

Changing Monuments and Monumentality

Reconstructing Perceptions of Civic Identity

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0 ABSTRACT

Maps of North American cities, popular throughout the nineteenth century, included vignettes of famous structures such as civic buildings, churches, and public statuary. These illustrations reflected map-makers' notion of monumentality, consistent too with civic virtues such as public utility or devotion. The choice of these buildings (and these ideals) was typically made by men of a certain class and race; the buildings themselves were conceived and executed, if not actually constructed, by those same men.

Who were they then? And, more significantly, who are their counterparts today?

The City of Baltimore, once famous as the "Monumental City," is a useful locus for the continuing reevaluation of public monuments. The meaning of some monuments, for instance, conflict with more recent public values. A laudatory statue of Supreme Court Justice Roger Taney, author of the infamous 1857 *Dred Scott* decision, is an uncomfortable example located in Baltimore's most prominent public square. But its position, place, and history afford contemporary Baltimoreans with a unique opportunity for education about changing race relationships.

Three other examples, both historic and recent, reflect new approaches for understanding monuments and memorials in their city context. An emphasis on the urban landscape, as a "medium" for interpretation, suggests alternative methods for reconfiguring existing monuments to the benefit of surrounding neighborhoods and the public discourse about those monuments' meaning.

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1 INTRODUCTION: Mapping Monuments

When one surveys material documentation concerning “the City” – its culture, its society, or the technologies which make such phenomena possible – one often looks for markers affording generalizations about a certain time or place. For many of us, such markers orient us and guide our initial questions, so that we might proceed to discover unique facts about a city’s development.

Civic monuments are obvious candidates for examination in this way, since they are ostensibly created to afford the public with a physical reminder of significant acts, concepts, and values¹. Certain monuments, of course, have been designed with little attention to such purpose and yet have had great meaning attached to their existence later on. Still others, conceived to express a clear message for a particular audience, have had either their message superseded or their audience displaced. Nevertheless, civic monuments and their depictions are especially *legible* markers for a particular period, a particular location, and for a particular group of people.

Consider the example of Baltimore’s “Poppleton Map,” published in 1823 [Figure 1]. Based on Thomas Poppleton’s survey of newly-annexed land surrounding the core of the city, the map shows proposed streets, turnpikes, thoroughfares, and minor alleys, all of which influenced a unique hierarchy among housing types throughout the city. Yet, despite its importance for Baltimore’s subsequent urban development, the “Poppleton Map” is itself better known among local historians for including a border of vignettes, each of which illustrated a significant architectural design or monument [Figure 2]. These images depict both secular and religious buildings in, roughly, equal proportion.

As an expression of Baltimore’s civic enthusiasms, reaching back two centuries, “Poppleton’s Map” is a useful introduction to the issues which the map’s creators sought to promote: a civic identity founded on the city’s successful fight against a foreign enemy, the visible expression of ecumenical piety, and the nascent expansion of both mercantile and cultural institutions². Concerns about labor, health, and welfare found expression, too, encoded in the architectural depiction of an alms house, public fountains, and the penitentiary. But the map’s illustrations of the memorial monuments hold for contemporary readers another lesson. The “Battle Monument,” [Figure 3] for instance, refers to actions in a place which, though geographically present, is not marked on the map. Instead, what is important has to do with commemoration itself, affording a sort of “displaced sanctification,” once-removed from either the original, celebrated act or even its direct memory³. This spatial displacement -- from the place of memorialized action to

¹ For a survey of the purpose and meaning of monuments, see Alexander (1958), Atkinson and Cosgrove (1998), Jackson (1980), Levinson (1998), and Sloane (1995).

² Jeremy Kargon, “Thomas Poppleton’s Map: Vignettes of a City’s Self Image,” *Maryland Historical Magazine*, 2 (2009), pp. 185-207.

³ Kargon, *op. cit.*, p. 195.

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the place of constructed memory -- suggests something worth tracing further: How might the urban geography of city monuments and memorials affect our reading of their message? How might their placement, orientation, and mutual relationships affect their civic role through changing times? How might we today control those relationships to address difficult problems of competing messages and meanings inherited from the past?

Over the last fifty years, writing about monuments and their use as memorials has increasingly attended to the issue of mediation, including the effect of representation⁴. Traditionally, a monument was thought to be a “thing” in itself, and the direct experience of that thing was considered to be the only authentic one. More importantly, the *content* of a monument -- its message, its impact, and its affect -- was thought to be embodied in one’s direct confrontation with the physical artifact⁵. On the other hand, more recent discussions have sought to explore monumentality in the context of language- and media-based theories of interpretation. Although these perspectives on the interpretation of monuments vary widely, what contemporary writers have in common is their identification of multiple readings and intentions with any particular artifact, its images, and the landscape in which it exists⁶.

