COMMEMORATION OF WAR AND PEACE: THE ANXIETY OF ERASURE

Roses and headstones,
Tyne Cot Commonwealth War
Graves Cemetery, Zonnebeke,
Ypres Salient, Belgium

Plinth and place

In the four weeks leading to 11 November 1928, the illustrated newspaper *Answers* published a 'magnificent series of plates celebrating the tenth anniversary of the Armistice'. Under the strapline 'Ten years after, 1918–1928' the plates were published as four pairs of pencil drawings by the former soldier-artist Adrian Hill. They depicted the principle buildings on the old Western Front in Belgium and France as they appeared both in ruins in late 1918 and under restoration ten years later. Arras Cathedral, the Cloth Hall at Ypres, Albert Basilica and the Menin Road had become icons across the British Empire, regarded as the immutable symbols of the trauma of the Great War. Indeed, in the months after the Armistice, Winston Churchill had strongly advocated 'freezing' the remains of Ypres and preserving it forever as an ossified commemoration of the war. Its pulverised medieval buildings, he argued, would be more articulate than any carved memorial or reverential monument. Churchill's predilection for bombed ruins surfaced again during the Second World War when he argued that a portion of the blitzed House of Commons ought to be preserved as a reminder of the bombing of the capital. [1]

As with many grand commemorative schemes, Churchill's vision was not to be realised. Indeed, after both wars many of the grander commemorative schemes floundered, a national war memorial garden in the precincts of St Paul's Cathedral was abandoned in the late 1940s. ambitious plans to house the national war art collection in an imposing 'Hall of Remembrance' came to nothing twenty years earlier, as did a similar architectural scheme in Canada. Although many such ideas were realised, few were achieved without some degree of argument.

The desire to produce a common understanding of the past has resulted most often in material forms such as the plinth and the pedestal, which have become the key visual components of an ideological and rhetorical urban topography. This is contrasted with the concept of 'reified place', in particular preserved or reconstructed battlefields, which have become the focus of commemorative rites—the places to where 'one takes personal narratives'. As has been the case throughout this volume, most of the examples used to illustrate this tension are drawn from the northern European theatres of war, although

(1)
Winston Churchill, in Hansard, 25 January 1945.

Adrian Hill, *The Menin Road 1918*, and *The Menin Gate 1928*, published in *Answers*, 1928

reference is made to certain far-flung conflicts—such as the Battle of Gettysburg—which became the template for historic conservation and the embellishment of military memory. In concentrating on idealised objects on the one hand and recuperated landscapes on the other, we have to set aside consideration of other acts of commemoration. This includes ritual, song, poetry and the material culture of war, such as artwork, paintings and sculpture, which were commissioned by national governments as both propaganda and as evidence of cultural superiority and are explored elsewhere in this volume.

When considering how warfare might variously be commemorated, it is clear that every act is highly contested. Even the granting of war trophies could stir dissent and disagreement. In 1919, when the small east Lancashire town of Haslingden was offered a tank as a gift from the government in recognition of its contribution to war savings, the local branch of the Discharged Soldiers and Sailors Association rejected it as an inappropriate emblem of commemoration. 'This tank', wrote their President, 'will remind us of things we do not want to be reminded of, and one which would be an expense to the town'.[2] He asked instead that the government send an army hut as a club room for the veterans and ensure them a fitting place in the coming Peace Day celebrations. However, the protocols for the latter proved to be as equally contested as the gift of a redundant military vehicle.

Of course, many of the tensions between 'plinth' and 'place' had been played out long before the Great War. The construction of monuments and memorials on sites of battle has a history reaching back to the classical periods of Greece and Rome.[3] However, the demarcation of battlefield sites to accentuate the material remains of the past is a fairly recent phenomenon. In their analysis of 23 north European battle sites, covering nine centuries (from the Battle of Maldon in 991 to the Spanish battle of Sorauren in 1813), Carmen and Carmen note that only five are marked by contemporary memorials, while all but three are furnished with modern memorials, of which all take monumental form.[4] Six of these sites also host a museum or have heritage status, usually dating from the twentieth century, thus reflecting the idea that such places have only latterly been considered worthy of note and subject

(2)
Haslingden Gazette, 17 May 1919, cited in William Turner, 'The talk of the town: how a Branch of the Discharged Soldiers and Sailors Association fought for a place in Haslingden's peace celebrations', *The Poppy and the Owl*, Leeds University, no.25, 1999.

(3)
See for example Alan Borg, *War Memorials*. London: Leo Cooper, 1991. Alex King, *Memorials of the Great War in Britain: the Symbolism and Politics of Remembrance*. Oxford: Berg, 1998.

