industrialised societies.¹

Monuments are produced within a dominant framework of values, as elements in the construction of a national history, just as such buildings as the Sydney Opera House contribute to a national cultural identity; they suppose at least a partial consensus of values, without which their narrative could not be recognized, although individual monuments may not retain their currency as particular figures fade in public memories, and individual buildings may be disliked. As a general category of cultural objects, however, monuments are familiar in the spaces of most cities, standing for a stability which conceals the internal contradictions of society and survives the day-to-day fluctuations of history. The majority in society is persuaded, by monuments amongst other civil institutions, to accept these contradictions, the monument becoming a device of social control less brutish and costly than armed force.

The use of culture as a means of preserving social order is stated as a general characteristic of bourgeois society in Herbert Marcuse’s formulation of the ‘affirmative character of culture’; it displaces value into an aesthetic domain, setting up a duality of art and life, allowing the impact of power or money on everyday life to be unquestioned, or at least less questioned. Whilst nineteenth-century monuments convey messages of empire and patriarchy, contemporary public art may be no less ideological in its content, regardless of its subject-matter. But are there cases of public sculpture which subvert the conventions of the monument, for example by a democratisation which celebrates ‘ordinary’ people, or by an inversion of its form, constituting a category of ‘anti-monuments’?

ART IN THE STREETS

When contemporary art is sited in the street, two kinds of space collide: one is, as it were, set up by the ‘autonomous’ artwork around itself as an extension of art-space, which, like the modern gallery interior, is ‘value free’; it sits comfortably within the conceptual spaces of city planning (‘representations of space’ in Lefebvre’s terms) and equally value-free spaces of modernist architecture, so that there is a more or less easy relation of art to the design of the physical site. The other is a more informal and mutable kind of public space, the space around the bodies of city dwellers, termed by Lefebvre ‘representational spaces’; this is always replete with values, personal associations, appropriations, exclusions and invitations, and the shared and disputed issues of the public realm, a set of overlaying spaces ‘disordered’ by users, and as such a psychological rather than physical space, which cannot be defined by map co-ordinates. The two spaces suggest different roles for ‘public art’: either public space creates wider access to the privileged aesthetic domain, but requires a level of cultural education if art is to be ‘appreciated’, just as the statue requires a recognition of its subject or type, recruiting more people to its liberal value-structure; or art, along with street theatre, street music and carnival, is a form of street life, a means to articulate the implicit values of a city when its users occupy the place of determining what the city is (Zukin, 1996:43).

The first scenario, in which art in public spaces has an ideological aspect even when, as with abstract sculpture, it is presented as a purely aesthetic entity, its subject-matter the formal relations of shapes and volumes, sets public art within a history of the monument; it follows precedents in the commissioning of public sculpture between the 1870s and the 1920s,² which produced the statues and portrait busts which are now almost overlooked in the streets, squares and parks of most towns in Europe and the Americas, the allegorical figures adorning public buildings, triumphal archways and war memorials. The second has few permanent models, because it produces social processes rather than objects; one case might be the festivals organised by David for the Jacobins, another the agit-prop trains which ran the length of Russia after the Bolshevik revolution. Festivals were organised in Russia, too, sometimes including the unveiling of monuments; P.M. Kerzhentsev wrote, in 1918: ‘art is breaking out of walls onto the streets’ (cited in Tolstoy, Bibikova and Cooke, 1990:53), and Nicolai



FIGURE 18 These tourists are looking at a bronze Roman Emperor, but why? Not all monuments retain a currency of meaning, some being subsumed in the heritage fabric

Kolli's sculpture of the red wedge splitting a white block (a temporary work) was erected in Revolution Square for the first anniversary of the revolution.³

THE MONUMENT AND NATIONAL IDENTITY

Monuments stand in a complex relation to time: they state a past or its imitation, but are erected to impress contemporary publics with the relation to history of those who hold power and the durability of that relation expressed in stone or bronze. One past out of many possible constructions is represented as *the* past, just as one concept of the city is represented as a dominant concept in its planning, as though history might be consistent whilst everything else, like our own lives, is mutable and temporary. This elevation to a realm of calmness and continuity is incidentally reflected in a description in *The Monument Guide* of an equestrian statue of *William III*, made by John Cheere in 1757 and sited in Petersfield as 'above the hustle of the market square' (Darke, 1991:80), and in its inscription:

WHEN THE STATE WAS TOTTERING HE HELD IT FIRM

The equestrian pose, plinth and material, separate this king, in the constancy of a history in which the subject people are not intended to speak, from the noise and smells of the market; but resistance is never impossible and the statue lost its gilding when it was tarred and feathered during an election campaign. Darke continues: 'it has been called "ridiculous", but also

"magnificent, heroic"; its counterpart, a bronze by Michael Rysbrack in Bristol, is without doubt a masterpiece' (Darde, 1991: 80).