2 Problem Monuments and Problem Memories

It is no surprise that multiple readings of this kind have engendered conflict. Increased diversity within civil or societal boundaries has led naturally to competition for control over what is called, these days, the “memory discourse⁷.” Monuments conceived as benign by a certain group, ascendant in the past, may now appear quite sinister to a majority today. In the United States, for instance, the support of slavery and unequal race relations inspired disagreements from the nation’s very beginnings; today, monuments about the Civil War are the pivots around which discussion of shared or conflicting memories often turn.

A famous example is a Baltimore statue [**Figure 4**] of Roger Taney, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court leading up to the Civil War and author of the infamous 1857 *Dred Scott* decision. Depicted seated, yet posed with some apprehension, Taney is here described

⁴ James Duncan, “Sites of Representation: Place, time, and the discourse of the Other,” in Duncan and Ley, eds., *Place / Culture / Representation* (New York: Routledge, 1994), pp. 39-43.

⁵ An excellent example of this point of view may be found in J. B. Jackson’s “The Necessity for Ruins,” *The Necessity for Ruins and Other Topics* (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1980), p. 94.

⁶ For the identification of multiple readings in the context of geography and landscape, see Daniels and Cosgrove’s introduction to *The Iconography of Landscape* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 1-9.

⁷ Andreas Huyssen, *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003).p. 3.

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only by his name and by the following words: “OF MARYLAND / CHIEF JUSTICE”. The monument obscures the fractious sectarian consequences of Taney’s jurisprudence; indeed, the “States’ Rights” interpretation of the Civil War’s origin, favored by Southern partisans to this day, is subtly evoked by the inscription’s mention of Taney’s home state and of his title, but not of his nation. Not surprisingly, this statue’s continued existence and its place in Baltimore’s most significant urban space has been challenged continually since the ascendancy of the city’s African American community⁸. Calls for its removal recur regularly, if infrequently, and are countered by claims of censorship, of artistic merit, or of historical “value”⁹. Nevertheless, the statue remains in place.

In fact, the literature concerning Civil War memorials is itself vast, and the memory discourse surrounding other historical events has also ballooned in the last decades. Concern is often voiced about what to do with old monuments whose message today is either explicitly racist or – more challengingly – only implicitly so. Another question raised concerns contemporary memorials, whose representations of past events are today seen by others as troubling, incorrect, or incomplete. Answers to these questions typically touch upon four alternatives: Removal, Re-contextualization, “Musealization”¹⁰, and Counter-Speech¹¹. Missing from most discussions is the effect of environmental morphology upon a monument’s interpretation by the public. Might greater emphasis upon urban design suggest an alternative approaches to monuments of all kinds?

3 Monuments in the “Urban Medium”

Of course, the possibility that a monument’s surroundings might affect the reading of its message has always been implicit in the traditional view. Monumentality’s classical attributes of scale, exaltation, and authority usually require certain attributes of context¹²,

⁸ One such example, among many, may be found in Wiley A. Hall III, “Urban Rhythms: A Suitable Salute for a Villain,” *Baltimore Afro-American*, 7 February 2003.

⁹ Discussion of conflicting opinions concerning monuments to Taney may be found in Mark Graber, “Tearing Down Statues,” *Maryland Daily Record*, 20 August 2007. Readers’ response to his article may be found on his website: <http://balkin.blogspot.com/2007/08/tearing-down-statues.html>.

¹⁰ By “musealization” is meant the placement of an artifact in a socially-constructed environment (whether physical or conceptual) which provides ancillary historical and theoretical information as a guide to the artifact’s interpretation. A museum is an obvious example. This neologism, coined by Hermann Lübbe, is currently in wide use; see, for instance, Martin Scharer’s “Things + Ideas + Musealization = Heritage: A Museological Approach,” in *Museologia e Patrimônio*, Vol. II, No. 1 (2009), pp. 85-89.

¹¹ A useful consideration of several aspects of “counter-speech” may be found in Benjamin Means’ review of Levinson’s *Written in Stone*: “Book Notice: Monuments to the Past in a Leveling Wind,” *Michigan Law Review*, 6 (1999), p. 1625.

¹² Robert Alexander, “The Public Memorial and Godefroy’s Battle Monument,” *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 17 (1958): pp. 19-42.

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such as separation from the profane or proximity to the sacred. Distractions such as noise or visual clutter are required, too, albeit in their absence. Either way, such context may be understood to contribute to the physical characteristics of a monument and certainly to one's sensorial experience of it.

