



The haunting presence of commemorative statues

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abstract

Modes of commemoration include a plethora of stone and bronze figures installed in the squares, parks and streets of many city centres. Created and installed many decades ago, these statues continue to constitute a consistent element in mundane public space. This privileging of selective individuals historically reflects the diverse symbolic values expressed by state, military and religious powers who endeavoured to fix ideological meanings in space. Despite this continued presence, their aesthetic qualities, symbolic importance and political relevance often remain utterly obscure in contemporary times. By investigating three very different commemorative statues in different locations, this paper explores the various ways in which they haunt the spaces in which they were erected with their obsolescent values, outmoded styles and incomprehensible meanings.

Part of the ongoing production of space involves a politics of commemoration through which groups endeavour to construct material reminders of esteemed, figures, events and processes, contemporaneously in complex, diverse and contested ways (Sumartojo, forthcoming). Invariably, these strategies evidence how the powerful impose selective meanings and sentiments across space. Such memorials may include the erection of abstract edifices and cairns, the establishment of museums and halls of remembrance, the naming of streets, squares and parks, and as is discussed here, the installation of particularly valued individuals wrought in stone or metal. As Nuala Johnson (1995: 63) declares, these monumental statues serve as ‘points of physical and ideological orientation’ around which ‘circuits of memory’ are organised. In organising space in this fashion, as Avril Maddrell (2009) contends, like other memorials, these metal and lithic figures act as a kind of ‘spatial fix’, a concrete place in the landscape where

the dead can be eternally 'located'. Evidently, such monuments and memorials are situated in very particular places in order to reaffirm, underline and transmit individual and group identities and the values, achievements and symbolic importance that they express (Johnson, 2002). These commemorative statues are enduring fixtures in most British and formerly colonial cities, and although they were largely created in a historically distant era with its peculiar values, styles and politics, they remain an integral element in the normative organization of public space, constituting part of the mundane fabric through which urban dwellers and visitors pass. They remain present because they retain a value that is esteemed by city planners, conservationists and heritage professionals, a contemporary organizational force that militates against their removal. Yet they also testify to an earlier historical process through which particular people, values and aesthetics were routinely commemorated, a process which has almost entirely vanished from the contemporary city but which continues to haunt it.

The ubiquitous presence of these statues ensures that they are rarely subject to any critical scrutiny; indeed, they are usually part of the taken-for-granted, commonplace geographies that form the backdrop of the everyday, habitual routines of inhabitants (Taussig, 1999). Yet in enduring, they retain the potential to stimulate understandings about the past and its relationship to the present, perhaps in accordance with the meanings intended by those who created them and organised their erection, but also in soliciting alternative and idiosyncratic interpretations. Alternatively, as I discuss below, they may also be unrecognized or impervious to contemporary understandings and values. This mystification may focus on the apparent strangeness of their metaphorical significance or sculptural aesthetics, or arise from a complete ignorance about the person or historical event commemorated. This is unsurprising considering that historical methods of commemoration change, especially with regard to the demise of endeavours to erect public monuments as devices to transmit dominant memories, meanings and values, and the corresponding loss of the interpretive skill required to make sense of them.

Thus, omnipresent stone and bronze statues, usually male figures stand atop plinths in western and postcolonial city squares, parks and graveyards, adjacent to railway stations and civic buildings. Though a lingering presence, they are often part of the un-reflexively apprehended routine environments in which we work, play and consume, objects that are habitually passed by but rarely considered, part of the design of the urban fabric, regularly maintained and only occasionally relocated. This ongoing presence instantiates the notion that stony and bronze figures are a normative element in the organization of everyday space and materiality, and constitute an inviolable heritage. As part of the built environment, they only infrequently suffer the indignity of destruction, perhaps when they

symbolize a historical event that is now deemed politically unacceptable or embody discredited regimes or currently reviled persons. Current examples include the Rhodes Must Fall campaign that calls for the removal of statues of the colonial icon, Cecil Rhodes, in Cape Town and elsewhere, and the vociferous campaigns for the removal of memorials dedicated to the Confederate states of America that are accused of perpetuating and glorifying ideas of white supremacy, racism and slavery.