The commonality, beyond that both are sited in public spaces, between public art and the monument is that both define and make visible the values of the public realm, and do so in a way which is far from neutral, never simply decorative. If the visual languages used seem diverse, the underlying model of intention may still have similarities: a mediation of history from the position of power is embodied in the monument, whilst the commissioning of public art is no less affirmative of given values or tastes, often dependent on state support, an issue taken further in the next chapter. John Willett, in his essay *Back to the Dream City*, writes of a continuity from the murals of the Nazarenes and Puvis de Chavannes, and the proposals of Watts and Manet to decorate the interiors of railway stations, to Tatlin's Monument for the Third International; these cases are, he maintains, steps in a development of the monument to fit modern secular democracy, and have a unifying source in the image of a New Jerusalem which 'goes on glittering away at the back of many minds' (Willett, 1984:9). William Mitchell, who uses the terms 'public art' and 'monument' almost interchangeably in *Art and the Public Sphere*, sees another continuity, and asks if violence is central to the concept of the monument, noting that many memorials, monuments, triumphal arches, obelisks, columns, and statues refer to a past of conquest: 'From Ozymandias to Caesar to Napoleon to Hitler, public art has served as a kind of monumentalizing of violence' (Mitchell, 1992:35) (see Figure 21).

Lefebvre's (and Massey's) characterisation of Picasso's art as violent in its distortion of the female body was noted in the previous chapter, but the task is accomplished in monumental art not through distortion but through sublimation; the dead heroes of conventional war memorials are relieved of their aggressive aspect and re-presented as a reflective and dutiful Everyman, embodying the required values of the humane state which nevertheless carries out its mission to rule. Similarly, statues of colonial administrators, generals and 'explorers' carry the white man's burden,⁴ and the vanquished, too, became aestheticised. These are incidental cases of the way a public culture constructs a past, and may seem harmless when sufficiently distanced by time. According to Marcuse, however, not only does art in western culture generally perform a function of displacement of meaning to a conceptual realm, but this was a factor in the rise of fascism in the 1930s, the period during which his essay on the affirmative character of culture was written.

AFFIRMATIVE CULTURE

Marcuse's essay on 'The Affirmative Character of Culture' was first published in 1937. In brief, he states that in classical thought experience is separated into two realms: that of pure thought and leisure; and that of application through labour and utility. These are 'in a hierarchy of value whose nadir is functional acquaintance with the necessities of everyday life and whose zenith is philosophical knowledge' (Marcuse, [1937] 1972:88). Thought's only objective is happiness. Marcuse sees in the division between beauty-leisure-peace, and labour-war-necessity the defeat of philosophy's original quest that practice should be informed by truth; this happens because the world of work and necessity is seen as insecure, so that if philosophical knowledge is concerned with a contentment which cannot be found in the material organisation of life, it must transcend it.⁵

A further development takes place in bourgeois society, characterised by its social contradictions and hence those of its thought, when the highest values of society cease to be the concern of, or appropriated as a profession by, the highest social strata, and a 'thesis of the universality and universal validity of culture' is devised by the new middle class; so, aristocracy is abolished to make the space of bourgeois democracy, which invents a culture of universal liberty, but people buy and sell labour in the *laissez-faire* competition bourgeois democracy also introduces, and 'the pure abstractness to which men are reduced in their social relations extends as well to intercourse with ideas' (ibid.: 93–4). To gloss some quite complex writing: after the abolition of the aristocratic privilege of pure thought, bourgeois society establishes a notion of universal cultural value whilst denying its applicability in a divisive system of labour relations. When alienation and commodification is structural in everyday life, the location of an idealised freedom must be somewhere else.

That 'elsewhere' is provided by the aesthetic dimension, through 'affirmative culture', which Marcuse defines as 'that culture of the bourgeois epoch which led in the course of its own development to the segregation from civilisation of the mental and spiritual world as an independent realm of value' (ibid.: 95). He argues that in bourgeois society, its value structure based in Reason but its claim of universal happiness an impossibility in face of the inequality set up by capitalist methods of production, 'the bourgeoisie could not give up the general character of its demand (that equality be extended to all men) without denouncing itself' (ibid.: 97); culture, a mental, abstract world, therefore takes on the claim to happiness, but is internalised, so that liberation becomes confined to the 'good, true and beautiful'. Bourgeois art subsumes the contradictions of life in fantasy: 'Only in the realm of ideal beauty, in art, was happiness permitted to be reproduced as a cultural value in the totality of social life' (ibid.: 117). Beauty in art is thereby compatible with social misery, and offers 'the consolation of a beautiful moment in an interminable chain of misfortune' (ibid.: 118). Art, then, depends on an internalisation of responses to life, a search for happiness diverted from actuality to an aesthetic dimension, as in the symbolist art of the 1880s-90s and the abstraction which followed it in the early twentieth century, and hence on an acceptance of the contradictions of society. When Huysmans wrote of Des Esseintes, that he withdrew from a vulgar world, he prefigured affirmative culture, whilst equally,

perhaps, setting up the possibility for a self-contained ‘system called’ in which there might be a ‘possibility of difference’ (see Barthes, 1982). In a more pragmatic way, the model of affirmative culture could also be applied to Haussmann’s replanning of Paris in the 1860s. Haussmann has been described by Walter Benjamin as an ‘artist of demolition’⁶ and his work is seen by Susan Buck-Morss, writing on Benjamin’s Arcades Project (Buck-Morss, 1995:89), as a case of re-organising urban spaces and forms whilst retaining social contradictions and class antagonisms. At the centre of the boulevards is the Arc de Triomphe.