There is, however, another way by which a monument's context affects both its originally-intended meaning and – more significantly – its perceived meaning today. The enormous critical literature about the “meaning of landscape” provides many competing models for interpreting a site's features (including monuments or memorials); but one can identify through all such approaches a sense in which the landscape itself may be considered the “medium” by which those features have been represented¹³. Even one's first-hand experience of a thing is necessarily refracted through one's understanding of its purposely-constructed environment, that is, its surrounding landscape. And, with regards to a monument's message, controlled spatial and civic relationships may easily become both subject and tool for constructing alternative interpretations.

Three other Baltimore examples, illustrate well the relationship among public monumentality, civic identity, and the “urban medium.” Each example was conceived to express radically different points of view; one, in fact, may have been conceived to express no explicit “message” at all. Each example, too, has been criticized for failing to serve appropriately Baltimore's contemporary civic life. The visual design of at least two of these monuments contributed in some way to their poor public reception. On the other hand, the location and orientation of all of them have been *fundamental* to their perceived failure. Nevertheless, it is precisely their urban design which need be evaluated to propose critical revisions. Their examples, furthermore, suggest rethinking the usual approaches towards revising the meaning of existing monuments: *meta-narrative*, instead of counter-speech; *intra-contextualization* rather than re-contextualization; and *de-musealization* in certain instances of public artwork.

4 A Constellation of Monuments: A Narrative about Counter-speech

Union and Confederate Memorials near Homewood, Baltimore, Maryland

As mentioned before, no single memorial theme has been as contentious as the honoring of Civil War dead in the United States. In Baltimore, sympathies for the slave-holding, Confederate cause were held in check only by the presence of Federal troops in the city¹⁴; consequently, monuments in honor of each side of the conflict compete for attention. Decades after the war, support among the white population for continued racial segregation tended to obscure former sectarian partisanship among the whites

¹³ Allen Carlson, *Nature and Landscape* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), p. 52-74.

¹⁴ Sherry H. Olson, *Baltimore: The Building of an American City* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), p. **.

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themselves. In their public memory discourse, too, the issue of slavery was de-emphasized in favor of a stress upon gentlemanly “honor” and the nobility of white men and women without reference to faction¹⁵. In this manner, at least three memorials to Confederate causes were dedicated in Baltimore throughout the years of established racial segregation, which persisted up through the beginning of the 1960’s. Baltimoreans dedicated only a single memorial to the Union cause during that time.

Three of the four memorials to Civil War causes exist in close proximity along Charles Street, Baltimore’s major north/south avenue [Figure 5]. Located furthest north at the corner of Charles Street and what is now University Parkway, a memorial to “Confederate Women” was dedicated in 1918. Another Confederate monument, dedicated to Robert E. Lee and Stonewall Jackson, was unveiled as late as 1948, only a few years after the cessation of World War II. Its site, a wooded area of a public park, is removed from Charles Street but is easily seen from a contributing traffic artery. The third monument, a memorial to “Union Soldiers and Sailors,” was in 1909 unveiled elsewhere in the city¹⁶. So, it was only in 1959 that the City government relocated the monument to the corner of Charles and 29th Street, the opposite corner of same park in which sits the Lee/Jackson memorial. Considered together, the memorials provide some measure of ambivalence towards what have otherwise been heated interpretations of the Civil War. At the very least, their respective placement affords an *awareness* of the Baltimore public’s changing view of the conflict, if not a consensus about the appropriateness of competing themes for collective memory.

The “Confederate Women’s Monument” [Figure 6] shares its iconology with many similar memorials created throughout Southern States at the beginning of the 20th Century¹⁷. The sculpted form sits on a granite pillar, at the front of which an inscription reads “TO THE / CONFEDERATE WOMEN / OF MARYLAND / 1861-1865 / ‘THE BRAVE MEN AT HOME.’” On the opposite side is inscribed, “IN DIFFICULTY AND DANGER / REGARDLESS OF SELF / THEY FED THE HUNGRY / CLOTHED THE NEEDY / NURSED THE WOUNDED / AND / COMFORTED THE DYING.” The bronze figures, cast by J. Maxwell Miller, depict a wounded soldier, comforted by a female nurse. A furled flag and its broken pole rest tight against soldier’s body. Behind the nurse and soldier stands another woman, her mildly defiant gaze set towards a distant point [Figure 7]. The standing

¹⁵ Kathy Edwards and Esme Howard, “Monument Avenue: The Architecture of Consensus in the Old South, 1890-1930,” *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture*, Vol. 6, (1997), pp. 92- 110.

¹⁶ John H. B. Latrobe, *Baltimore’s Monuments and Memorials* (Baltimore, 1997), pages 179, 180, and 183.

¹⁷ Smith, S., “The Tennessee Monument to the Women of the Confederacy: A Study in Conflicting Ideas of Public Commemoration and Collective Memory, 1985-1926,” *Border States: Journal of the Kentucky-Tennessee American Studies Association*, No. 11 (1997), on-line journal. URL: <http://spider.georgetowncollege.edu/htallant/border/bs11/fr-smith.htm>

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woman's hands are clenched together, a gesture which suggests the "difficulty and danger" mentioned by the written inscription.

