Lest We Forget: the Shrine of Remembrance, its redevelopment and the heritage of dissent

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The recent redevelopment of the Shrine of Remembrance in Melbourne, entailing the transformation of its undercroft into a museum and the opening up of a new subterranean entrance to its crypt, give one pause to reconsider the iconic status of such monuments and the role played by public architecture in the formation of public sentiments. This is particularly so given efforts in the past to imbue war memorials like the Shrine with a quasi-spiritual or sacred character. One would expect their subsequent alteration to be deemed irreverent given this sacred endowment. Consideration should given the motivation for such redevelopment to renew war memorials and make them culturally relevant all the while avoiding the so-called 'trap' of glorifying war.

The Shrine (Phillip Hudson & James Wardrop, 1934) and its adaptive re-use (Ashton Raggat McDougall [ARM], in collaboration with landscape architects Catherine Rush & Michael Wright) provides an opportunity to question changing sensibilities towards war, its commemoration and interpretation. Moreover, these circumstances also beg consideration of the capacity of one or the other design brief—indeed architecture itself—to anticipate the complex reception of such memorials. They require thoughtfulness of the kinds of disruptions to individual lives and communities provoked by the events these buildings commemorate and the political circumstances that throw grief onto the public stage allowing it to become, possibly, dissent. Additionally, the Shrine and its redevelopment raise questions as to how to write about the life of these buildings over time. They require thought as to how history-writing is itself one of the discourses which imbues architecture with an obvious political and ethical charge.

Comments on the Shrine redevelopment in the architectural media describe how its designers achieved the aim of "avoiding the dangers of glorification" and national chauvinism attending past eulogies to 'God and Country' presumably associated with memorials, particularly to World War I.[1] Meanwhile, government and representatives of the veterans' community are pleased with increased attendance rates at the redeveloped Shrine and more generally, with the growing popularity of Anzac and Remembrance Days, above all among young people. Participation in parades and sunrise services across Australia and visits to Anzac Cove at Gallipoli are commended. One can rightly ask whether a memorial in itself and, equally, its rehabilitation, can engender a particular attitude towards war or a museum cultivate one by manipulating the experience

of visitors inside. Likewise, motivations for visiting the Shrine or attending an Anzac Day parade are hard to second-guess. Both sets of outcomes are likely the result of varied practices at places like the Shrine, including curatorship and proper or decorous behaviour. These reinforce values within the community, entailing the significance of days of commemoration promulgated by governments and the media rather than a designer's intentions alone or a spontaneous swelling of national spirit per se. Both practices and values have attended the transformation of the Shrine into a museum, whereby a past of conflict, grief and dissent in all its disorder is presented in a potentially myopic light.

This article argues that the representational schema of the Shrine redevelopment along with commentary on it have served to obscure at least one aspect of the monument's heritage. This neglected or repressed aspect is a particularly important one given controversy generated by Australia's involvement in the recent Iraqi War. Part of the monument's heritage is that it has served as a prompt for certain kinds of 'unauthorised' grief accompanying protests there. It has had, from the beginning, a subversive aspect in which grief has played a part—sometimes condoned, at other times forbidden. One instance of the latter was the particular anguish experienced by Victorian women as they fought for compensation for their lost sons during the interwar years. Joy Damousi describes how these women were obliged to stand by while their pain was renamed 'glory and honour', partly through the construction of monuments like the Shrine of Remembrance. She reminds us how:

> …'sacrifice' has a history. Historians of war have perceived 'sacrifice' as a static category, and in doing so have treated the representation and experience of mothers' grief as unchanging. But such a perspective ignores how the grieving mother's role in the public domain shifted from being that of a participant to that of a marginalised other.[2]

Alternatively, one can say that sacrifice was never a static category and that states (and memorials) have always manipulated grief to their own ends. This article argues that commentary on the Shrine redevelopment runs a similar risk of treating grief as unchanging and chauvinism as something easily identified and left behind. One way in which aggrieved and dissenting voices can be marginalised is by placing undue emphasis on contrasts in style and national sentiment between the 'heroic' character of monuments to the world wars and the more, supposedly circumspect disposition of recent projects like the Shrine redevelopment. In its planning and didactic relationship to Hudson & Wardrop's original building, its relationship to the ground and inclusion of a subterranean entrance and other details, ARM's scheme draws on, though in fact, composes, a gap separating the symbolic effects of traditional war memorials and an 'anti-monumentality' seemingly called for today. Commentary on the scheme, particularly where history is invoked to stress its validity for our times, further widens this gap. A history of varied curatorial practices, public behaviours and values attending the commemoration of war become subsumed by insinuation of a more singular process forming national identity, a particularly subversive intent, ethical or recuperative function behind the transformation of the Shrine and its precinct.

To explore these themes, the following sections of the article describe the character of the Shrine of Remembrance as originally built, its redevelopment and forms of dissent that occurred there by first counterpoising features of monuments from the 1920s and 1930s with the idea of the 'counter-' or 'anti-monument' of more recent times. Emphasis is placed on the opposing formal relationship of each type of memorial to the ground plane. The neoclassicism and sobriety associated with Hudson & Wardrop's hilltop Shrine is contrast with the modern and provocative character of ARM's renovations where reflection, not only on the sacrifice of those who gave their lives but on the meaning of war itself, is intended. Next, the article will relate commentary on the Shrine redevelopment entailing views of its national, historical and philosophical significance. The views of one commentator, in particular, are singled out as they were cited in the Victorian parliament in support of the Shrine of Remembrance amendment bill. They sanction, inadvertently no doubt, an official reading of the monument's contribution to national identity and heritage, thereby obfuscating its other role as a focus for dissent.