(4)
John Carman and Patricia Carman, *Bloody Meadows: investigating landscapes of battle*. Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 2006.

to demarcation, textual display and commodification. Such spaces are invariably politicised, dynamic and contested; they are open to constant arbitration.[5] They are also complex sites of social construction. As we see in our examination of twentieth century wars in northern Europe, it is best not to view such sites as the location of single events but as 'a palimpsest of overlapping, multi-vocal landscapes'.[6]

Commemoration: A definition of terms

Any reading of the historiography related to the commemoration of war[7] will reveal that the words 'monument' and 'memorial' are used interchangeably, their definitions often paradoxical and weakly articulated. Arthur Danto, reflecting on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in the US, attempts to distinguish one from the other by arguing that whereas many memorials speak of healing, remembrance and reconciliation, monuments are usually celebratory or triumphalist.[8] Although somewhat simplistic, such a definition offers a starting point. According to the Oxford English Dictionary a monument is 'a structure, edifice or erection intended to commemorate a person, action or event'. In contrast, definitions of 'memorial' focus on the preservation of specific memory and their iconographic role in evoking remembrance. In common understanding, a monument should bear the attributes of scale, permanence, longevity and visibility. Memorials, by contrast, are often more intimate, local and personal, though they are still required to be durable and open to public gaze. While the monument has often been built to promote specific ideals and aspirations—from the Statue of Liberty to the Eiffel Tower—the memorial is essentially a retrospective form, idealising a past event, historic figure or deified place. The German cultural historian Alois Riegl distinguished between monuments that are 'wanted'—in the sense of satisfying a commemorative need—and those that are merely remnants, usually in the form of historical or preserved remains that connect us to a revered past.[9] Drawing on Freud's work on mourning and melancholia, others have argued that monuments become memorials as a result of the successful completion of a mourning process:[10]

> ...the object must die twice, first at the moment of its own death and secondly through the subject's unhitching from its own identification. It is only then that the

(5)
Barbara Bender (ed.) *Landscape: politics and perspectives*. Oxford: Berg, 1983.

(6)
Nicholas Saunders, 'Matter and memory in landscapes of conflict: the Western Front 1914–1919', pp. 43–67, p.37 in Barbara Bender and Margot Winer (eds.) *Contested landscapes: movement, exile and place*. Oxford: Berg, 2001.

(7)
See: Samuel Hynes, *A War Imagined: The First World War and English Culture*. London: Bodley Head, 1990. George L. Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990. Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

(8)
Arthur Danto, 'The Vietnam Veterans Memorial', *The Nation*, 31 August 1986, p.152.

(9)
Aloise Riegl, 'Der Moderne Denkmalkultus', 1903, cited in Robert Burstow, *Materialising Memory: Mementoes, Memorials and Modernism*, catalogue essay for *In Memorium*, Walsall Art Gallery, 22 November 2000–21 January 2001, pp.8–12.

(10)
Michael Rowlands, 'Remembering to Forget: Sublimation as Sacrifice in War Memorials', in Adrian Forty and Susan Kuchler (eds.) *The Art of Forgetting*. Oxford: Berg, 1999, pp.129–147.

The Cross of Sacrifice, designed by
Reginald Blomfield, Commonwealth
War Graves Commission

*object can pass into history and that the stones can be
set—for mourning and memorial are a phase apart.* [11]

Clearly, there are several distinct phases in the creation of the
public monument. Winter proposes a tripartite cycle in the
afterlife of *lieux de memoire*: an initial, creative period—the
construction of 'commemorative form'—which is marked by
monument building and the creation of ceremonies that are
periodically centred on the reverential object. During the sec-
ond phase the ritual action is grounded in the annual calendar
and becomes institutionalised as part of civic routine. There is
then a critical, transformative period when the public monu-
ment either disappears or is upheld as an active site of memory.
This final phase, as Winter reminds us, is largely contingent on
whether a second generation of mourners inherits the earlier
meanings attached to the place or event and adds new mean-
ings. [12] Without frequent re-inscription the date and place of
commemoration simply fade away as memory atrophies. Very
soon the monument loses its potency to re-invigorate memory;
it becomes 'invisible'.