Sited at the intersection of two busy boulevards [**Figure 8**], and adjacent to the campus of the Johns Hopkins University, the "Confederate Women's Monument" is nevertheless under-scaled for its prominence along Baltimore's streetscape. Pedestrians who move at the site's perimeter have little reason to approach the monument, and so the details of its sculpture are hard for most passers-by to perceive. Even today, the weakness of its scale shields this memorial from considered attention. For example, in a recent article otherwise critical of the prevalence of the city's pro-Confederate memorials, one writer's position is influenced by the accidental modesty of the memorial's urban scale, noting only that "this memorial almost transcends North-South partisanship, [since] it is a tribute to the good deeds of noncombatants¹⁸."

To be sure, neither the contentious issue of slavery nor the fact of armed rebellion is a part of the monument's explicit message. Instead, and typical to the time, the monument commemorates certain well-conscripted women's roles. The roles so defined, were implicitly domestic and nurturing, and therefore acceptable not only to women of a genteel class but to a white audience of all classes and political leanings¹⁹.

On the other hand, the "Robert E. Lee / 'Stonewall' Jackson Monument" has been interpreted by Baltimoreans in increasingly belligerent terms since its 1948 dedication, even though its location near the "Confederate Women's Monument" is less prominent. The sculpture itself, created by Laura Gardin Fraser, is nearly unique among statuary in the United States. Two mounted figures are depicted side-by-side, set on a granite base bearing commemorative inscriptions [**Figure 9**]. Double-equestrian statues are rare; in the United States, only one other had been erected before 1948²⁰. The memorial itself is located in a wooded area of Wyman Park, adjacent to the drive which separates the park from the Baltimore Museum of Art. One typically approaches the monument from either side, so that the first impression is of mounted figures' being lost among trees, in some private convocation.

What subtleties are afforded by the statue's location and orientation are compromised in detail by the awkward placement of the commemorative inscription [**Figure 10**]. Two sentences are written along the side of the memorial's granite base, set with raised bronze letters: "SO GREAT IS MY CONFIDENCE IN GENERAL LEE THAT I AM WILLING TO FOLLOW HIM BLINDFOLDED / STRAIGHT AS THE NEEDLE TO THE POLE JACKSON

¹⁸ Chalkley, T., "Battling Monuments," *Baltimore City Paper*, 11 March 1998, archive accessed via the internet on 18 September 2009: <http://www.citypaper.com/news/story.asp?id=2542>

¹⁹ Smith, op. cit.

²⁰ Lee-Jackson Memorial Committee, *Dedication of Double Equestrian Statue* (Baltimore: The Municipal Arts Society, 1948).

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ADVANCED TO THE EXECUTIVE OF MY PURPOSE". Since the texts' lengths are longer than the sides of the base, the texts are wrapped around the perimeter. Approaching the front of the statue, one can read only the following fragments: "MY PURPOSE * * * SO GREAT". It takes little imagination to believe that the memorial's expressed message has directly to do with these figures' "great purpose". And due to the historical prominence of both Lee and Jackson, it takes little more imagination to connect that purpose with the carnage directly caused by those men.

The quality of the sculpture, the fame of Lee and Jackson, and the relative isolation of the memorial has led to its use by contemporary Confederate groups, such as "Sons of the Confederate Veterans," for yearly ceremonies in the subjects' honor²¹. As one would expect, their doing so in a mostly African-American city encourages both verbal and written "counter speech" by journalists and others, who seek to correct through verbal commemoration a fuller interpretation of these historical figures' acts. In addition, a physical counterbalance was provided a decade later by the introduction of the final memorial in this constellation, the "Union Soldier and Sailors" monument located at the exact opposite corner of Wyman Park [Figure 11]. Although impossible to see simultaneously, the presence of one and the other (and Baltimorean's repeated encounters with both) afford the potential for their messages' mutual competition, if not reproach.

The "Union Soldier and Sailors" memorial was executed by sculptor Adolph Weinman and architect Albert Ross for a site less than a mile to the south-west of its current location²². Removal and re-installation elsewhere, motivated here by the threat of demolition in 1959, is a common method for revising the public message of a past monument. In this case, however, its part in a newly-created constellation of monuments created not a new message but a redirection of its former message towards a changing audience.

The memorial consists of a semi-circular granite exedra, which includes two inscribed bronze tablets and a continuous bench for the use of visitors to the site; a granite base, which includes a carved inscription and marble reliefs; and a bronze statute [Figure 12], in which a single, standing Union Soldier is flanked by two female allegorical figures, representing "Victory" and "Bellona," the Roman goddess of War. Oriented towards the south-east, the monument faces north-bound traffic along Charles Street and west-bound traffic along 29th Street. However, a south-bound service driveway removes the monument from close proximity to the intersection, and so the impact of this prominent location is greatly lessened by the apparent exigencies of vehicular traffic.