Most public statues originate from the 19th century or the early years of the 20th century, an era in which it was commonplace for groups of citizens to raise funds to commemorate and celebrate selective figures. Most prominent, in an age when the British Empire extended its influence, was Queen Victoria, omnipresent in the cities and towns across the United Kingdom and liberally scattered across colonised urban realms. A host of statues commemorating men, typically scientists, philanthropists, statesmen, explorers and military heroes, accompanies this historically real female figure. Feminine forms also exist as stony emblems that symbolize 'Victory', 'Britannia' or other abstractions and they are supplemented by figurative idealisations of unknown soldiers in war memorials.

Typically, these sculptural forms were fashioned in classic realist style derived from Ancient Greece and Rome, and towards the end of the 19th century they were augmented by romantic and pre-Raphaelite renditions and the more realist representations of the 'new sculpture' (Beattie, 1983). Their affective impact was enhanced as they were installed as part of collective memorial displays at iconic sites such as London's Trafalgar Square, reinforcing symbolic meanings about imperial power, national aspirations and exemplary heroic achievement (Stevens and Sumartojo, 2015a).

Yet while this lithic and metal horde were devised to celebrate, commemorate or exemplify the cherished aesthetics, values and achievements of their era, in contemporary times, these are frequently and profoundly outmoded, obsolete, wholly forgotten or incomprehensible. Yet according to Angela Dunstan (2016: 3), this inscrutability is not merely a 21st century impulse; she argues that for the Victorians themselves, many sculptures were 'hauntingly present but rarely interrogated, monumental yet mundane, and, above all, disconcertingly difficult to read'. If this was the case at the time of their erection, this impenetrability is multiplied for contemporary urbanites. Despite this obsolescence, however, Dunstan (2016) points out that commemorative figurative sculpture is nonetheless a peculiarly haunting mode of representation, still, silent, largely monochrome, and lifeless, a static model of a person, once living and vital but now deceased. Statues thus constitute a peculiar reminder of the mortality of all individuals as well as the death of those they commemorate.

In this paper, I explore the ways in which three very different statues that exist in different states of absence and presence haunt the spaces in which they were erected. As the dynamic city rapidly transforms, continuously emerging according to changing economic phases, architectural fashions, planning strictures and popular tastes, it leaves behind traces of previous inhabitants, politics, ways of thinking and being, and modes of experience that interject into the present, sometimes confounding, aligning and colliding with it (Edensor, 2008; Pors, 2016). As Maddern and Adey (2008) claim, exploring the ghostly is about being curious about those obdurate elements that somehow remain amidst ongoing processes of urban becoming. These enduring material figures conjure forms of haunting that are not especially phenomenological in soliciting vicarious sensations amongst onlookers (Frers, 2013) nor saturated with loss, trauma and deep emotion (Bille et al., 2010). Rather, these statues embody the sheer otherness of what has been and is no longer, and the unreachability of cultural meanings and practices that seem incomprehensible to the contemporary mind. This historical passing of prior commemorative conventions, aesthetics and values carries a tinge of uncanniness generated by the distance that we now feel from them, in the disjuncture that exists between present and past ways of feeling and thinking (Lowenthal, 1985).

This unknowability about a past in which groups of largely high status people called for the commemoration of a living or deceased person through the media of a statue, is no longer a common impulse, save for the recent plethora of realistic, less elevated sculptural endeavours that celebrate sports stars, popular entertainers and popular musicians. These are also accompanied by subaltern political gestures to honour forgotten or neglected figures by creating a monument to reinscribe the historical record and public space with their presence. These recent statues rarely stand high on a plinth above the throng, gazing into the middle distance and possessing an expression that connotes a nobility of mind and purpose. This attempt to bestow a certain aspect upon a statue exemplifies Daniel Sherman's (1999: 7) assertion that all commemoration is cultural: 'it inscribes or reinscribes a set of symbolic codes, ordering discourses, and master narratives'. But the world in which such codes and meanings prevailed has passed, and is more or less unreachable. This is especially arresting since such forms were intended to be remembered in perpetuity but have, after a century or so, become obscure, underlining how transient are the endeavours of the powerful to inscribe meanings on space that circumscribe gender, class, religious, national and ethnic identities. As I explore further below, the particular power of the figurative statue atop a plinth carries an uncanny trace of the once extant human that it represents, linking the figure with the onlooker as connected embodied individuals.