THE MONUMENT—HISTORY AND HEGEMONY

The expansion in the commissioning of monuments in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when the plunder of colonial wars was being assimilated to European museum culture (Coombes, 1994), is a statement of national identities which takes place in slightly different forms on both sides of the Atlantic.

The allegorical figures representing the *Four Continents* designed by Daniel Chester French⁷ and completed in 1907, on the neo-classical US Custom House at Bowling Green, New York, are geography translated into female figures which signify cultural and political attitudes. They too form, in their similarities of language and intention but variance of detail, a system of difference, and in their time they stood for a web of relations between continents. *Asia* sits in contemplation, holding a lotus; skulls at the base of her throne remind us of the transience of life and supplicant figures suggest either the rejection of materialism or, in their emaciation, the inferiority of asceticism compared with American materialism. *Africa* (Figure 19) drowses bare-breasted, sleep a metaphor for darkness (and suggesting that this sleeping beauty is unaware of our gaze on her nakedness), resting one arm on a lion (primordial strength) and the other on the head of the sphinx (ancient mystery); she looks like a voluptuous but tired model escaped from a nineteenth-century *salon* painter’s studio, playing, to invert the sentiment of a Barbara Kruger photo-collage, ‘nature to our culture’. *Europe*, like *America* framing the central entrance to the building, is stately in Greek dress, holding a book and resting her arm on a globe—the word or the law, and the world—like a figure in judgement. Fragments of the Parthenon frieze are referenced on the side of the throne to afford a link to democracy, though a Roman imperial eagle has somehow alighted behind her, perhaps a Republican at heart like his American cousin. The one dynamic figure is *America* (Figure 20), for which read ‘United States’, who seems to move forwards while a kneeling male figure turns a wheel of fortune, or industry; she holds the torch of Liberty and a sheaf is placed on her lap to signify abundance. A Native American is conscripted into a secondary role behind her, visible only from certain angles, as if accepting a genocide still, in 1907, within living memory. The building is now a museum of Native American art.

The selectivity of the narrative and idealism of its visual language is obvious when compared to, for example, documentary film, although that, too, makes selections; other examples of nineteenth-century public sculpture, such as *Horace Greeley* (1890) in City Hall Park, or *George Washington* (1883) at Federal Hall National Memorial, both by John Ward, utilise another visual language—the ‘likenesses’ of portraiture and naturalism—which seems more down to earth, but may be no less selective or artificial. Naturalism dispenses with the outward appearance of high culture—‘as if we might have known them’—though not the plinth or male domination of its subject-matter, but the transparency it offers disavows complexity through a focus on recognition rather than interpretation, which inhibits ideological readings but does not restrict ideological intention.

The associated meanings of a portrait bust may change in history. How, for example, does a black person in Brixton (site of what the media call ‘race riots’, where black people have died in police custody), whose ancestry might be traced to slaves on the sugar plantations of the West Indies, see a bronze bust of Victorian, white philanthropist *Sir Henry Tate*, who donated some of his fortune to the Tate Gallery and the library behind his bust, but made that fortune from the development of the sugar cube, sugar being a trade which depended on slavery?⁸ Once this kind of change is perceived, the ideological basis of naturalism becomes accessible. The head of *Nelson Mandela* by Ian Walters outside the Festival Hall in London, though larger than life, is a modern form of naturalism; its reception has already shifted since its unveiling in 1985 by Oliver Tambo, with Mandela’s release from prison and election as the first black President of South Africa.

Hegemony

The nineteenth-century development of monuments in the public realm, within a programme of public education and betterment undertaken by a state representing the industrial middle class, contrives to be a national story also told by the invention of traditions including tartans and morris dancing, as well as the opening of public collections of art. The contrivance is that the story offered is the only one offered, a process of persuasion in which the dominant class seems to ‘naturally’ inherit history; Gramsci termed the process of which this is an aspect ‘hegemony’. Renate Holub gives a succinct definition:



FIGURE 19 US Custom House, New York—*Africa*

Hegemony is a concept that helps to explain, on the one hand, how state apparatuses, or political society—supported by and supporting a specific economic group—can coerce, via its institutions of law, police, army and prisons, the various strata of society into consenting to the *status quo*.

(Holub, 1992:6)

Frantz Fanon gives a similar description of how white society operates, which he contrasts with the more brutal application of law to black people under colonial administrations; he sees education, the handing down from father to son of moral reflexes, the loyalty of workers who are given rewards for long service, as ‘aesthetic expressions of respect for the established order [which] serve to create...an atmosphere of submission’ (Fanon, [1961] 1990:29). But Holub goes on to add another dimension to hegemony:

On the other hand, and more importantly, hegemony is a concept that helps us to understand...also how and where political society and, above all, civil society, with its institutions...contribute to the production of meaning and values



FIGURE 20 US Custom House, New York—*America*

which in turn produce, direct and maintain the ‘spontaneous’ consent of the various strata of society to that same status quo.

(Holub, 1992:6)⁹

In Chapter 5, this model is applied to property development, which serves the interests of a specific economic group and is frequently embellished with public art (Zukin, 1996:45).