²¹ Robbie Whelan, "There Stands Brody Like a Wall..." *On the Record: Blogsite for the Maryland Daily Record*, 18 November 2008, archive accessed via the internet on 24 September 2009: <http://blogs.mddailyrecord.com/ontherecord/2008/11/18/there-stood-brody-like-a-stone-wall/>

²² Latrobe, op. cit., p. 179.

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Although the monument's slightly-removed location contributes to the ease with many pass by unaware, but another factor is the monument's lack of legibility at a distance. The iconography embodied by the figurative sculpture is at once hard to perceive from afar and also difficult to decode today, so long after the era of classical portraiture. Once at close range – close enough to read the texts and see clearly the marble reliefs – can one begin to identify the subject matter and the memorial exhortation.

Nevertheless, considered together with the other two nearby memorials, the “Union Soldiers and Sailors Monument” does relate part of the social and historical narrative extending throughout this local, urban landscape. The key is in the phrase “together” and in the possibility (weak as it may appear) of considering three unique monuments as an ensemble. The implicit *meta*-narrative might read something like this: “Baltimore and its people were, historically, both Union and Confederate; in the time since the Civil War, some Baltimoreans affiliated with one side and some with the other; and one hundred and forty years after the conflict, additional chapters in the narrative remain, unfortunately, unacknowledged and unconstructed.” Such a meta-narrative *must* express the critical incompleteness of the ensemble, but the direction for future engagement is clear. The legibility of a future narrative should depend most significantly upon the arrangement of existing and future elements within the medium defined by physical space, human movement, and implicit institutional hierarchies defined throughout the area. Today's relationship among these three existing monuments merely points towards as-of-yet-unfulfilled potential.

5 Proposing “Intra”-contextualization

Baltimore's Holocaust Memorial

Unlike the Confederate cause, the subject of a Holocaust memorial would appear *prima facie* to be unassailable. Of course, arguments about how to represent the events of the Holocaust, as well as events more recent and perhaps similarly traumatic, are many and even heated²³. But few critics, other than the most obvious cranks, have an interest to challenge the decision to implement such a project, which is usually conceived and supported by privately-collected funds. And afterwards, comment and criticism about the result may be hard to express. In a public forum, constituted by diverse communities, it may be impolitic -- or otherwise *impolite* -- to suggest that an effort to capture the enormity of Holocaust memory somehow fell short of its intent. A recurring problem is to find evaluative criteria for assessment which do not offend the sensitivities of those who conceived the memorial in the first place.

Begun in the early seventies, the movement to establish Baltimore's Holocaust Memorial [Figure 13] reflected the belief that a physical monument would testify more powerfully

²³ Berel Lang, *Holocaust Representation: Art Within the Limit of History and Ethics* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), p. x.

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than books or film to the reality of the Holocaust, separated by time and by geography from Baltimore's contemporary Jewish community. Furthermore, a setting in downtown Baltimore, near the recreational area called the Inner Harbor, was selected to promote awareness among the wider community. Land belonging to Baltimore Community College, a publicly-funded institution, was set aside (but not deeded) for the purpose of building the memorial. Designed by Donald Kann and Arthur Valk, the memorial was dedicated in 1980²⁴.

As originally designed, two 80-foot concrete monoliths divided the site and reached towards each other, leaving only a small gap between the two. The upper part of each monolith cantilevered towards the other, affording a measure of visual suspense congruent with the literal, material suspension. Adorning the monoliths were inscriptions dedicating the monument to the victims of the Holocaust and listing the 32 camps where they died. Surrounding these elements, a grove of trees was planted to the south and a landscaped lawn filled out the site to the north.

This original design was derivative of the architectural elements of early Holocaust memorials, such as Jerusalem's *Yad vaShem*. Abstract forms, conceived with no intrinsic symbolism, were conceived through material means to afford the impression of solemnity, heaviness, and irresolution. The muteness of the monument's architectural language would, presumably, allow substantive meaning to be projected onto the memorial by visitors, aided by the list of historical names and by the recurrent enactment of public ceremonies at the site. The surrounding landscape, too, was intended to create a silent place, vested with the appropriate solemnity and suitable for a visitor's personal reflection²⁵.