Monuments and anti-monuments

The history of the Shrine of Remembrance, the impetus behind its design and more recent redevelopment, encompass different understandings of the role of the monument in the life of the city and nation. Contrast the period witnessing the construction of monuments to the global wars of the first half of the twentieth century to that which sees the building of 'anti-monuments' in the latter decades of the century. In his study of public monuments and politics from 1870 to 1997, Serquisz Michalski described how the monumental building forms of large scale and visual prominence have given way in recent decades to more ephemeral, invisible or inverted designs, becoming a means of "engendering reflection on the limitations of monumental imagery".[3] This move, varied in character and distinctiveness from one project to another and from one nation to another—particularly from the West to the nations of the former Soviet Bloc where monumentalism persisted longer—was propelled by newly emerging aesthetic currents. It entailed the rejection of other, seemingly outmoded trends. It would be useful to cite a few of these trends and key projects—designs which are thought to render invisible, invert or otherwise question readings of traditional monuments—as these prefigure in some way motives guiding the redevelopment of Melbourne's Shrine, most notably its subterranean workings. This inversion of the forms and meaning of traditional monuments can be seen in instances where designers are most conscious of working with the ground plane and of subverting common expectations for memorials which rest upon the ground in particular and, generally, obvious ways.

Public monuments built in the decades immediately after World War I and II generally engaged with the ground in a familiar manner, rising nobly above it, their scale and visual prominence accentuated by their being placed on a hill or by being centrally-placed within a bounded domain. Thanks to considerable earthworks, this was the case with Melbourne's Shrine. They were placed within a square and enclosed by streets and parklands, for instance as with Sydney's Anzac Memorial at the southern end of Hyde Park, designed by C Bruce Dellit with sculptures by Raynor Hoff and completed in 1934. Or, they were enclosing

in themselves, placed at the terminus of an axis formed between other monuments or given wings. This occurred at the Australian National War Memorial in Canberra, largely completed in 1941 with subsequent extensions, which removed the visitor from mundane surroundings and introduces them to a more, presumably sacred terrain.

What is interesting about the neoclassical or beaux-arts formality of most of these monuments is that just as they were placed firmly on the ground, they likewise positioned the spectator within a given domain that was read, for lack of a better term, 'monumentally'. Drawing on and contributing to an international language of monuments, for instance, a construction like the Sydney Cenotaph, designed by artist Edgar Bertram Mackennal and completed in 1929, can be easily compared to the Cenotaph in Whitehall, London designed by Edwin Lutyens and completed in 1920. This occurred in terms of the close resemblance of their forms as well as the obvious and recorded stylistic derivation of one from the other.

Inviting culturally-derived and historically-situated modes of interpretation, such projects were capable of provoking both praise and condemnation for their aesthetic attributes just as their visual prominence in the city has encouraged acts of veneration and sometimes, political action or protest. While familiarity with their customary forms, surroundings and approaches raises certain expectations for such monuments, these are hardly unequivocal. For example, Donald Richardson recorded public reactions to the Sydney Cenotaph and criticisms of the design voiced prior to its completion. These included objections to its squat appearance, lack of an elevated site, the constrained space of Martin Place where the monument stands, as well the exact positioning of the accompanying statues of soldiers and the details—mismatched it seems, particularly the leggings—of their uniforms.[4]

Many monuments to the world wars, typified by the familiar form of the cenotaph, draw our attention to the ground in other ways, apart from it being a place that was high or low, properly bounded and sacred or profaned by everyday enterprise. Honouring those killed in battle, the cenotaph drew on the longstanding iconography of tombs and burial places, directing our attention to a place sanctified by the dead, though not containing corporal remains per se. Speaking more generally of monuments to war than the forms of cenotaphs alone, tombs for unknown soldiers allowed for particular remains to represent or stand in for those of the multitude resting far from native lands. This collapse of geographical distance to create a heightened sense of the sacred was reinforced in monuments of different kinds which used indigenous materials, particular native stone, in their construction. The recently completed Australian War Memorial in London, by the architectural firm of Tonkin Zulaikha Greer, developed this technique with considerable effort and expense opting for large quantities of imported, finely worked and extensively engraved, greenish Australian granite instead of the Portland stone that covered many of London's monuments and buildings.

Intertwined aesthetic traditions, formal and constructional techniques for relating monuments to the ground, physically, tectonically and metaphorically were thought to be subverted by more ephemeral or invisible monuments established

in the latter decades of the twentieth century. Many key anti-monuments from the 1970s and 1980s have been designed in response to wars and their attendant horrors, most notably the Holocaust accompanying World War II. These events represented for some a number of 'black-holes' in the western imagination of disaster or were described as "the very anti-matter of culture and civilisation".[5] Here were instances where figure-ground relationships were inverted, where the ground and voids-in-the-ground were used to question traditional monumental forms and imagery. These were evocative of Claes Oldenburg's 1965 sculptural one-liner of an underground memorial and tomb for John F Kennedy, being an inverted and buried colossal statue of the assassinated president, or Oldenburg's realised *Placid Civic Monument*, being the installation and filming of a hole dug, then filled, by municipal gravediggers behind the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1967. Some projects were relatively modest in scale though involved great effort. Consider, for instance, Horst Hoheisel's *Aschrott Fountain Monument* in Kassel (1988), where the abstracted form of a belle-epoque fountain, donated by a Jewish manufacturer to the city in 1908 and destroyed by local Nazis in 1939, was recreated in concrete. It was displayed for a week at City Hall Square, before being turned upside down and buried twelve metres beneath the ground.[6]