This complex and delicate process is
exemplified in the case of monuments to distant wars. Here,
as Inglis suggests, the terminological difference is significant:
'Where the French speak of *monuments aux morts*, the English
say *war memorials*.' *Memorial* leaves open the form of com-
memoration that may or may not be monumental. [13] Com-
memoration, essentially anti-entropic, is often predicated upon
the 'monument' being a physical object that arrests the effects
of time. It has a temporal as well as a spatial value and might
be considered a 'single point [that] continues in the present
and into the future'. [14] By comparison, the German word for
monument *'denkmal'* (literally 'a means to thought') offers a
conceptual vehicle that is more closely attuned to the idea that
human perceptions shift and adjust and monuments—like so
much rhetorical topoi—can become irrelevant, invisible and
yet also able to arouse intense debate. [15]

In largely Protestant
countries such as Britain, hospitals, libraries and other utilitarian
memorials have long been considered to be structures appro-
priate for the commemoration of war. Victorian and Edwardian
Britain was strewn with the evidence of philanthropic and
state benefaction. This was perhaps most evident after the
First World War, when small communities, already torn by

(11)
Mark Cousins, 'Inside, Outside', *Tate Magazine*,
Winter 1996, pp.36–41.

(12)
Jay Winter, *BBC History*, 22 November 2000.

(13)
Ken Inglis, 'The Homecoming: the War Memorial
Movement in Cambridge, England', *Journal of
Contemporary History*, 27, 1992, pp.583–605, p.601.

(14)
Marc Treib, 'The landscape of loved ones', in Joachim
Wolschke-Bulmahn (ed.) *Places of Commemoration:
search for identity and landscape design.* Washington:
Dumbarton Oaks, 2001, p.82.

(15)
Paul Gough and Sally J. Morgan, 'Manipulating
the metonymic: the Bristol Cenotaph, 1919–1932',
Journal of Historical Geography, 30 (4) 2004,
pp.665–684.

grief, were further divided by the need to decide between erecting reverential memorials or building functional utilities. In the latter, memorial schemes varied in object from avenues of trees to pragmatic solutions to local issues and took the form of community halls, recreation grounds, convalescent homes and, in one case, a water pipe to a local school. [16] There were precedents for such decisions. A paper on 'Monumental Memorials and Town Planning', given in 1917, noted the tale of a 'small Urban Council who, with an eye to thrift and economy, decided to commemorate the Jubilee of Queen Victoria by the construction of a new public sewer'. [17] A preference for the utilitarian may, in part, have been a reaction to the frenzy of monument building across Europe in the late nineteenth century. As Whelan points out, the busy furnishing of the urban centres reflected the intense nationalism of the period when plinth-topped statuary became a focus for collective participation in the politics and public life of villages, towns and cities across Europe. [18] Figurative ensembles were readily understood as symbolic devices capable of capturing and imposing the ideals, principles and aspirations of the established regime. 'Frenzy' is the appropriate term. Owens calculates that one statue was erected in central London every four months during the reign of Queen Victoria. [19] In Germany, in a single decade, some 500 memorial towers were raised to Bismarck alone.

However, in 1919 the need to find a tolerable meaning to the vast losses of the Great War demanded a radical break from august statues crowding the over-furnished urban centres of Europe. The scale of loss could not be satisfied by short-term utilitarian solutions. In the absence of bodies to grieve over, the cenotaphs, memorial stones and catafalques erected in thousands across Britain had to perform several interlocking functions. Initially they acted as a focus for personal, public and civic displays of grief. Their iconic form helped to reassure non-combatants and relatives that the dead had died for a greater cause, one linked to abstract values of nationhood, camaraderie or Christian citizenship. The blank-faced slab of the Cenotaph in Whitehall provided a template for hundreds across the Empire honouring the placeless dead. Along with the equally classless Tomb of the Unknown Warrior in Westminster Abbey, the Cenotaph became a heterotopic site at which the 'multiple memories' of parents, fiancés and widows could be located and fixed. [20]

The very solidity of these monumental forms provided a sense of 'anchoring'—spatial, temporal and perhaps even social—in a mobile and disjointed society. [21] Indeed, stone, brass and metal have become increasingly valued as the material embodiment of memory largely because they seem to act as a counterpoint to fears of a throw-away consumer culture that emphasises the immaterial, the transient and the fleeting.

Annual rituals, such as Armistice services, gradually reinforce the permanence of the material through becoming the locus of communal and individual remembrance and opening up a discourse of healing, regret and reflection. Monumental forms:

> … should ideally allow the fusion of the living with the dead as an act of remembrance whilst in time providing a way out of melancholia through an act of transcendence [22]

As such, they function as palliative topoi that help resolve the conditions of 'negativity and impotence' aroused by violent death, particularly of the young. Of course, not all war memorials act in this way; some are bombastic and celebratory, embellishing the past, promoting pride in distant victories and asserting inflated values of nationhood. Although they play a major part in the creation of place identity in the built environment, the role of monuments during social change is rarely predictable and they are subject to random forces:

> Existing monuments may be removed and replaced; they may be re-designated and their meanings re-interpreted to express new meanings; or they may simply become ignored and rendered all but invisible, their meanings lost through being irrelevant or unreadable. [23]

Unsurprisingly, they are also capable of arousing complex passions. Take for example, the furore over the installation of a statue to Sir Arthur 'Bomber' Harris in London in 1992 [24] or the 'desecration' of the Whitehall Cenotaph during May Day protests in 2000. Consider also the recent upsurge in the memorialisation of the Second World War, most notably in central London but also at the National Memorial Arboretum in central England. [25] Amid such contingency we can be certain of two things: firstly, monuments are seldom built to commemorate continuing events or to

(16)
Alex King, *Memorials of the Great War in Britain: the Symbolism and Politics of Remembrance.* Oxford: Berg, 1998, p.68.

(17)
S.D. Adhead, 'Monumental Memorials and Town Planning', *Journal of the Town Planning Institute*, 3 (5) 1917, pp.17–28. 'Long may she drain!' was suggested by one local as a suitable announcement at the opening of this commemorative facility.

(18)
Yvonne Whelan, 'Mapping Meanings', in Graham Ashworth and Brian Graham (eds.) *Senses of Place: Senses of Time.* London: Ashgate, 2005, p.63.

(19)
Gary Owens, 'Nationalist Monuments in Ireland, 1870–1914: Symbolism and Ritual', in Raymond Gillespie and Brian P. Kennedy (eds.) *Ireland: Art into History.* Dublin: Townshouse, 1994, p.103.

(20)
Elizabeth Hallam and Jane Hockey, *Death, Memory and Material Culture.* Oxford: Berg, 2001, p.90.

(21)
Andreas Huyssen, *Twilight Memories: marking time in a culture of amnesia.* New York: Routledge, 1995, p.7.

(22)
Michael Rowlands, 'Remembering to Forget: Sublimation as Sacrifice in War Memorials', in Adrian Forty and Susan Kuchler (eds.) *The Art of Forgetting.* Oxford: Berg, 1999, pp.129–147.

(23)
Graham Ashworth and Brian Graham (eds.) *Senses of Place: Senses of Time.* London: Ashgate, 2005, p.11.

(24)
Nuala Johnson, 'Monuments, Geography and Nationalism', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 13 (1) 1995, pp.51–65.

(25)
Paul Gough, 'Planting peace: the Greater London Council and the community gardens of central London', *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 3 (1) 2007, pp.22–41.

National Memorial Arboretum,
Alrewas, Staffordshire,
central England

(26)
David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country*.
Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985.

(27)
Reginald Blomfield, *Memoirs of an Architect*. London:
Macmillan, 1932, p.179.

(28)
Philip Longworth, *The Unending Vigil*. London:
Leo Cooper, 1967, p.96.

(29)
Geoff Dyer, *The Missing of the Somme*. London:
Penguin, 1995, p.126.

(30)
Stephen Zweig, in Thomas Lacquer, 'Memory
and Naming in the Great War' in John Gillis (ed.)
Commemorations. Princeton: Princeton University
Press: 1994, pp.150–168, p.154

honour those still living. This explains our 'queasiness when we are commemorated'.[26] Secondly, the erection of memorials is intended (but does not always achieve) to be a terminal act, indicating closure and the completion of a segment of historical past. Monuments are crucial icons in the official act of closure, the ultimate solidification in the 'discourse of big words': 'heroism', 'gallantry', 'glory', 'victory' and, though only occasionally, 'peace'.

Naming and knowing

In his account of building the Menin Gate at Ypres, Sir Reginald Blomfield identified the single greatest problem in achieving an appropriate design for his war memorial: 'I had to find space for a vast number of names, estimated at first at some 40,000 but increased as we went on to about 58,600.'[27] Yet despite spreading the names over 1200 panels across walls, arches, columns and even the stairwells, Blomfield could fit only 54,896 names into the elongated tunnel-like arch. Expediently, the names of 'an excess of nearly 6000' were transferred to national burial sites nearby.[28] Further south the design of the gigantic arch at Thiepval was dictated by the need to display the names of 73,367 men with no known resting place who had died during the Battle of the Somme. Designed by Edwin Lutyens, the arch consists of sixteen enormous load-bearing columns each faced by stone panels carved to a height of some six metres, the words never quite beyond legibility. It is, as Geoff Dyer reflects, a monument to the 'untellable'[29] while also being a monument that is 'unphotographable'; no image can capture its daunting scale, its weight and the panorama of names—'So interminably many', Stephen Zweig notes, 'that as on the columns of the Alhambra, the writing becomes decorative'.[30] It is also unnervingly precise in both its grammar and specificity. Individuals who may have served (and died) under assumed or false names are listed, common surnames—Smith, Jones, Hughes—are further identified by their roll number and the memorial also features an addendum and even a corrigendum. It is a gargantuan roll of honour created in brick and stone. As Shepheard has convincingly argued, it is this painstaking attention to detail—the assiduous 'clip and mow and prune' and the insistence on specificity at every level—that makes