The proliferation of statues and memorials in the late nineteenth century sought to legitimise the recently acquired powers of the European or American nation states and wealth of their entrepreneurs; it subsumed social conflict within a myth of national identity, and (in Europe) personal grief for the deaths of colonial wars within a myth of sacrifice, supported by an established religion and commemorated in memorials which were sites of public remembrance, a process described by Bird as ‘the state’s desire to represent itself as the unifying authority’ (Bird, 1988:30). The transformation of memories into national memory replaces experience with a unifying abstraction to which the memories are co-opted, just as onto the remains of

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FIGURE 21 The feet of the colossus of *Rameses II* on which Shelley's poem *Ozymandias* is based temples excavated during the Napoleonic campaigns in Egypt, for instance, was projected a notion of their past to which the ruins were then co-opted.¹⁰ This does not deny a romantic reading of ruins as speaking of uncertainty against Enlightenment predictability, as in Shelley's poem *Ozymandias*, based on the colossus of Rameses II in his mortuary temple at Thebes (Figure 21) —a statement against autocracy as much as of the triumph of time; but it also allows Speer's 'theory of ruin value'—that buildings should be constructed to 'ruin well' in the thousand-year *reich* (al-Khalil, 1991:38).

Legitimate memory

There is a history of architecture as persuasion through inevitability. The scale of fascist architecture and spectacle is one form of this, but others use history rather than might. For the emperor Hadrian, whose succession was dubious, history was used to invent a continuity into which to insert himself. His major work is the rebuilding of the Pantheon in Rome, on which he inscribed

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using not his own name but that of the builder of the old Pantheon. Hadrian resolved the tension between a need to establish himself through building and a need to keep a low profile by a revealing the city's 'essential' character through his monuments, confirming his legitimacy (Sennett, 1994:94).

Something similar happened in the nineteenth century, but power was then located in an economic rather than military class; Bird writes of a legitimising which 'became the crucial operation for hegemonic structuring of civil society', and the 'recognition and celebration of hierarchical authority under the aegis of rituals and commemoration' (Bird, 1988:30). The devices for this were statues and memorials, and rites of remembrance which replicate social hierarchies. Some of Michael Sandle's sculptures destabilise this tradition, as in *A Twentieth Century Memorial* (1971–8), made in context of demonstrations against the Vietnam War, in which a skeletal, blackened Mickey Mouse sits at a machine gun. *George and the Dragon* (1987) also subverts a heraldic device in an exhibition of masculine brutality, representing George as hard-working killer. Whilst Gramsci writes of the priest and pharmacist conveying the values of society to a peasant class in whose interests rejection would be healthier, Mickey Mouse stands for imposed social norms, and collapses the project in banality, while St George reveals a violence at the centre of those norms. Conventional memorials present an idealised image of war which supposes a reverence for the nation rather than its conscripts—war is noble not bloody, death does not really hurt. An example of heroic figuration is F.Derwent Wood's *Machine Gun Corps Memorial* at Hyde Park Corner—a naked David standing on a plinth, flanked by wreaths; it is hard to read from this the role of machine guns in turning a war fought on eighteenth-century infantry principles into mass slaughter in muddy ditches. A departure from such conventions, more radical in its time than it

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FIGURE 22 Charles Sargeant Jagger's *Artillery Memorial* in Hyde Park, London (detail)

might now seem, is Charles Sergeant Jagger's nearby *Artillery Memorial* (Figure 22); Jagger served in Gallipoli and France and his monument accurately models every detail of clothing and equipment so that death, too, is stated in the pathos of the recumbent figure covered with a coat, a tin helmet on his chest. At the same time, the figures can be read as types rather than individuals, that is, as an aesthetic statement, framed by the latin text

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above a list of countries, expressing endless space as a metaphor for endless time rather than death's finality—because that finality is what crushes.

THE LANGUAGE OF ALLEGORY

The mediation of history asserts its persuasion, then, through an aesthetic transformation. Despite the variety of forms, the common aspects are the primacy of a visual reading, based either in the idealising forms of classicism or the recognition of naturalism, and the communication of inevitability. Such a quest needs a coherent visual language, but to what extent is the language of the monument continuous through history? For Willett, it begins in 1789 with representations of Reason; yet he argues that the language used remained initially within an earlier, allegorical tradition, enabling, for example, 'Commerce to figure almost as a secular saint' (Willett, 1984:8). Concepts arising from the new political consciousness of eighteenth-century bourgeois society such as *Liberty*, from colonialism such as *Navigation*, and from industrial expansion such as *Mechanics* or the *Telephone*, were given allegorical form, usually female.¹¹ Setting urban development within a classical framework conferred a degree of respectability; the entrepreneurial desire for expanding opportunities for manufacture and trade was supported by these images in public buildings which lent to industry the legitimisation of the state, and promoted the values of (men's) commerce by likening them visually to (feminine) images such as *Liberty*. The problem for sculptors was in applying allegorical language to modern rather than classical ideas, and the effort faltered in face of inventions which are not ideas but things; hence *Telephone* is represented merely as a reclining female figure holding a telephone,¹² and *Transportation* at Grand Central Station in New York,¹³ unveiled in 1914, borrows the figure of Mercury presiding over a clock between Minerva and Hercules, although one of Mercury's roles was to transport the souls of the dead to the underworld, a reference presumably not intended for rail travellers.