A process of discovery and open-ended questioning—of the past, of the former configuration of the site with its now buried replica fountain and of this particular and local instance of barbarism—was intended as part of the act of commemoration orchestrated by Hoheisel. Questioning and attending uncertainty was built into Jochen Gerz's *Memorial Against Racism* created in the forecourt of Saarbrücken Castle (1990-93). The artist collected the names of 2,146 Jewish cemeteries, both existing and destroyed and inscribed them on an equal number of cobbles placed face-downwards, along with other, blank or un-inscribed stones to form the paving of the courtyard. Visitors, being unaware exactly which stones served as symbols of destroyed burial places, were meant to feel certain uneasiness at the thought of physical contact. The artist drew on a widespread, culturally-based fear of desecration to manipulate sentimental responses to the place. Two years later, in 1995, Micha Ullman created a subterranean room beneath the cobblestones of Bebelplatz in Berlin. Its walls were lined by empty bookshelves to commemorate the burning of books there by Nazi students in 1933. A small, plaque nearby was all that alerted the pedestrian to what lay beneath and what once happened there. Viewing access was provided by a partially opaque window set into the ceiling of the subterranean room. Again, this unusual way of positioning the design and viewing it was intended to provoke thoughtfulness of the events it commemorated.

In the same year, 1995, an ill-fated open competition for the highly-prominent Berlin Holocaust Memorial, a central national monument to the Holocaust, unearthed a scheme for a gigantic, *platz*-sized hole, 80 by 60 by 50m, to be excavated in the heart of the city. This lost out to the winning entry, Christine Jackob-Marks' design for a monolithic tombstone inscribed with the names of the murdered Jews, though both were forgotten when Chancellor Helmut Kohl cancelled the project due to ensuing controversy, largely over the language of commemoration used.[7] Though its successor, the result of a second closed design competition in 1998 and much political wrangling by Kohl, Peter Eisenman's *Forest of Pillars*, was only recently completed above ground, it remains reminiscent of the negative model for monuments established by Oldenburg's,

Hoheisel and Gerz's earlier designs. In reproducing the form of the neoclassical cenotaph 2,700 times in a vast field of concrete plinths, each of the pillars loses its positive formal or figural coherency through reiteration while the void between them becomes a labyrinth within which visitors are intended to walk and reflect.

An obvious reference for the Shrine of Remembrance redevelopment, given its popularity with designers, was Maya Lin's Vietnam Veteran's Memorial in Washington (1982), which represented yet another departure from the prominent, neoclassical, object-based monuments to the world wars. Though initially described by its detractors in derogatory terms as a kind of open wound or 'wailing wall' and so, an apologetic response to conflict, the designer's response to site and the ground was more abstract than these metaphors suggested. One commentator saw the project as elegiac, more representative of grief in general than regret over one, particularly unjust war.[8] Lin's gesture of cutting into the low hill forming the site created a void between two vertical surfaces. These increased in height relative to the visitor and enclosed them as they moved along a path towards the junction of the planes. It was a design move which attempted to gradually introduce visitors to a space for contemplation remaining, nonetheless, open to the surrounding parkland. The oppositional character of the Vietnam Veteran's Memorial, compared to other traditional, more prominent or figurative monuments, was reinforced by the careful positioning of the open ends of its angled walls, so that they pointed to the landmarks of the Washington and Lincoln memorials their bases forming, as it were, the distant horizon. Accounts of the Vietnam Veteran's Memorial invariably include reference to controversy generated by the scheme and the attempt to placate more conservative critics with the addition of the trio of bronze soldiers at one end.[9]

The contrast of monument and anti-monument is perhaps useful for comparing the architectural styles of memorials, though one should not assume too direct a correlation between the forms of one versus the other and patterns of belief characterising the times in which they were built. To do so risks overly generalising the motives prompting the construction of memorials, their interpretation and subsequent reception. It can allow style to stand in for those generalisations. Neoclassical monuments of the kind typified by cenotaphs might well provide a convenient stylistic counterpoint to more modern designs like the Shrine redevelopment. However, they too possessed a degree of open-endedness as the various assessments of the aesthetic merits of Sydney's Cenotaph suggest. The monumentality of many memorials to the world wars was not universally accepted as an appropriate response to war and its aftermath. Hence, one finds a record not only of wide-ranging criticisms of their design, placement and size, appearance and detailing, but also cost and a lack of agreement as to how one might use them appropriately—responses which were largely absent when plans for the Shrine redevelopment were unveiled. Even with the class of lesser monuments like the countless attendant statues of World War I soldiers that populate the smallest of country towns in Australia and which were more or less purchased off-the-shelf, there remained enough variation in their forms to allow for individual choice and discernment. While, as Kenneth Inglis has suggested, memorials in capital cities and rural communities were instrumental in building consensus and consolidating common attitudes towards conflict, the good, just

and sacred, they nonetheless allowed for multiple interpretations of the meaning of monumental forms, a fact which is easily overlooked today.[10]