The Menin Gate, designed by
Reginald Blomfield, Common
War Graves Commission,
Ypres, Belgium

(31)

Paul Shepheard, *The Cultivated Wilderness: or, what is landscape?* Cambridge: MIT Press, 1997, p.227.

(32)

Alistair Horne, *'The Price of Glory': Verdun*, 1916. New York: Marshall Cavendish, 1984, p.228.

(33)

Fabian Ware, 'The Price of Peace', *The Listener*, 2, 1929, pp.636–7.

(34)

Michael Heffernan, 'Forever England: the Western Front and the politics of remembrance in Britain', *Ecumene*, 2 (3) 1995, p.302.

(35)

Alex King, *Memorials of the Great War in Britain: the Symbolism and Politics of Remembrance*. Oxford: Berg, 1998, pp.184–185.

(36)

Nicholas Penny, "Amor publicus posuit": monuments for the people and of the people', *The Burlington Magazine*, 129, no.1017, December 1987, pp.793–800, p.794.

(37)

Thomas Lacquer, 'The past's past', *London Review of Books*, 19 September 1996, pp.3–7.

it possible for the Commonwealth War Graves Cemeteries to commemorate the dead without glorifying war.[31]

Naming, and the evocation of names, was central to the cult of commemoration after the Great War. As a process, it mirrored the complex bureaucracies developed by the industrial armies during years of total war; the administration of death echoed the military machine that had become rationalised, routinised and standardised.[32] However, it was not until Fabian Ware had established a War Graves Registration Unit that a systematic audit of the dead and their place of burial could be achieved. By mid-1916 Ware's hastily contrived organisation had registered over 50,000 graves, answered 5000 enquiries and supplied over 2500 photographs.[33] It was a remarkable achievement; the dead would no longer pass back into the private world of their families and loved ones. They had been rendered 'official property' to be accorded appropriate civic commemoration in 'solemn monuments of official remembrance'.[34]

Lacquer has pointed out the epistemological shift that came out of Ware's founding work; here, a new era of remembrance began—the era of the common soldier's name. This marked a radical break from the customs of the nineteenth century. On monumental structures in France and Prussia, naming dead soldiers of all ranks had been occasionally adopted, but this was not the case in Britain. When such a proposal was considered as a way of honouring the dead of Waterloo, it was turned down by Parliament.[35] It was left to military units to initiate and raise the money for memorials that listed all ranks. Usually only officers were named, rankers simply identified by the number of dead.[36] This was certainly the practice after the Crimea, but by the end of the Boer War it had become commonplace for local military memorials in Britain to contain lists of those who had died, often denoting rank—a practice that was avoided after the Great War largely to connote 'equality of sacrifice' irrespective of class, rank or status.

After the Armistice of 1918, the administration of death and grieving became highly regulated and was marked by a historically unprecedented planting of names on the landscapes of battle.[37] Indeed, the very words chosen for the Stone of Remembrance in each of the larger

cemeteries underlines this fact: 'Their name liveth evermore'—a phrasing that caused Lutyens to ask, 'But what are names?'. For the bereaved, however, names were often all that was left.

Place and the 'anxiety of erasure'

While names can be recovered or even recuperated from the past, language strains to depict the calamity and depravity of modern war. As T.S. Eliot wrote, words crack 'and sometimes break under the burden, under the tension, slip, slide, perish'.[38] John Masefield, writer and future poet laureate, had no available vocabulary to describe his first sight of the Somme battlefield in 1916. 'To say that the ground is "ploughed up" with shells is to talk like a child', he complained, 'to call it mud would be misleading':

> It was not like any mud I've ever seen. It was a kind of stagnant river, too thick to flow, yet too wet to stand, and it had a kind of glisten and shine on it like reddish cheese, but it was not solid at all and you left no tracks in it, they all closed over, and you went in over your boots at every step and sometimes up to your calves. Down below it there was a solid footing, and as you went slopping along the army went slopping along by your side, and splashed you from head to foot.[39]

Almost every battlefield visitor called it 'indescribable'. And yet, every battlefield visitor tried to describe it in words; indeed, many thousands of pages were filled trying to define and describe the trauma that had been visited upon this small tract of northern France. The spectacle of abject ruination drew pilgrims, just as it draws tourists today, to dwell and stare in dread fascination and awed respect. However, when considering these as commemorative sites, the 'spectacle' was often little more than a cleared tract of land to which historic significance had to be attached. It often took negative form; it was a spectacle of absence, a potent emptiness of flattened earth, ruined and shattered forms. As sites of memory though, these obscure places loom huge in the popular imagination.