The little known Bishop of Manchester

Central Manchester's Albert Square is an archetypal urban commemorative space, a large, municipal square that in essential details has remained unchanged since the late 19th century. Sited in front of the city's imposing Town Hall, the square remains an important civic space, the site of political demonstrations and rallies, annual festivals, triumphant sporting celebrations, seasonal markets, art events and religious gatherings. It is also a space that connects important administrative and commercial streets in the city centre and as such, constitutes an important thoroughfare as well as a space to linger, to meet friends and consume food and drink. Its cobbled surface is punctuated by five 19th century statues that have resided here since Victorian times. They all stand atop plinths, endowed with a gravitas bereft of irony or humour that does not resonate with contemporary tastes.

Centrally positioned is a white marble likeness of Victoria's consort, Prince Albert, after whom the square is named, that derives from 1867. Housed in a neo-gothic sandstone shrine with a tall, elaborately carved, canopy and spire, and bestowed with imperial symbols, the figure stands on a pedestal above five surrounding steps. Albert is accompanied by a statue of renowned Liberal Prime Minister William Gladstone, the radical politician John Bright, and the less celebrated banker and local philanthropist William Heywood. The fifth figure is a bronze rendition of Manchester's reforming bishop, the almost completely forgotten James Fraser, who was in office from 1870 to his death in 1885. Few passers-by would possess any sense of familiarity with this character, yet he continues to preside over the square, an authoritative patrician figure who seems to be placating those who he appears to be addressing from upon his lofty Aberdeen granite plinth. All these figures belong to a remote public realm and hierarchical world in which large sums of money were raised through public subscription to honour them.

These memorials are part of a larger infrastructure through which the nation is signified across everyday space, an integral element of what Michael Billig (1995) terms 'banal nationalism'. Such banal expressions of nationhood are entangled with the usually unreflexively apprehended mundane spaces and routine quotidian experience that are part of urban life. These statues are akin to the 'unwaved flags' to which Billig refers, always present but not part of overt, ceremonial ceremonies, part of the backdrop to everyday life. As a site that is crossed by thousands of people during their everyday routines, Albert Square constitutes what Doreen Massey (1995) terms an 'activity space', like parks and transport termini a realm of intersection and meeting, a shared space that is part of what David Crouch (1999) calls 'lay geographical knowledge'. Habituated to such settings and the statues in them, locals have acquired a sedimented, embodied sense of their presence

through repetitive encounters (Waterton, 2014). In this shared public space, symbolical national figures – most specifically Prince Albert and Gladstone – stand alongside figures deemed important in the local political sphere. Besides their obvious celebration of particularly masculinist qualities and characters, they underline the hierarchical position of members of crown and state, and values of tradition, majesty and political struggle. Such traits and figures are also widely commemorated across the nation in other local settings and contribute to the common sense sustenance of the ‘imagined community’ (Anderson, 1983) of the nation. In the case of Bishop Fraser, the centrality of religion is imprinted on space.



Bishop James Fraser, Albert Square, Manchester (photo courtesy of Paul Hepburn)

The erection of a statue of any contemporary cleric in a prominent public space in Manchester would be a surreal imposition. The civic impact made by campaigning religious leaders such as Fraser is now much diminished as is church attendance and the social and political role of the church. The respected leadership, and

extensive pastoral and cultural influence of such a public figure are part of a vanished age, and yet the proliferation of pre-second world war churches across the city and other ecclesiastic signifiers haunt the largely secular city of the present. This was an era in which the Bible was a widely familiar text, biblical allusions were commonplace and most people regularly attended church, and would have been accustomed to the solicitations of vicars and bishops. Church bells, processions and special services would have repetitively resonated across urban space. In the contemporary city, such effects are a pale echo of the quotidian religious influences of yesteryear.