Likewise, the political reception of prominent memorials like the Shrine of Remembrance was equally equivocal, so it would hard to suggest that they were, on the whole, based on a collective desire to glorify war or a singular reading of one particular style. In other words, the reception of monuments needs to be distinguished from the motivations for building one or the other while their popular appeal is another, different issue yet again. Though some language exists, in period accounts or inscribed on the memorials themselves to suggest otherwise, our predecessors were as equally aware of the pitfalls of celebrating military might as commentators are expected to be today. Inglis showed how caricaturists working in the years following World War I effectively turned the language of neoclassicism to subversive purposes. They lampooned monuments, cenotaphs, columns and statues of soldiers and the Shrine of Remembrance itself and subverted more conventional messages with epithets like "To Those Who Were Fooled" or which were intended, in a nod to Samuel Coleridge, for "Those Who Returned Sadder But Wiser Men".[11] Likewise, memorials could provide a focus for different kinds of dissent, not only for pro- or anti-war protests. Common appreciation of the forms and features of such memorials may have facilitated caricature, though obviously, aesthetic interests were merely an initial provocation for dissenting voices. One particular cartoon, for instance, showing under-employed veterans or 'diggers' literally 'digging' site works and providing cheap labour for the construction of the Shrine of Remembrance, offered not-so-veiled criticism of government failure to provide a worthwhile livelihood for returned soldiers. It was not, however, a criticism of the Australian government in joining the war effort per se.[12]

The Shrine of Remembrance, its redevelopment and protests

In 1921, at a public meeting in Melbourne's town hall to commemorate the 114,000 Victorians who served and the many that died in World War I, a fund was established to build what would become the Shrine of Remembrance. The City Council and Victorian government each contributed to the fund which was also opened to public subscription. A total of £250,000 was raised, a considerable amount given that the 1920s and 1930s formed a period of considerable economic hardship in the state, as elsewhere. A competition was held and Melbourne architects and World War I veterans Hudson & Wardrop were given the prize. Their design was, as was commonly the case of war memorials of the period, strongly inspired by antique, primarily Greek, models.

Whereas the design was evocative of two of the Wonders of the Ancient World— reminiscent of the portico of the Parthenon superimposed over the Mausoleum of Halicarnarssus—it was criticised by the press, particularly by Keith Murdoch, father of Rupert, on the grounds of its grandiosity, the severity of its design and great expense. Murdoch labelled the building a "tomb of gloom".[13] Chair of the executive committee initiating the project and former commander of Australian forces during the war, General Sir John Monash came under attack by some Christian commentators as having been responsible for the pagan character of the design given the apparent absence of crosses and other emblems of the faith. Monash, incidentally, was Jewish.[14]

Given such criticism the Victorian government abandoned the project, proposing instead a more modest cenotaph for a newly designed square at the top of Bourke Street in front of Parliament House. Requiring the demolition of Windsor Hotel, a favourite watering hole for Melburnians, this scheme was also criticised. Marshalling support from *The Age* newspaper, and turning the 1927 Anzac Day parade into a demonstration of 30,000 veterans in support of the St Kilda Road monument, Monash eventually won the day and the government acquiesced to the new design.[15] Construction began in 1928 and the Shrine was opened at 11:00am on Remembrance Sunday, 11 November 1934, an hour and day when, famously, a shaft of light falls from the memorial's roof to illuminate a Stone of Remembrance inside. Monash, incidentally, formerly a civil engineer in the years before 1914, took personal charge of construction and reworded the inscription Hudson had proposed for the Shrine's west façade:[16]

> LET ALL MEN KNOW THAT THIS IS HOLY GROUND. THIS SHRINE, ESTABLISHED IN THE HEARTS OF MEN AS ON THE SOLID EARTH, COMMEMORATES A PEOPLE'S FORTITUDE AND SACRIFICE. YE THEREFORE THAT COME AFTER, GIVE REMEMBRANCE.

Critics launched a renewed attack on the project, this time for the absence of Christian references or, in fact, any religious references at all in the inscription. However, by the time these were voiced, and before his cherished project could be completed, Monash was spared such vitriol. Having died in 1931, he found a place to dwell less self-righteous than Melbourne.

Hudson & Wardrop's design was added to on several occasions, most notably, with the addition of a forecourt on its north side, an Eternal Flame and 12.5m Cenotaph to honour the veterans of World War II. Subsequent additions or inscriptions followed the Korean, Vietnam and Gulf wars. In the 1990s, restoration of the terraces surrounding the main building of the Shrine more clearly revealed the development potential of the undercroft, a large, space under the building that gave the structure its height resulting from its position atop a largely hollow artificial hill. At the time, the undercroft was occupied with little more than rubble from the time of the memorial's construction. For some time trustees had envisioned transforming the space into galleries of remembrance—a museum, in effect—with interactive displays and other features that would "tell the story of Victorians' history at war from the Boer War through to the Gulf War", as the preamble to the Bill amending the Shrine of Remembrance Act of 1978 set out.[17]

The design brief for the redevelopment revealed two chief, architectural concerns: the insertion of a new programme, being administration, display and educational spaces, into the existing building; and the differentiation of the Shrine Reserve from the surrounding parkland.[18] The scheme by the Melbourne-based firm of ARM, which won a competition for the project, provided for a ground level entrance below the monument through an Entry Courtyard formed by variously angled and sloping walls of red-stained concrete. The Courtyard was placed to the northeast of the undercroft and was mirrored on the opposite side by a similarly enclosed Garden Court. This way of entering the monument from below was radically opposed to the formal approach up to the main space of the Shrine via opposing sets of stairs at each of the cardinal points. Whereas,

the latter approach drew on formal and visual links with the surrounding city and topography, this new means of entering allowed for a series of more constrained, one might say intimate spaces. In these are currently housed a long arcaded entry corridor in which are displayed numerous medals marking military activity, then a foyer and travelling exhibition space, audio-visual area and administrative rooms and public amenities. The attempt at intimacy in the design of the entry was reminiscent in a way of the approach to the Vietnam Veteran's Memorial, while the array of medals in the former compares with the wall of incised names in Maya Lin's design. There the direct comparison stops, for the Vietnam memorial lacks the public amenities and didactic displays of the Shrine.