Liberty, a political concept meaning the empowerment of the male property-owning class to carry out reforms of society, might seem more straightforward, but the difficulty of depicting it is seen in Delacroix's *Liberty Leading the People*, marking the July uprising of 1830. Delacroix both borrows and departs from allegorical conventions, using a realist language for the

crowd, who are particularised in pose, dress and the kind of weapon they carry, whilst for Liberty reverting to a Greek type, as if a classical statue had been lent a tricolour and come to life. Marina Warner describes Liberty as 'in the classical costume of a goddess of victory, and her lemych chiton has slipped off both shoulders. Her breasts, struck by the light from the left, are small, firm, and conical, very much the admired shape of a Greek Aphrodite' (Warner, 1987:271). The contrast between Liberty and the insurgents brings out the contradiction between realism and neo-classical allegory —for which Warner uses the phrase 'in a place of ideal difference' (Warner, 1987: 271)—perhaps between working-class 'freedom' (from oppression) and bourgeois 'Liberty' (to prosper). But could Liberty be presented in any other way? Delacroix's painting still met a hostile reaction when first exhibited in 1831, in part because the conventions of neo-classicism had slipped in Delacroix's handling, but more because, with a restored political order, a red bonnet had become a subversive emblem.

Goya's *The Third of May 1808*, painted in 1814, is more consistent in its language, depicting the victims of execution with emotive realism and posing the execution squad so that their faces are unseen—a pictorial device to dehumanise them used also in *One Can't Look* (Disasters of War 26). For a European viewer, the white-shirted victim with arms raised takes on the identity of a Christ-like martyr, the firing squad of Roman soldiers, or fascists. The *Cable Street Mural* (Figure 23), commemorating opposition to an attempted fascist march through London's East End in 1936, uses the same device to evoke sympathy with resisters to fascism:¹⁴ the demonstrators are shown full-face, but the policemen are painted either in back-view or with helmets pulled down. The *Cable Street Mural* establishes its cast as heroes and villains, as crudely as a spaghetti western but using pictorial devices from art history.

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Victory and liberty

National memory is still constructed through public monuments, not only in the West. Saddam Husain's *Victory Arch* in Baghdad (which he designed himself in anticipation of a victory, which was never recognised, in the Iran—Iraq war) consists of two pairs of giant arms scaled up from casts of his own (cast in a foundry in Basingstoke) holding swords cast (in Iraq) from the weapons of dead soldiers, placed at each end of a parade ground. At their bases, five thousand Iranian tin hats topple in a heap. Samir al-Khalil locates the Arch in the context of Iraq's utilisation of heritage culture and replication of archaic sites within the modern state as backdrops for images of the President, suggesting a continuity in which Saddam Husain is the most recent link to a history which includes Babylon;¹⁵ he contrasts the realism of the arms with the falsity of the message of victory and notes the proliferation of monuments, mosques and memorials of huge size under the Ba'athist regime. The Gulf War now colours western perception of *Victory Arch*, but is its lack of authenticity different from that of, say, the *Statue of Liberty*, a monument also inserted into public memory for ideological reasons?

The *Statue of Liberty* has a longer history than *Victory Arch*, and being visible from Ellis Island where millions of refugees awaited entry to 'the land of the free', is a symbol of the opportunity to escape poverty. As an idea, its history begins with the French liberal jurist Edouard de Laboulaye's proposal that France should present a gift to the United States on the centenary of its independence—an oblique comment on French politics under Napoleon III. As an image, it derives from precedents such as Egyptian statues, and the more immediate source of neo-classical public sculpture; Frédéric-Auguste Bartholdi, who visited Egypt with the orientalist painter Gérôme, was commissioned by Laboulaye in 1865 to make a portrait-bust, and, at the time, was in process of conceiving a grand monument for the entrance to the Suez Canal, which he called *Egypt Bringing the Light to Asia*.

It was this image which became the basis for Liberty when the project was taken up following the restoration of the French republic; Bartholdi went to the United States in 1871 and began adapting his idea for the entrance of New York harbour, exhibiting the arm with beacon at the Philadelphia World's Fair in 1876, and the head in Paris in 1878; the gift was funded by public subscriptions raised in France, formally accepted by Congress in 1877, and unveiled in 1886 after subscriptions raised in the United States paid for the pedestal. Bartholdi's Liberty is very different from Delacroix's—lacking a red cap as Laboulaye observed. Warner echoes this reading: 'Liberty is no longer La Liberté, but was identified from the start with an American ideal of democracy, now represented as an American gift to the world' (Warner, 1987:7). Its dominant reception, through popular prints and in the literature of shipping companies, is as a mother of exiles; but there is a contradiction—the first laws restricting immigration into the United States, banning convicts, lunatics and Chinese labourers, were passed as the statue was being commissioned.