The durable qualities of stone and bronze as well as sustained maintenance through the decades have ensured that the figures remain in their original setting and continue to mark their presence on space. The fame of some – like James Fraser – is fleeting while a wider awareness about others endures. They have not been destroyed or relocated to a place of collection, such as at Budapest's Statue Park, where the obsolete sculptures of state socialism are gathered as tourist attraction (Foote et al., 2000). In considering this continuing presence of Fraser and his companions, it is pertinent to ask just what it is about these installations that makes them inviolable. Why has the space of Albert Square been historically frozen in this way? Similar scenarios are evident throughout urban space: such statues appear sacrosanct.

Since the time that they were erected, no new intrusions have been sited here, though monuments to the Peterloo massacre and a statue of renowned suffragette Sylvia Pankhurst are to be installed nearby, following many years of campaigning for their presence. Until recently, they have not been deemed worthy of commemoration by the powerful though their historical and political significance is widely acknowledged. Yet they will not be permitted to unsettle the venerable commemorative configuration of the square. By contrast, the inviolate Fraser haunts the present with his obscurity, a religious figure stranded in a largely irreligious world. An outmoded form of commemoration, he lingers in space, haunting the present with his inscrutability like numerous other Victorian statues (Gordon, 2008).

The enduring presence of the Bishop of Manchester and his four companions contrasts with the nameless hordes who laboured in the construction of the Town Hall. Surrounding the already built Albert Memorial in the square were a host of masons and artisans whose numbers expanded to around 700 as the building neared completion, along with an assortment of steam engines, cranes, polishing tables and saws. This multitude have not been recorded as having made a significant contribution to the building though their presence is visibly signified by the abundant marks of saw and chisel marks embedded in the stony façade of

the Town Hall (Edensor, 2012). Paid off after finishing their work, they are part of a historically anonymous transaction that evaporates, though it may occasionally be rescued in an archive. This vividly testifies to how certain subjects such as Fraser have been historically valued while others are consigned to oblivion. Yet once envisaged in the mind's eye, they are difficult to banish from the imagination. Collectively, they would have constituted a vast, noisy scene of hard work, as muscular men sawed beams, chiselled at stone and hauled loads back and forth, thick stone dust suffusing the air and the shouts of foremen and the banter of the workers ringing out.

In contrast to this neglect, the Bishop of Manchester and his still and silent colleagues have been granted institutional forms of protection in being listed on the statutory list of structures of special architectural or historic interest, the Albert Memorial conferred with Grade 1 listed status, the others granted Grade 2 status. This assignation expresses official understanding that such material commemorations are deserving of preservation, and conforms to the aesthetics and ethics of the organizational body that bestows this protected status, Historic England. Yet this temporal freezing of Albert Square to honour the urban designs of Victorian Manchester also signifies the ongoing affective, symbolic and sensory power that the statues impart. Though these static figures may be outmoded, unrecognized or barely understood, there is something about their materiality and design that deters their erasure. Their stony or metal materiality, suggestive of immobility and permanence, along with the maintenance that has been organized to prevent their decay, has ensured that they endure. They express a physical solidity that conveys import, and this is undergirded by their positioning on a raised plinth so that they overlook the everyday passage of pedestrians and the activities staged at the square. Skilfully rendered to assume a verisimilitude to the humans on which they are modelled, but also echoing Dunstan's (2016) point about their contrasting stillness to the living bodies that preceded their erection, their memorialization of actual bodies suggests that removal would be improper. This all-too-human affective impact is further entrenched by the styles in which they are rendered and by the personal qualities and charismatic persona this conjures up. James Fraser's commanding left arm seems to authoritatively settle a point of contention, or calm an assembly, while his right arm is braced against his side as he thrusts out his chest in a dominant posture. Given extra potency by his sturdy boots, his thick over-garment and his stern demeanour, this skilfully rendered, dramatic presentation suggests that the bishop is participating in a ghostly public debate but also carries conviction as a recognizable human stance and disposition. He was designed to inspire onlookers and these capacities remain even though he is cloaked with now obscure allegorical symbolism. The figure conveys resolution and authority; even though the man he represents is long departed, he embodies a presence that discourages his removal.