Importantly, just as the redevelopment allowed for a new way into the Shrine precinct, these display and support spaces provided novel access to the space beneath the Shrine, known as the Crypt. This was formerly reached via opposing flights of stairs downwards from the main chamber of the Shrine itself and so lay beneath the Stone of Remembrance. This new access was made rather dramatically through the Hall of Columns, formerly an unvisited and largely unseen area containing the closely spaced columns carrying the weight of the building above. From the outside, the neoclassical forms of the Shrine were cast in light and shadow of an ancient, imaginary Greek world and the harsh light of a real antipodean one. The solemnity and dark mystery of this new means of entry into the Crypt was evocative of the hypostyle halls of ancient Egyptian temples, idolatry and perhaps, even the adventures of Indiana Jones. The character of the Hall was heightened by the roughness of the brick used to form the columns and lighting, which heightened both their texture and the illusion of near-ruin and which directed the visitor's eye to the darkness of the ceiling some distance above.

The attempt to instil a sense of drama here is familiar. Whatever national, historical or philosophical underpinnings may support the redevelopment or however it may resemble other anti-monuments in its relationship to the ground plane, curatorial practices at museums are increasingly dependent on identifying a certain kind of 'experience' to be had by the visiting public. Such an encounter is seen as a prompt for self-reflection and the basis for fuller understanding of the events explained therein—the experience of visitors to the Shrine redevelopment, for instance, allegedly leading to a fuller understanding of the experiences of those who fought for their nation or sacrificed their lives in war. Calls for the redevelopment of the Shrine of Remembrance, and indeed of war monuments more widely in Australia in recent years, are redolent with fears of forgetting the legacy of past as fewer and fewer citizens have reason, supposedly, to empathise with these experiences of former soldiers. Voicing his support for the Shrine of Remembrance Amendment Bill in 1999, which allowed for the use of its undercroft, Victorian MP for Gippsland, Philip Davis described how the proposed educational display in the new museum of the shrine would:

> create an opportunity to convey a wealth of knowledge to those young people whose only contact with and understanding of the commemoration and remembrance of fallen soldiers is the Anzac Day parades and what they see in the newspapers or on television of the Remembrance Day ceremonies. Many young people do not have the opportunity to understand the significance of such issues simply because of the passage of time and the reticence of their grandparents, who

> may have been involved in World War II, to discuss those conflicts. The experience of Vietnam veterans is such that few are inclined to talk about their experiences and the hazards of those environments.[19]

As Adrian Forty has observed, monuments designed to facilitate our remembrance of certain things and events also work to cause forgetfulness about others.[20] This paradox is equally evident in designs which seek question traditional readings of monuments as glorifying war as those eulogising past glories and honour. Focus on the experience of visitors to memorials for design purposes can also serve the attempt, implicit in the preceding quotation, to manipulate public sensibilities and build consensus towards potentially controversial issues, wars past and present. Questions of the authenticity or sincerity of visitor reactions to such encounters, including the playful actions of children shooting one another behind the columns supporting the Shrine or echoing the ghosts there, will invariably arise. This is because monuments and museums work more to inculcate certain forms of behaviour than to respond to presumably natural or understandable ones in any routine way. In this former enterprise they are not always successful. Political values, alongside standards of public propriety and decorum stamp certain behaviour with the tag 'dissent'.

The Shrine of Remembrance has served as a focus for various experiences of grief and rebellious activities and, likewise, has acted as a site for governing public forms of both. Most notably, anti-Vietnam War demonstrators painted the word 'Peace' on the columns of the north portico of the Shrine in 1971, hints of which remained for some time afterwards. Give public sensitivities and awareness of heritage values, even if pro-war demonstrators had imposed the word 'War' there, the result probably would have been the same: public outcry and arrest. This is to say that attitudes to the commemoration of war sit alongside attitudes to a number of events and values which a memorial might be said to represent, like forms of historical or cultural heritage more broadly conceived. Moreover, to illustrate the particular fluidity of the label 'dissent', consider one demonstration by women at the Shrine in sixty seven years ago. It received a hostile reception by the press at the time, but would likely be welcomed by government officials and veterans today. At the dawn service at the Shrine in Melbourne in 1938 nearly 100 women joined the double file or returned soldiers. *The Age* newspaper reported:

> Women have invaded walks of life, manners and customs that once were thought the sole preserve of man, and man has been the last to question their right. There are times, however, when he feels impelled to voice an objection. Such an occasion was the Dawn ceremony at the Shrine of Remembrance yesterday. In spite of many requests that the observance should be exclusive to men, several hundred women, singly, in groups and with male companions, attended an observance that is peculiarly that not merely of men, but of returned men.[21]

The commentator for *The Age* continued to suggest that it would be "likely that the possibility of excluding these intruders by other means than unheeded appeals will be sought before next Anzac Day."[22]