There is a commonality between Bartholdi's *Statue of Liberty* and Saddam Husain's *Victory Arch* in the way each signifies an inevitability. Liberty has come to stand for democracy, and America as its purveyor, so that opposition to American interests threatens democracy, which in turn is, like high art, a defining aspect of western civilisation. Victory Arch seeks to establish the Ba'athist regime as inheriting a history going back to the dawn of urban settlement in Mesopotamia, so that opposition to it is similarly an assault on the timeless values of civilisation. If the meaning of the *Statue of Liberty* embodies contradictions, its appearance undergoes mediation in public appreciation. Warner describes it in terms of 'a thunderbolt judge of stern unrelenting character' (Warner, 1985:8–9) and contrasts this with the soft-focus photography used in souvenir illustrations. At the same time, demonstrators in Tiananmen Square made a version of the *Statue* to signify their aspirations to freedom in

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FIGURE 23 The face of a policeman covered by his helmet, *Cable Street Mural*—the white drips are the result of paint-bombing by right-wing extremists

1988 (Mitchell, 1992:29–31, 37); just over a century before, in 1885, following the new restrictions on immigration, a Chinese immigrant wrote that to him the appeal for a subscription for the statue's base was an insult.¹⁶

FRAMEWORKS

Frameworks of discussion on monuments differ according to professional perspectives. *The Monument Guide* (Darke, 1991) gives a non-critical description of monuments as items in a geographical rather than cultural landscape—‘an open air treasure house’ or ‘topographical gallery’ (Darke, 1991:10). Marina Warner (Warner 1985), reading monuments through cultural history, sees those which have continued to receive wide public interest, despite the loss of their original purpose, as cultural signifiers for a city. She writes of the *Statue of Liberty* that it shares characteristics with the Eiffel Tower, that both are first

monuments with little other function—‘Stripped of use and service, they resist obsolescence. They are in the first place expressions of identity’ (Warner, 1985:6). The idea that monuments stand for cultural identity is extended by Donald Horne to include everyday items: he links, for example, the Ramblas with Barcelona, and argues that ‘a meat pie eaten in the street is part of the “language” of Melbourne’ (Horne, 1986:42–3). Signifiers of place are not always associated with wealth—Wigan Pier signifies the recession of the 1930s but has become a tourist attraction. Sociologist John Urry, who coined the term ‘tourist gaze’, suggests that unlikely places become centres of heritage-based tourism (Urry, 1990:105) and that such survivals are relieved of meaning as a memory of industrial exploitation, and represented in a sanitised form (Urry, 1995: 160); he notes Robert Hewison’s argument (Hewison, 1987) that heritage culture constructs an illusory past which distracts attention from present conflicts, though he defends the visitors’ centre at Wigan Pier as preserving local memories, some of which are oppositional. Local authority officers, museum curators or tourist organisations aiming to develop heritage industries, however, tend to select safe aspects of history for public consumption; John Molyneux, a social historian, states of their efforts: ‘it is much more important to tell a pleasing story, to give tourist and visitor what they want, than it is to be true to history’ (Molyneux, 1995:16). Social and economic historians such as Molyneux, on the other hand, interested in the structures of power and money in industrial societies, and to expose contradictions in how a society represents itself, have tended to see monuments and heritage culture as devices for social control. Molyneux continues: ‘Nine times out of ten the interpretation of history deemed non-controversial for heritage purposes is the right-wing view, the establishment view’ (Molyneux, 1995:18). Just as monuments construct hegemony, so heritage sites construct a past which conveniently fits civic aspirations and serves social stability.

Two cases of art which illustrate different methods of constructing place are the *Miners’ Memorial* at Frostburg, Maryland, also known as *Prospect V-III*, and *Cincinnati Gateway*, both by Andrew Leicester. The *Miners’ Memorial*, of 1982, combines art, local history and community participation to commemorate a marginalised past. Old mining artefacts donated by members of the community are integrated in a series of passages and rooms through which the spectator progresses as in a journey through life from infancy, represented by a coal-cart as cradle, to death as the black shaft, in which a bed is sculpted from coal, and on the bed a figure.

Cincinnati Gateway (1988) in Sawyer Park on the Ohio river, was a more ambitious project, with a larger budget and more constraints in terms of the image of the city desired by those who exercised influence over its affairs.¹⁷ If the public for the *Miners’ Memorial* can be defined as the ex-mining community, it is more difficult to say for whom *Cincinnati Gateway* is intended. Described by John Beardsley as ‘the most successful use to date of locally relevant—even reverent—imagery’ (Beardsley, 1989:144), it still seems a representation of a ‘decorative past’ which commodifies place in the same way as heritage culture. A walkway on an embankment in which is set an image of the river, a brick wall representing a canal lock, a bridge referencing the structure designed by John Roebling which spans the river nearby and is a forerunner of the Brooklyn Bridge, and sculpted images of fish, fossils, Native American artefacts, riverboat chimneys and winged pigs are some of its elements. Leicester stated: The sculpture’s emphasis was supposed to be about Cincinnati over the past two hundred years... I expanded that narrow view of history by recalling the real social and cultural roots of the riverfront’ (Doss, 1995:208), which led him to include pigs signifying ‘porkopolis’: the city as a centre of pig meat production. Some voices sought to exclude the pigs in a controversy inflamed by local political rivalries; the *Cincinnati Enquirer* published a front-page article against the project in which the word ‘pig’ was used over twenty times (Doss, 1995:225). Although the work was completed, and has received wide and generally favourable publicity, Leicester’s representation of a city through a series of motifs created more than one public: one supportive, though perhaps for reasons also connected with objections to arts censorship; one antagonistic, again perhaps with its own agenda. Overlooked by both was the co-option as decorative motif of Native American imagery.