Identifying, conserving and managing these 'places we want to keep' because they are deemed to have layers of significance is strewn with competing demands. As Freestone argues, the structures and relationships between

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Thomas Stern Eliot, 'Burnt Norton', *Collected Poems: 1909–1962*. London: Faber, 1963.

(39)

John Masefield, letter to his wife, 21 October 1916, reproduced in Constance Babington Smith, *John Masefield: A Life*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978, p.164.

Headstones, Commonwealth War Graves Commission, Ypres Salient, Belgium

Ataturk Memorial, with words attributed to Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, Anzac Cove, Ariburnu, Canakkale battlefield Gallipoli historical area, Turkey

the many sets of stakeholders who have some authority over a given 'site of memory' are 'complex, incomplete, sometimes unfair, confused, and conflicting'. [40] Elsewhere in this volume, we have explored the challenge of preserving former battlefields. We have seen the tracery of commemoration since Gettysburg in the mid-1860s through the cinder-fields of Verdun and Vaux, the razed villages of Oradour and the bloodied beaches of Normandy, to the horror of Hiroshima and more recent killing fields in Cambodia. On each of these sites of trauma, the moral resonance of the site is paramount. In so many of these places the grassed over trenches, mounds, lumps and apparently barren tracts have been preserved because they are held as iconic historical traces that have assumed an air of unassailable ethical authority. In previous sections of this volume, we have seen visitors and pilgrims have been continuously drawn to places that seem to contain the memory of overwhelming events. The commemorative terrain around the Bastille, the grassy knoll in downtown Dallas or the ash hills of Fort Douaumont are now regarded as secular shrines capable of evoking memories of breathtaking events. Landscapes of trauma are still regarded by many as inviolable spaces that cannot be airbrushed, digitally manipulated or edited beyond recognition, though many such sites have indeed been purposefully levelled or razed, buildings ground to dust to try to erase a sordid past. As Claudia Koonz states so eloquently, only topography may be capable of conveying the narrative of extermination. 'At these places of remembering, memory feels monolithic, unambiguous, and terrible.' [41] There is a palpable tension between the need to identify sites of trauma and their permanent preservation as places of memory. Designation as a heritage site forever alters the character of an area, which 'thus becomes monumental and historic with potential consequences for the sense of place held by insiders and outsiders'. [42]

The former battlefields perched on the tip of the Dardanelles peninsula in western Turkey offer a telling example of a heritage site that has been spasmodically contested by 'insiders and outsiders' since British Empire troops evacuated its bloody ridges and exposed beaches in December 1915 and early January 1916. The defence of Gallipoli was a victory for the Turkish army—their single triumph

(40)
Robert Freestone 'From icons to institutions: heritage conservation in Sydney', *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 1 (2) 1995, pp.79–90.

(41)
Claudia Koonz, 'Between memory and oblivion: concentration camps in German memory', in John Gillis (ed.) *Commemorations*. Princeton: Princeton University Press: 1994, pp.258–280, p.258.

(42)
Graham Ashworth and Brian Graham (eds.) *Senses of Place: Senses of Time*. London: Ashgate, 2005, p.151

in five campaigns—but until very recently this might not have been the first impression gained by any visitor.

The peninsula is peppered with war memorials, battlefield museums, facsimile trench lines and military cemeteries. The main period of cemetery planning and memorial building took place in the 1920s when the IWGC assumed responsibility for situating and planning 31 cemeteries and five Allied memorials. [43] They are carved in the restrained neoclassical style that characterises the work of the IWGC, work that was carried out in the most severe climactic, geological and socio-political conditions. The principal architect, Sir John Burnet, bemoaned the insecure ground, poor drainage and the propensity of the impoverished locals to remove stone and metal intended for the Commission. He also had to work in an emotionally charged context, brokering a clamorous lobby by Australian and New Zealand ex-servicemen to designate the entire 'Anzac' area as consecrated ground, a lobby that, while unsuccessful at the time, would later lay the foundation for territory disputes that have become spasmodically inflamed since the Turkish government agreed to the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923.