One sign of the agency of government and the media to authorise particular views of historical events, ennobling some kinds of sacrifice and marginalising others was the space created around war monuments where certain responses to

grief are allowed, though not all, particularly where some are labelled seditious. Whereas women and, particularly, children are widely welcomed at Anzac celebrations today, more so than they were in 1938, any protests on the grounds of memorials are generally regarded with disdain, if not outlawed outright. Counterpoising the demonstration at the Shrine in 1938, on Remembrance Day 2002, two Greens candidates joined other women at the Shrine in a protest against the imminent Iraqi War, enraging some veterans, including Shrine trustee and one-time RSL chief, Bruce Ruxton. Emerging with Victorian Premier Steve Bracks and other luminaries from the crypt into a sun-filled day after the 11am service and facing a police cordon and Women for Peace activist Reta Kaur, Ruxton walked over and was recorded as suggesting to her "Why don't you go away, old hag, go away."[23] This incident of protest against the Iraqi War and another, unrelated one elsewhere the following year against the Howard Government's industrial policies resulted in calls for the Shrine site and Remembrance Day not to become politicised. This is ironic given that wars are, like memorials themselves, by and large, political and that Remembrance Day in Australia coincides with the now legendary dismissal of the Whitlam Labour government by the Governor General in 1975.

Though perhaps emblematic for some of Australian national values, history and shared sentiments, the implication of the original Shrine of Remembrance and its redevelopment in a politics of commemoration makes both a stage, often for opposing purposes and protests. To the contrary, suggesting a kind of apolitical consensualism favoured both by left-leaning enthusiasts of a tolerant society *and* conservative members of RSL clubs is the view expressed in an editorial from the Independent Anzac Network Database, applauding growing attendance at recent Anzac Day celebrations both at Anzac Cove and throughout Australia. The Network operates from a website apparently sponsored by TAT Tourism Turkey and asserts, from abroad, how the national day of commemoration in Australia has "proved adaptable and it has drawn together disparate groups, from returned soldiers to peaceniks, from feminists to radical cultural groups."[24]

A Shrine for modern sensibilities

Thoughts on the limits of monumental forms and imagery that cast monuments like the Shrine of Remembrance redevelopment as provocative, and possibly as a counter- or anti-monument, though the terms now seem to lack much critical value, arise largely within academic circles or the architectural press. Reinforced here is the use of conventional language for describing the evolution of architectural form whereby neoclassical or historicist styles give way to modernist subversion. Support is given to well-worn interpretive frameworks questioning the contribution of monuments to national identity or to the philosophical construct of modernity. These can entail views of the exceptionality of Australia's wartime past or even Melbourne's urban future, given the Shrine's prominent position in that city.

Cited in the Victorian Parliament on the occasion of the second reading of the Shrine of Remembrance Amendment Bill in 1999, Melbourne academic, historian and architecture critic Philip Goad was enlisted to support claims for the significance and heritage value of the Shrine. His views, attributed to an interview in *Trust News* (the magazine of the National Trust in Victoria), were

cited by Ian J Cover, as the honourable member for Geelong encouraged bipartisan political backing for the redevelopment. Goad's claim that the Shrine of Remembrance signalled "the ultimate end to the idea of the nineteenth century, and the beginning of modernism in Melbourne breaking with the historical past…" was cited in Parliament—an assessment which, incidentally, Cover, attributed to "an architect's view".[25] The building's capacity to represent national identity, however problematic, seemed more obvious to the parliamentarian and more worthy of extended quotation. Parliamentary minutes record Goad's comments:

> The shrine stands for the establishment of national identity, and the further understanding of our national identity can be achieved by the future proposed developments at the shrine. The shrine is at that stage in its history, some 65 years since it was built, where new development should take place both physically through the development of the galleries of remembrance, but also spiritually so that people can further understand what it is that those people so many years ago fought for and what it meant for Australia to be involved in conflicts on the world stage.[26]

Offering an equally positive appraisal of the Shrine redevelopment, Norman Day, adjunct professor at RMIT and architecture correspondent for *The Age*, described the subversive intent behind the project as a "sleight of hand" and a "very Australian piece of architecture, created from within the culture, not mimicked from outside." Day continued:

> This is a building of renunciation, both architectural and cultural. The elusive charm for an architect to exhibit stellar skills has been denied by the weight of the importance of the building in our culture. The culture of war has been denied, too, by the burrowing of an important space under another in such a way that the legends of conflict are subsumed only to be represented in a new world of peace and light. This building extension could benefit from a further project that would allow additional contributions to the entire Shrine complex—perhaps more museum space, greater areas for tourists, but especially areas that could provide more by way of explanation of the horrors suffered, and nobility shown by tolerant people who were caught in extraordinary conflicts.[27]

Language of juxtaposition, of continuity and renewal, old and new, characterise such commentary, just as terms of figure and ground, above- and below-ground can be used to draw aesthetic parallels between the Shrine and anti-monuments. For the commentators cited here, rather than existing as a place set apart from the city by doubled tiers of monumental stairs, axial and symmetrical orders that speak of timeless geometric realities and buildings like the Parthenon, the designers of the Shrine redevelopment have allowed the modern world into the sacred precinct of the monument. They have invited modernism's perennial questioning—one might say further rewriting—of the past, including past forms of commemoration. Projects such as these are thought to be about questioning and a careful avoidance of what Andrew Benjamin describes as "falling into the trap created by 'God and Country'."[28]

Writing in the professional journal *Architecture Australia*, Andrew Benjamin saw an important relationship existing between the undercroft development and the new master plan for the Shrine Reserve, the eleven hectare site within Melbourne's Kings Domain within which the monument stands. He identified a tension characterising the design between a view of the Reserve as it forms a

contiguous part of the larger parkland and urban domain and the necessity that it be set apart, somehow, not as a religious space per se, but as a special place within a modern and secular society. Identifying this tension between physical contiguity and (for lack of a better phrase) spiritual discontinuity provided a framework for understanding the project and Benjamin extended it, in effect, to articulate relations between the neoclassicism of the Shrine and its self-reflective, modernist redevelopment so that the one provided a framework for interpreting the other.