One of the arguments against the imposition of a contrived sense of place is that it aestheticises the city; another that it is a closed history which affirms the structures of power, taking the time of history and, as it were, spreading it out in a static present, so that projects such as *Cincinnati Gateway* are spatial representations of time. Ernesto Laclau has argued that whilst space is stasis, time is a process of dislocation which opens the way for political change.¹⁸ Massey interprets the theory:

Laclau, for whom the contrast between what he labels temporal and what he calls spatial is key to his whole argument, uses a highly complex version of this definition. For him, notions of time and space are related to contrasting methods of understanding social systems.

(Massey, 1994:251–2)

Any self-contained system, or causal structure in which change comes from inside and is thus ‘unsurprising’, is for Laclau spatial, whilst time indicates dislocation, disruption of the chain of cause and effect—The spatial, because it lacks dislocation, is devoid of the possibility of politics’ (Massey, 1994:252). It is not important, in this discussion, that the terms ‘temporal’ and ‘spatial’ are used, as much as that the distinction between the seamlessness ascribed to space and the dislocation ascribed to time from which change, or freedom from the replication of past patterns, is possible. The idea of a self-contained system

could be mapped onto contemporary art, and the model of space and time onto art as object in space or process in time. So, elements of contesting pasts are de-activated in a continuous, seamless space, offering only a passive reception which, because it cannot admit change, is what Laclau, for whom 'Freedom is the absence of determination' (Massey, 1994:253), terms 'closure'. Massey is critical of Laclau for privileging time as the ground of being, and much of her own writing has sought a rehabilitation of space, but the idea of space as a closed system describes cosmetic notions of a 'spirit of place' dependent on the primacy of visual representation.

There are, then, three frameworks through which to interrogate the notion of the monument: following Bird and Molyneux, as the imposition of an ideology; following Darke and Warner, as landmarks or signifiers of place, to the consumption of which Urry and Hewison apply a critique; or, perhaps a third possibility is that the monument can be democratised.

The first two categories overlap. *Nelson's Column*, for example, was, when erected in 1842 an image of English naval power in the aristocratic neo-classical style; since then it has become one of London's postcard views, no doubt as popular with French tourists as any others. The only thing it has never been is a statement for a defined community, since the habitations which once filled the space over which it now towers were cleared to build the white, utopian vista of Trafalgar Square. The *Albert Memorial* (1862–72), designed by Sir Giles Gilbert Scott, was also part of the construction of a history, presenting Albert as a progressive consort who favoured industry and design—he holds the catalogue of the Great Exhibition of 1851—and inherits the mantle of the chivalric past through the referencing of medieval Eleanor crosses; and it is a convenient landmark for people walking through the park. Tancred Borenius described it in 1926 as 'an episode in the landscape of Kensington Gardens—especially in the mellow light of the late summer evenings, when the masses of foliage are full and rounded' (cited in Darke, 1991:60). But this fading into the urban landscape itself contributes to a depoliticisation of Albert.

RESISTANCES AND THE DEMOCRATISATION OF THE MONUMENT

Challenges to the classical language of allegory began in the nineteenth century and include Rodin's *The Thinker*, in a version enlarged from the original and sited outside the Pantheon in Paris in 1906, which uses a realist language to express a sympathy for the emancipation of the worker, although in keeping with the cultural climate of its time it assumes a universal masculinity, and occupies a plinth. Rodin described it as 'the fertile thought of those humble people of the soil who are nevertheless producers of powerful energies'¹⁹ and saw it as a precedent for a monument to French workers.²⁰ Its visual language supports this, given the association in French nineteenth-century art of realism and radical politics; Albert Elsen sees it as a 'culmination of his efforts on behalf of the workers' (Elsen, 1985: 107), noting the frequency of strikes and growth of syndicalism in France at the time.

If, then, realism was the art of radical politics in France in the mid-nineteenth century, are there cases of recent art in public spaces which attempt a comparable programme? In a way, Raymond Mason attempts this in *Forward* (Figure 24) in Centenary Square, Birmingham; the sculpture depicts the 'people of Birmingham' walking in procession towards the future (aligned in the direction of the new convention centre representing new investment). Yet Mason's figures are stereotypes, for whom no models in everyday life could have existed, with the same difficulties of reception as the monuments of socialist realism, many of which were being craned out of squares in eastern Europe as Mason's work was installed.

Statues to local people, unlike stereotypes, may retain meaning in local memories—for example, Henry Blogg, a lifeboatman commemorated in Cromer, Norfolk (Darke, 1991:197), or *Snooks the Dog*²¹ in bronze on the seafront at Aldeburgh in Suffolk (Darke, 1991:195–6). A more direct immortalisation is Jim the station dog at Slough railway station, who is stuffed, in a glass case, being simply himself dead rather than a representation, though, of course, framed by the glass case with its museum associations and re-coded as memorial. Ticket collectors and porters have not received a similar treatment.

Kevin Atherton's bronze figures at Brixton railway station, *Platforms Piece* (1985–6) are life-casts (regarded as a single artwork) of three people who regularly used the station at the time, set without plinths on the platform. Atherton, who regards the piece as significant in his own development and that of public art, selected two black models and one white—Peter Lloyd, Joy Battick and Karin Heistermann:

I have used the station platforms...as plinths for the three figures, thus pitching them into the same reality as the railway passenger. The work is about speculation—the speculation about other travellers that passes through one's mind when isolated and waiting for a train. By using younger people as models, I have also tried to capture the vibrant optimism of youth....