Intriguingly, the Baltimore Holocaust Memorial has gone through two renovations, each of which responded to obvious problems with the site's engagement by the public at large. Isolated from pedestrian traffic during the day and bereft of adjacent street life during evening hours, the park-like setting of the monument attracted otherwise homeless persons to establish their temporary shelters below the tree canopy. Furthermore, the memorial's severe abstraction left many visitors unmoved or bewildered. In 1988, a sculpture by Joseph Sheppard [**Figure 14**] was installed on the south side of the site, on-axis with the gap between the two "silent" monoliths. Intended to represent bodies' burning by a consuming flame²⁶, this statue is supported by a base upon which is carved Santayana's by-now-trite saying, "Those who do not remember the past are destined to repeat it." Although this sculpture did add a popularly accessible sort of imagery to the

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²⁵ For the comparison with *Yad vaShem's* design, see James Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), pp 249-254.

²⁶ Joseph Sheppard opinions concerning his sculpture may be read on the artist's own website: <http://www.josephsheppard.com/Holocaust/AboutStatue.htm>

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memorial site, its peculiar amalgam of visual cliché had no effect upon the memorial's use by the homeless, and so the perceived "desecration" of the monument persisted.

In 1995, the architect Jonathan Fishman (RCG, Inc., Architects) led a team to redesign the entire memorial site. The design team proposed that the original concrete structures might be seen as the railroad cars used to transport Jewish victims to the concentration camps. Inspired by Primo Levi's *Survival in Auschwitz*, the "rail-car" metaphor was made literal by the addition of metal "cow-catchers" to the concrete monoliths, and an inscription from Levi's text was placed prominently on the surface of the monoliths themselves [Figure 15]. The team's landscape architect also extended the physical mark of memorialization throughout the entire site. A triangular plaza, defined by stone pavement, was introduced so that the existing monoliths would define its base and Sheppard's sculpture its vertex [Figure 16]. Bands of alternating color paving would cut across the triangular plaza, and the rail-yard motif would continue these bands in the forms of train tracks extending towards the edge of the site. Cleared of trees except at the periphery, the resulting memorial design discouraged informal use of the site for shelter yet provided a park-like amenity for persons working or otherwise visiting downtown Baltimore. In addition, the designers decided to fence around the remaining lawn area at the north end of the site. A passage on a memorial plaque tells visitors that this "forbidden green sanctuary to the north can be seen through the rail car doors, but is inaccessible." On the other hand, the inexpensive welded-wire fabric fence evokes little but an institutional wish to keep so-called "inappropriate uses" from returning to the site.

The redesigned memorial was dedicated in 1997. Since that time, the memorial has remained free of transients, but remains free, too, of any semblance of activity throughout most of the day. Baltimore's Jewish community, centered in suburban neighborhoods remote from the memorial's downtown site, continues to maintain the landscaping and, furthermore, to occupy the site for active memorial observances on anniversaries of particular historical events such as *Kristallnacht* or of the contemporary Israeli *Yom ha Shoah*. More tendentiously, some Jewish groups have used the memorial as a site for political actions unrelated to Holocaust memory²⁷. The lack of any other significant Jewish site within Baltimore's downtown has apparently encouraged increasing identification of the memorial (of a specific, historical event) as merely a place for public exposure. In fact, it is the urban design of the site which encourages this elision between memory and current events, and it does so by preventing the occurrence on and around the site of an authentic urban life. The territory has been marked, in a sense, by the institutions which established the monument in the first place; but the "void" on the site, so poetic to consider in the abstract or even as an aerial graphic, allows those institutions free reign to appropriate its physical and, consequently, its iconographic space²⁸.

²⁷ One example, among many, was reported by Julie Scharper, "Supporters of Israel Rally at City Holocaust Memorial," *The Baltimore Sun*, Jul 26, 2006, p. 3b.

²⁸ In the context of Berlin, one may consider how voids in a city's urban fabric have undergone appropriation in similar and in contradictory ways. See Huyssen, op. cit, pp. 49-71.

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Further criticism of the memorial's design would be best served by prescription: What else might be done on the site? Considering the vicinity's urban configuration suggests at least three strategic decisions. The first must be to acknowledge that the memorial site should contribute to the activity surrounding city life; that is, the "sacred" character of memorials of all kinds should not diminish the day-to-day business of the surrounding neighborhood. Indeed, the sacred and the mundane should *not* be spatially segregated, a typical consequence of Baltimore's urban planning throughout most of the twentieth century.

The second decision should be that the physical density of the site must be increased, for both aesthetic and functional reasons, with market-driven development. The existing site is far too big in relation to the rest of Baltimore's downtown, and so the current memorial creates a damaging gap in the surrounding urban fabric. And the third decision should be to introduce an active "memory institute" for part of the new ensemble, so that increased commercial development elsewhere on the site might support (and, in reciprocal fashion, be supported) by the newly-configured institute. As for the existing memorial, its core -- the concrete monoliths (brutal as they are) and the bronze sculpture (artistically mediocre as it is) -- should be retained for continuity's sake. But the bronze sculpture should be relocated so that its placement no longer dominates the axis of approach towards the main bulk of the monument. Subtlety and counterpoint can be useful compositional tools, which together de-emphasize awkward visual elements but integrate their expressive content.