For Benjamin, one feature of the Shrine redevelopment that evinced its modernity was the colour used to stain the walls of the Entry Courtyard; it called to mind the cover of Charles Bean's standard reference, *Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-18*.[29] Though atypical for memorials operating in more overtly religious contexts, red made obvious the artifice and didactic character of the Courtyard—its reception as an obvious work of contemporary design and commentary—and so concerned relations between memory and an urban community poised to interpret them:

> The red colour [Benjamin wrote], in not having a determined point of reference, creates a site where meaning is not given in advance. This refusal of the symbol on the part of the architects marks an important departure.[30]

Another prompt for reflection are the scripted words 'lest we forget' casually scrawled across the entry walls, a strategy the architects have used before on the façade of the National Museum of Australia facing the Garden of Australian Dreams. Like graffiti, the words seem as though they too may disappear one day, beneath another coat of oxide or like the protestor's pleas for peace erased by a forever changing urban landscape and the forces of nature. Refusal of permanence and fixity of interpretation was furthered by the ambiguity of the angled and battered walls of the Entrance and Garden Courts themselves, alternatively seen as bastions and supports for the Shrine rising above them and as the jagged edges of bomb craters.

Benjamin's review alerted us to ways that theoretical discourse can impose a universalising cast on human history and its monuments while serving as exegesis of a designer's intentions, even as he or she might aim to associate textuality with an interrogation of the past and open-ended referentiality with subversion. Benjamin echoed the terms set by landscape architects Catherine Rush and Michael Wright in their précis of the scheme, using the word *temenos*—a Greek word signifying the sacred precinct surrounding a temple often separated physically from surroundings further a field. He asked how one might relate the different projects, Hudson & Wardrop's Shrine and ARM's redevelopment, as being different articulations of the temenos. This is to impose a dichotomous order onto the projects in relationship to the urban landscape. Commentary implied, though did not fully explore, the existence of a timeless, ethical function for building. It was a view allied with another. This was the belief that the chief role of architecture was, and perhaps has always been, to help humans find their place in the world, namely, as in times of war, by overcoming the traumas that cause grief. Implicit within this formulation was a certain view of remembrance as performing a recuperative role. This view needs to be questioned, for if memorials perform a recuperative role, then what purpose

is served by restraining some forms of 'recuperation', namely protests of certain kinds and not others, or the kind of forgetfulness that parliamentarians seem keen to abolish? Similarly, if the Shrine redevelopment is to be read as a modern manifestation of the ancient Greek temenos (one means by which the values of the sacred and the profane are reconciled or reinterpreted for modern times), then must we equally accept the unchanging relevance—and likely persistence—of warfare for modern society?

Conclusion

The prospect that a building like the Shrine of Remembrance, or its subsequent redevelopment, can embody a particular attitude towards war depends upon both functioning as 'representations' of prevailing public sentiments as these constitute national identity, imply a subversive intent or ethical function. One could explore this function further by considering semiotics, the concept of sign and signified, or by adopting some other theoretical framework for describing the mechanics of perception and interpretation, self-awareness and understanding. However, this article argues that if such a possibility can be realised—that a war memorial can in itself glorify war or conversely, represent or articulate the threat posed to civilised values by conflict—such lessons depend not so much upon the building alone, its position in the landscape, form or other architectural quality—all acting as a kind of self-evident basis for interpretation. Rather, it seems more likely that while interpretations of the meaning of war memorials might require such an ensemble to operate semiotically, on another level, they are the consequence of practices aimed at forming an audience or constituency that embraces a given reading and a political context within which such practices and constituencies arise.

These practices seem to benefit from certain ways of writing about architecture. This is most notable, seeing how Goad's comments entered the Victorian parliamentary record, selectively no doubt, where the multiple and potentially contradictory functional, symbolic and pedagogic effects of building form are described—or construed by the parliamentarian—to be mainly instances of the workings of style on the individual and collective psyche. As a consequence individual responses to one or the other monument are made equivalent to common aims, sensibilities and aspirations. Acts of protests, like the aberrant or poorly resolved neoclassical detail, are rendered anomalous. They come to suggest momentary delays in a nation's forward journey towards self-realisation. They become subsumed by a process of spiritual awakening thereby acquiring a teleological value like the conflict of war itself which ultimately disappears, at least according to Day "in a new world of peace and light".[31] Protests, like aberrant building details, become something to be worked through. Commentary describing the significance of the Shrine and its redevelopment in terms of architectural style and representations or thinking which relies on the oppositions of historicism and modernity, monuments and anti-monuments, opens a gap in understanding whereby the past is composed in a way to prefigure the present, thereby obscuring historical precedents for unauthorised sentiments and protests, making them more amendable to censorship today. Comments in praise of the renovation design in the architectural media and those from the broader community celebrating the reawakening of the Anzac spirit mostly forego

questioning the forms of consensualism that can define periods of peace *and* war—even times of terror. This can involve a kind of retrospective triumphalism which sees the construction of war monuments to be the inevitable consequence of a nation coming to terms with grief or a sort of aestheticisation which describes the renewal of war memorials in terms of national identity, modernist style or even postmodern notions of textuality.