(British Rail, 1986)

It was claimed that local people had given the station a new identity, and that 'at Brixton, which is not the wealthiest part of the Home Counties, there has been no vandalism against Kevin Atherton's amusing bronzes' (Hughes, 1988)—no longer a



FIGURE 24 Raymond Mason's *Forward* in Centenary Square Birmingham

possible claim since right-wing extremists have daubed the face of one sculpture with white paint, and never a very helpful one in linking a lack of wealth rather than lack of ownership with vandalism. The spaces of the station remain covered in graffiti and its interior reeks of urine.²²

Anti-monuments

Other kinds of art in public spaces are more overtly challenging, such as Jenny Holtzer's texts on electronic message boards, or Krzysztof Wodiczko's projections onto monuments; and some groups, notably The Power of Place, a multi-disciplinary team working with minority communities in Los Angeles to recover their memories of place (Hayden, 1995), seek to build continuing and empowering engagement with identified communities. The issues are brought into focus when artists are commissioned to make monuments for the Holocaust, a 'buried' history. The *Harburg Monument Against Fascism* (1986) by



FIGURE 25 Kevin Atherton, *Platforms Piece*, Brixton Station, London (Photo: Kevin Atherton)



FIGURE 26 Kevin Atherton, *Platforms Piece* (detail)

Jochem and Esther Shalev-Gertz is sited in a shopping area half an hour from the centre of Hamburg; its form is a 12-metre lead-encased aluminium column initially raised above, then periodically sunk into, a pit. The artists set a text beside it:

We invite the citizens of Harburg and visitors to the town, to add their names here to ours. In doing so we commit ourselves to remain vigilant. As more and more names cover this...column, it will gradually be lowered into the ground. One day it will have disappeared completely.

(cited in Young, 1992:56)



FIGURE 27 Maya Lin's *Vietnam Veterans Memorial*, Washington, DC

Many kinds of graffiti were added to the column, exposing prejudices against 'guest-workers' reminiscent of anti-semitism, the controversy around the monument accepted by the artists as part of its impact. The column has been described as an anti-monument, which refuses the forgetfulness of conventional monuments which do society's remembering for it (Young, 1992: 55).

Theodore Adorno argued that it is impossible to write *lyric* poetry after Auschwitz, but the argument has a general application; whilst the monument as a device of hegemony establishes a national history, so it may also bury a national memory. It seems interesting that some of the Holocaust or anti-fascist monuments in Germany, such as the column in Harburg, finally submerged in 1990, and Horst Hoheisel's inversion of the *Aschrott-Brunnen Monument* in Kassel, are, literally, buried, in reference to the invisibility of a particular history. The original fountain in Kassel was funded by a Jewish entrepreneur in 1908, and was removed by the Nazis in 1939. The artist describes his idea as a mirror image of the old structure, sunk beneath its location, 'in order to rescue the history of this place as a wound and as an open question' (cited by Young, 1992:70) so that history is not repeated. It presents a monument-shaped hole into which water runs from a surrounding pool; from a distance only the sound of water indicates its presence.

The history represented by statues is a closure inhibiting the imagining of alternative futures by denying the possibility of alternative pasts; but if this monument is an opening in society's received structure of values, dislocating the assumptions of an 'official' history, it is an act of resistance. It is in such a dislocation of the conventional reading of monuments that Wodiczko's projections work, abolishing the familiar and reminding us, for instance, by projecting onto it the image of a missile, that *Nelson's Column* is a monument to war. Wodiczko writes: The intervention lasts longer than the work itself...the power of the projection can be better understood when the projectors have been switched off. Something has been broken' (Freshman, 1992:105).

Maya Lin's *Vietnam Veterans Memorial* (Figure 27) in Washington, DC, of 1982, consists of a shallow V-shaped 'cut' into the green of the Mall, one side pointing to the *Lincoln Memorial*, the other to the *Washington Monument*; it refers to a war the history of which is, in the light of protest and the social invisibility of the returning veterans, problematic. On its polished, black stone surface are inscribed the names of the 58,000 Americans dead or missing in action between 1959 and 1975, arranged so that the first and last are adjacent at the centre. Charles Griswold has described the memorial as open and closed, like a book (Griswold, 1992:104) and cites Maya Lin as describing it in terms of a 'gash in the earth';²³ the scar it seeks to heal is perhaps the rent in American society caused by protest against the war. Beardsley writes that the debate around the monument was a catharsis and that its success is in terms of 'easing trauma into memory' (Beardsley, 1989:124–5). Whether, in the end, the *Vietnam Veterans Monument* is public art, architecture, or a monument, is not an interesting question; what seems more to the point is whether it, or public art in general, affirms or interrogates the structures of power in society which bring about wars, whether contradictions are addressed or buried, whether it constructs, in Laclau's terms, an open time or closed



FIGURE 28 The *East Coast Memorial*, Battery Park City

space. The *Vietnam Veterans Memorial* is not an anti-monument like the fountain in Kassel, and there are precedents for its black stone, including the base of the *East Coast Memorial* (Figure 28) in Battery Park, New York; but it avoids the idealising language of allegory and the replication of social hierarchies. It has created a public, being visited constantly, even on days that are cold and wet, by those who look for or make a rubbing of a name, pause, leave a flower, or simply look into the stone's mirror surface, or cry.