As for marking their part in the campaign, there was no comparable response from the Turkish authorities until the 1950s and then again in the late 1960s when a number of imposing modernist structures were built at Cape Helles, the most southern point of the peninsula. During the late 1980s a number of traditional Islamic memorial sites were built and, in the last decade, several large figurative statues—some of them strident, even bombastic, in tenor—have been located at Anzac Beach and Helles Point. Although the war ended in Turkey in 1916, a battle for monumental supremacy has been waged ever since. Turkish and Commonwealth memorial sites are located uncomfortably close to each other on the cliffs over the once disputed beaches and immense statues of Turkish heroes stand face-to-face with CWGC obelisks, locked in 'parallel monologues'. [44] On the eve of the 80th anniversary of the Allied landings in 1995, the Turkish authorities supplemented the martial statuary with an ambitious—but not uncontroversial—planting regime designed to dress the battlefield with appropriate symbolic floral designs. [45]

Two years later the Turkish government announced a competition for a new 330,000-hectare park dedicated to peace at Gallipoli. Although a winning design was chosen, there has been little (indeed no apparent) progress in advancing the scheme and the only physical changes on the peninsula have been the unplanned encroachment of villas and an irreversible road-widening programme intended to facilitate the tens of thousands of visitors (many from Australasia, but increasingly from Turkey) who want to visit. In recent years Australian and New Zealand visitors have become concerned at the unsightly violation of a place they deem to be essential to their origins and identity as modern nations. Their objection and resistance appear to be having no impact. Instead the Turkish state has started to reassert its own authority and the moral ownership of the former battle ground has shifted palpably.

As a hallowed site of national memory, the identification and preservation of a battlefield as a physical and inviolable entity can help maintain a consciousness of the past, which is 'essential to maintenance of purpose in life, since without memory we would lack all sense of continuity, all apprehension of causality, all knowledge of our identity'. [46] However, as is evident on the contested ravines and beaches of the Dardanelles, memory, identity and purpose are seldom shared values, especially between nations thousands of miles apart. Nevertheless, if landscape is the most powerful prompter of collective memory, then preserved battlefield sites can help to make material the experience of war and evoke profound reflections. Despite the need for occasional artifice, battlefields are especially significant as memorial landscapes because they 'challenge us to recall basic realities of historical experience, especially those of death, suffering and sacrifice'. [47]

Beyond space: Counter-memorials

Perhaps some of the most radical developments in the evolution of commemorative form emanated in Germany in the 1980s, as a young generation of artists and writers began to face up to the concealed and repressed recent past of their nation. Building on the maxim of John Latham and the Artist Placement Group that asserts that 'the context is half the [art]work', artists and cultural interventionists such as Jochen Gerz worked from the premise that memory is fluid and contingent and that, consequently, it is

[43]
Philip Longworth, *The Unending Vigil*. London: Leo Cooper, 1967.

[44]
Rosie Ayliffe, Mark Dubin and John Gawthorp, *Turkey: the Rough Guide*. London: Harrap Columbus, 1991.

[45]
Paul Gough, 'Conifers and Commemoration: the Politics and Protocol of Planting In Military Cemeteries', *Landscape Research*, 21 (1) 1996, pp.73–87.

[46]
David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985, p.103.

[47]
R.M. Rainey, 'The memory of war: reflections on battlefield preservation', in R.L. Austin (ed.) *Yearbook of landscape architecture*. New York: Van Nostrund Reinold, 1983, pp.68–89. See also: Michael Lambek, *The Weight of the Past*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002.

Reflecting Absence, architect
Michael Arad and landscape
architect Peter Walker,
The National September 11
Memorial, Westfield World
Trade Center, New York, USA

neither possible nor desirable to insist on a single, objective and authoritative reading of any place or historic moment. [48] The key concepts behind these actions produced 'negative' or 'invisible' forms. Anti-matter and the ephemeral were preferred over verticality and solidity, dislocation and disturbance premised over comfort and reconciliation. Now regarded as the origins of the 'counter-monument', the conceptual basis was articulated by contextual fine artists who asserted that fixed statuary induces national amnesia, rather than meaningful acts of remembering. Their principle aim was to register protest or disagreement with the 'untenable prime object' (invariably, the 'hero on the horse'—the plinth-bound exalted statue) and to stage an alternative that might arouse reflection and debate, however uncomfortable or radical. [49]