The first result of these decisions would be to shelter visitor's experience of the renewed memorial from the degradation of Lombard's Street's excessive traffic [Figure 17]. Lombard Street's own vitality, too, would be better served by street-level commercial storefronts and a bulk in scale with the surrounding buildings -- six stories, at least, along the entire length of the site. Upper stories may be commercial or residential depending upon further study of the local economics; but this new development needs have no explicit *physical* relationship to the memorial itself, other than to provide a suitable edge for a smaller, more intimate open space to its north. But this development should provide *financial* support for future memorial activities on the reduced site. In the context of continuing debates about private/public sector support for monuments and their maintenance, the feasibility of any memory discourse at all must be considered together with its on-going autonomy, whether political or financial.

The second result would be to effect a far more intimate physical experience in the presence of the actual monument. Intimacy, as a characteristic which encourages reflection and attention, relates not to size but to scale -- that is, the perceived relationship between one's body and another object. The orientation of one's approach to the monoliths might be reversed, so the resulting open space would be far smaller and better defined. In addition, the existing rail-car ornaments can be removed and set to the side (or

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otherwise housed) as memory sculptures in their own right, so that the original, massive concrete structure may be experienced once again without distraction.

Of course, many alternative urban plans might easily be appropriate for Baltimore's Holocaust Memorial site. Recent discussions between a local developer and Baltimore Community College have already broached the possibility of commercial options on the immediately-adjacent parcel²⁹. But what is at issue here is to provide not re-contextualization but rather *intra*-contextualization – to create not different surroundings for a monument, but its more intricate integration with those surroundings.

6 De-musealization of Art in a Public Place

Male / Female, Pennsylvania Station Entrance Plaza, Baltimore, Maryland

One final example may at first appear to be a *non sequitur*. A large sculpture titled *Male/Female*, conceived and executed by the artist Jonathan Borofsky, was installed at Baltimore's main rail connection, Pennsylvania Station, in 2004 [Figure 18]. Fifty-two feet tall, fabricated of aluminum, the sculpture has been described by Borofsky as, simply, "An intersecting silhouette of a male with the silhouette of a female"³⁰. Nevertheless, its enormous height and its prominent position by Baltimore's transit gateway belie that simple description. *Male/Female* is "monumental" in the traditional sense of the word, which connotes both large scale and authority's endorsement. Its great cost and its axial placement in line with the train station entrance supports no other perception. The sculpture's reception by the general public has become, therefore, another example of contemporary artworks' controversial relationship with both general opinion and urban site design. Disappointingly, some public criticism of the piece – and, more tellingly, much of the public comment in its defense – focuses upon the sculpture's aesthetic merits, upon the "appropriate style" for public-based artworks, or upon the imperative for novelty in contemporary art³¹. Nevertheless, the core of such controversy may be disagreement not about art *per se* but about responsibilities assumed by significant objects placed in the public realm. But in the absence of consensus or even awareness about these responsibilities, *Male/Female* is typical of monuments which encourage only the most unsatisfactory public discourse.

²⁹ Daniel J. Sernovitz, "BCCC Mulling Development Options for its Harbor Campus," *Baltimore Business Journal*, 2 February 2007.

³⁰ Taken from Borofsky's web-site: <http://www.borofsky.com/index.php?album=malefemale>, accessed 12 October 2009.

³¹ Among examples are comments by Gary Vikan, director of Baltimore's Walter's Art Gallery, and his blog readers: "Public Art: Can We Handle It?," 3 March 2007, available on-line at <http://thewalters.org/blog/comments.aspx?b=13>, accessed 12 October 2009.

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When asked about the inspiration for his use of the enlarged human figure in many of his works, Borofsky has said,

When I was 6 years old, I used to sit on my father's knee and he would tell me stories about a big friendly giant who lived in the sky. The important thing about this friendly giant was that he did good things for people. In his stories, my father and I often went up to visit with this friendly giant who lived in the sky and we learned many things about life from him. . . . If you, the reader, are one of these people who likes to analyze things from a psychological perspective, you might even say that I am trying to bring this friendly giant down to earth -to get closer to him or her- or even to find this friendly giant inside myself.³²