Openness to the meanings, historical and symbolic, that accrue to particular places and buildings allow for multiple readings, true, and perhaps a certain kind of freedom which comes from picking up one book and putting down another. However, textuality, when valued too highly as an important indicator of a state of urbanity or civilised behaviour—or something to design for—offers little to help one decide which reading is more desirable or more just in the long run. Consider how poignant the medals arrayed in the Shrine's new foyer would be if it were known these might be the ones thrown away by disillusioned veterans, or how moving Anzac Day might be if schools, government and the media promoted the occasion and sites like the Shrine as affording opportunities for practicing citizenship by encouraging protest.

The recent redevelopment of the Shrine of Remembrance give one pause to consider, lest *we* forget—designers, academics and citizens alike—that the past can be understood in terms other than its opposition to the present, as these terms are called upon to legitimate creative enterprise, validate national styles of architecture or confirm allegedly shared values. The words written in red paint along the walls of the forecourt to the Shrine museum are intended to recall those inscribed on stones erected across Australia. They counterpoise and challenge the neat, firmly incised serifs used on monuments in former times. However, they seem to pale in comparison in their provocative charge to others that once appeared on the Shrine, but remain today only as faint, imperceptible traces of paint from graffiti erased long ago or the decaying, perhaps recycled, protest banners of more recent years.

Notes

[1] Andrew Benjamin, 'A Secular Temenos', *Architecture Australia*, 92, 5 (2003): 51, 54.
[2] Joy Damousi, 'Private Loss, Public Mourning: motherhood, memory and grief in Australia during the interwar years', *Women's History Review*, 8, 2 (1999): 365-366.
[3] Serguisz Michalski, *Public Monuments: art in political bondage 1870-1997*, London: Reaktion Books, 1998, p 172.
[4] These assessments were recorded by the *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 October, 1928, 26 March, 1928; and are cited by Donald Richardson on the website article 'Bertram Mackennal's War Sculptures in Australia', March, 2000, http://www.skp.com.au/memorials/pages/20069.htm (accessed 12 November, 2005).
[5] Michalski, *Public Monuments*, p 176.
[6] Michalski, *Public Monuments*, pp 177-178.
[7] 'Holocaust memorial fails to convey suffering, says Jewish Leader', *The Guardian* (UK), 10 May, 2005.
[8] Wayne Charney, 'Et in Arcadia Ego: The Place of Memorial in Contemporary America', *Reflections: The Journal of the School of Architecture, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign,* 6 (1989): 86-95.
[9] Jonathan Glancey, 'Southern Comfort', *The Guardian* [UK], December 20, 2004.
[10] Kenneth Inglis, *Sacred places: war memorials in the Australian landscape*, Carlton [Vic]: Miegunyah Press, 1998, pp 280-282.
[11] Inglis, *Sacred places*, pp 247, 339, 464.
[12] Inglis, *Sacred places*, p 316.
[13] Keith Murdoch quoted by Geoffrey Serle, *John Monash: A Biography*, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1982, p 472.
[14] Inglis, *Sacred places*, p 317.
[15] Inglis, *Sacred places*, pp 321-323.
[16] Inglis, *Sacred places*, pp 317, 318; Serle, *John Monash*, p 473.
[17] Victorian Parliamentary Hansard, Parliament of Victoria, Preamble, 'Shrine of Remembrance (Amendment) Bill', Second Reading, 22 April, 1999.
[18] Andrew Benjamin, 'A Secular Temenos', p. 50.
[19] Victorian Parliamentary Hansard, Parliament of Victoria 'Shrine of Remembrance (Amendment) Bill', Second Reading, 25 May 1999, p 721.
[20] Adrian Forty, *The Art of Forgetting*, Oxford: Berg, 1999, p 5.
[21] Cited by Joy Damousi, 'Private Loss, Public Mourning', p 372.
[22] Cited by Joy Damousi, 'Private Loss, Public Mourning', p 372.
[23] Anonymous correspondent for the *Herald Sun*, 12 November, 2003, p 13.
[24] 'Anzac Day has become one of our most enduring commemorative public holidays', Independent Anzac Network Database/TAT Tourism Turkey [online]: http://www.anzacday.biz/anzac_day/archive/news.asp?index=399 (accessed 12 November, 2005).

[25] Victorian Parliamentary Hansard, Parliament of Victoria 'Shrine of Remembrance (Amendment) Bill', Second Reading, 25 May 1999, p 722-723.
[26] Victorian Parliamentary Hansard, Parliament of Victoria 'Shrine of Remembrance (Amendment) Bill', Second Reading, 25 May 1999, pp 723.
[27] Norman Day, 'Shrine of Remembrance', *The Age*, October 20, 2003.
[28] Benjamin, 'A Secular Temenos', p 54.
[29] Charles, Bean, *Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-18*, Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1921-1942.
[30] Benjamin, 'A Secular Temenos', p 54.
[31] Norman Day, 'Shrine of Remembrance', *The Age*, October 20, 2003.