Through their extraordinary interventions, artists such as Christian Boltanski, Jochen Gerz and Krzysztof Wodiczko were not 'commemorating' particular wars as such, instead they were offering up a complex critique of how nations repressed or subverted uncomfortable memory. One example brilliantly illustrates the radical shifts in the nature of commemoration brought about by such thinking. The *Harburg Monument Against War and Fascism and for Peace* was unveiled in October 1986 by Jochen Gerz and Esther Shalev-Gerz, but had 'disappeared' by November 1993, not through vandalism or theft but to meet the artist's radical agenda. Having asked the critical question 'What do we need another monument for?' and replied, 'We have too many already', they created a monument that would gradually disappear and, in so doing, challenge the traditional connotations of permanence, durability and 'authoritarian rigidity' normally attributed to monuments. [50] In a nondescript suburb of Hamburg in an obscure pedestrian mall, they unveiled a forty-foot-high, three-foot-square pillar of hollow aluminium, sheathed in a layer of soft lead. A temporary inscription in several languages invited all citizens of the town to add their names—and so 'commit ourselves to be vigilant'—and become aware that over time the column would gradually be lowered into the ground. 'In the end', concluded the inscription, 'it is only we ourselves who can rise up against injustice'. As sections of the tower were inscribed with graffiti—names, messages, obscenities, political slogans and aerosol-painted tags—it was lowered into its chamber until all that was left was a simple

(48)
John Latham, quoted in David Harding and Pavel Buchler, *DECADEnt: public art, contentious term and contested practice*. Glasgow: Foulis Press, 1997, p.15.

(49)
Sergiusz Michalski, *Public Monuments: Art in Political Bondage, 1870–1997*. London: Reaktion, 1988.

(50)
James Young, *At Memory's Edge: After-images of the Holocaust in contemporary art and architecture*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000, p.128.

capstone. Provocative and uncomfortable, the vanishing monument returned the burden of memory to visitors. As Young notes, 'All that stands here are the memory-tourists, forced to rise and remember for themselves.' [51] In France, Gerz transformed a stereotypical provincial memorial to Les Morts of the First World War by gathering statements, reminiscences and observations from local inhabitants about their feelings and responses to the existing memorial, inscribing some of them on to plaques that were then affixed to the stonework. The intervention is planned to carry on, possibly for years, each new inscription covering the others and radiating from the locus of 'official' memory.

While counter-monuments are often shocking in their confrontational polemic, can it be said that they have subverted the cultures of commemoration? Have they reinvigorated the material form of memory-creation? In northern Europe, recently built war museums—at L'Historial, Péronne and In Flanders Fields, Ypres, for example—have engaged more fully with their audiences, creating participatory and interactive exhibits that genuinely attempt to engage all levels of involvement and suffering. However, only miles away, the former battle grounds of the old Western Front are being systematically bedecked with monumentalia of uneven aesthetic quality, occasionally based on dubious history. Capital cities such as London are being liberally furnished with additional monuments—from women's contribution in the Second World War to animals who died in wars—arches, memorial gateways and other commemorative *objets de memoire* designed to stave off that 'anxiety of erasure' felt by generations of combatants and their relatives for whom their war contribution is fast fading.

How will the 'war on terror' be remembered? If the 'war' is ever resolved, what commemorative forms might result? If closure is one day achieved, what will be its inscription and markers? Will it find commemorative shape in three dimensions? Pervasive warfare may be matched by pervasive technologies of commemoration. The public space that once housed the reverential monuments of the twentieth century has become fragmented, serialised and digitally accessible as a consequence of the rapid expansion of communications technologies and digital cultures. In an age when the local has exploded, it is now understood that

'the Internet provides a medium in which public art can be created specifically for non-localized, interactive and lasting memorializations'. [52]

One example illustrates this transformation: *The Numbers and the Names* is an online memorial to 9/11. It was created by Mac Dunlop and Neil Jenkins, with a visual prologue by Annie Lovejoy, as a component of an extensive collaborative art project. Eschewing the naming of names, the four-dimensional memorial consists of words drawn from Dunlop's poem '11.09.01'. [53] Using an orbital engine created by Jenkins, they float on a colourless screen in a steady rotation around a central void. The order in which they appear is generated according to an inverse reading of the viewer's IP address and those of previous visitors to the website. The visitor-participant can use the mouse to slow down or re-orient the orbiting words, but they cannot completely stop or reverse the process. As a virtual monument, *The Numbers and the Names* both records and functions because of the history of mourners who have visited the site; it continues to exist only if visited by those who wish to participate or as long as people continue to show any interest. Whereas many virtual memorial sites are in little more than online petitions, Dunlop's interactive site may indeed represent a paradigm shift in the nature of commemoration.

(51)
Ibid., p.131.

(52)
Annie Gérin, 'The Four-dimensional Monument: Public Art Futures on the World Wide Web', Fuse, 25 (4) 2002, p.11.

(53)
Mac Dunlop, *Here and There*, accessed 11 November 2014, «herenorthere.org/11.09.01».