A more puerile motivation for a work of public art may be hard to identify – Borofsky may himself have been dissembling – but Borofsky’s story may reflect a common ellipsis to be found at the center of some figurative sculpture in the years after Pop and Minimalism. At issue is not so much the lack of “content” as to the banality of that content³³. Joseph Becherer, who purchased an earlier version of *Male/Female* for installation at the Frederik Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park, has said that “[f]requently utilizing stylized descriptions of male and female figures, Borofsky suggests the commonalities shared across humanity regardless of race, gender or creed³⁴.” In fact, the rhetorical purpose of such a platitude is not dissimilar from those which adorn the Confederate monuments mentioned above. Artwork like *Male/Female*, when placed in the public realm, seems intentionally to “shrug off” its own significance, otherwise imposed upon it by a public audience conditioned not by art criticism but by the conventions of urban design. An example might be the expected equivalence between an axially-placed element and a conceptual procession from place to place; another might be the correlation of size with a marker for a past civic event. Dissociation from these conventions leads to conflicting expectations, and to the result that criticism of a sculpture like *Male/Female* is held to be irrelevant to the “true” concern of the artwork – which, in turn, is never defined sufficiently for the public audience.

³² Cited in catalogue published at the opening of the Open Air Museum, Kagoshima, Japan, and reprinted on-line: http://www.open-air-museum.org/en/art/collection/openair/jonathan_borofsky.php, accessed 12 October 2009.

³³ Referring to Modernist sculpture, beginning as early as Rodin’s *Balzac*, Rosalind Kraus writes that “one crosses the threshold of the logic of the monument, entering the space of what could be called its negative condition—a kind of sitelessness, or homelessness, an absolute loss of place... [I]t is the modernist period of sculptural production that operates in relation to this loss of site, producing the monument as abstraction, the monument as pure marker or base, functionally placeless and largely self-referential.” Borofsky’s sculpture is conceived largely in reaction to this position, but what remains at issue is the significance of the references his art does engage. See Krause, “Sculpture in the Expanded Field,” *October*, Vol. 8 (1979), p. 34.

³⁴ Cited in Amy Sawad, “American Sculptor To Build Site-Specific Architectonic Exhibition,” press release of the Frederik Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park, 1 December 2008.

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The example of Borofsky's *Male/Female* in Baltimore lends itself less to a site-based solution than to an appeal to change the terms of public discussion about new artwork conceived for public spaces. Continued argument about the visual qualities of one piece or another, or about the "style" of its architectural context, will maintain only the unsatisfactory drama of public posturing. A telling contrast is with some historical monuments for which relocation to a museum environment provides better public focus upon both artistic merit and difficult historical messages. Instead, contemporary art in public spaces may well need to be "de-musealized," that is, removed from the framework of art-critical discussion alone. What is needed is public debate about the elements of urban design, including new monuments, based upon an ethical consensus about how all of us use those public spaces. Such a consensus may be possible in some places and not in others; but, at the very least, all participants in the debate (including architects, artists, their patrons, and their public audience) need to acknowledge that *to design for the city is an ethical act*³⁵. The ethical categories which underlay urban design may be obscure to the public and to architects, planners, and artists as well. Ethics is, nevertheless, fundamental to our sharing common space and to our substantive perception of those markers in our midst, our monuments.

7 CONCLUSION: Speculation about Mediated Monuments

In short, monuments ought also to try a little harder, as we must all do nowadays! – Robert Musil³⁶

Of course, Musil's tone is arch, and so his irony cuts two ways. The passivity of traditional monuments is, for many of us, unsatisfactory. Today's consumers of culture expect interactivity, spectacle, and novelty. Those historical artifacts which depend upon a one's personal knowledge have little chance to compete with other, less demanding (and more stimulating) attractions in the cultural landscape.

Recent monuments and memorials throughout the world have taken up the challenge, incorporating theatrical techniques and methods derived from commercial marketing. Yet, for those monuments which hope to engage society beyond a single focus-group, those new presentation technologies must still remain subject to wider considerations of environmental and urban design. Even new monuments stand *somewhere*, and that "somewhere" remains the critical factor in the public's relationship to them.

³⁵ Karsten Harries, *The Ethical Function of Architecture* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2000), p. 4.

³⁶ Musil, R., "Monuments," *Posthumous Papers of a Living Author* (Hygiene, Colorado: Eridanos Press, 1987), trans. Peter Wortsman, p. 63.

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Here, therefore, is the second implication of Musil's irony: Our engagement with memory must take for granted our own effort "nowadays" *and* our efforts tomorrow. Doing so should reflect awareness that public memorials are only partial (and impermanent) answers for what we seek through commemoration³⁷. As described elsewhere in this essay, the construction of meta-narratives about conflicting counter-speech is deliberately open-ended. Likewise, the intra-contextualization of existing monuments into new urban development takes for granted the reality of *re*-development in the future. Like the markers on our city maps, our monuments may point out to us particular ideas, concepts, or considerations. How we get to them and how we proceed are, for all practical purposes, unspecified.

³⁷ Huyssen, op. cit., p. 6. "We need both past and future to articulate our political, social, and cultural dissatisfactions with the present state of the world."

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