Paradoxically, while the religious, patrician, canonical, political and religious values that they embodied at the time are outmoded, and the commemorative practices and aesthetics through which such men were honoured are thoroughly obsolete, these statues remain highly valued elements of the contemporary urban fabric, supported by institutional and doxic power. They radiate ghostly resonances of the extensive influence of the church, the struggles for political reform and the patrician institutions of Victorian Manchester. Yet while the meanings and values that these bronze and stone men embody have evaporated, highlighting the almost inevitable failure of attempts to secure meanings in urban space in perpetuity, like so many others of their kind, they remain esteemed fixtures in the contemporary city.

The queen's plinth: An unexorcised vestige of colonial rule

The second statue that I consider is absent, but the plinth upon which it stood is still situated in a different kind of public space, namely Melbourne's Edinburgh Gardens in Australia, a large park in the suburb of Fitzroy, created from a grant of land in March 1862 by Queen Victoria. In a central part of the park, amidst a rose bed, lies the empty plinth that once hosted a wooden statue of the imperial queen, similar in design and style to the numerous other statues of Victoria scattered across the British Empire. The oval-shaped park is extremely popular and on public holidays is full of picnicking and game-playing crowds. Other features include the cricket and football oval and large grandstand that once accommodated the fans of Fitzroy AFL club, children's playground, community centre, bowling greens, tennis courts and cricket nets, skate park, two playgrounds, venerable trees and well-trimmed lawns.

Like the statue it once housed, the park's name was bequeathed to commemorate the visit to Australia of Victoria's young son, Prince Alfred, Duke of Edinburgh, in 1867. The former presence of Victoria in this urban park testifies to what Dunstan (2016: 6) refers to as 'the global and colonial reach and network of Victorian sculpture', and its display in the colonies as 'an important imperial vehicle'. The queen's reign from 1837 to 1901 witnessed an expansion of sculpture on a scale not seen before, thanks to royal patronage, commissions for new buildings and public squares, and innovations in casting and reproductions, and like the figures in Manchester's Albert Square, these statues were an integral part of everyday urban experience. Queen Victoria is by far the most popular figure rendered in stone and bronze during this period and statues of her extend across the UK and beyond to colonies of diverse kinds.

Yet the statue of Victoria was only present in the gardens for three years before mysteriously going missing. She has been absent for more than a century yet the plinth endures. Close to the rose bed there is a small cast iron plaque on which underneath the caption 'We are not Amused', the following is inscribed:

Following the death of Queen Victoria in 1901, George Godfrey MLC, presented a commemorative statue to the people of Fitzroy

The statue was mounted on the base in front of you amidst a decorative garden bed of cabbage palms and roses. Queen Victoria, in a typical pose, carried the orb and sceptre of royalty

After a tumble, the royal statue went missing and was never replaced

Would Queen Victoria have been amused?

For most of the time since the wooden Victoria's disappearance, the plinth has remained unoccupied. No effort has been made to install a substitute nor to erase the plinth from the park. Indeed, the plinth fell into disrepair only to be reconstructed in 1972, though it remained unoccupied by any statue. It is as if the commemoration of a figure of such import and the statue's subsequent absence has deterred any administrative attempt to alter the status quo. Yet this stasis has surely amplified the power of the queen, for rather than the predictable, ongoing presence of a commemorative figure scarcely noticed during passage through the park, her all too clear absence calls forth her presence once more: the vacant plinth draws attention to what is not there.

In recent times, the plinth has been successively occupied by a selection of surreal, absurdist and conceptual sculptures wrought out of a diverse range of materials as part of a programme organized by City of Yarra Arts. Like the Fourth Plinth Programme in Trafalgar Square, where a plinth constructed in 1841 intended to hold a statue of William IV was a site for diverse artistic exhibits, this scheme uses the structure as an opportunity to exhibit contemporary public works (Sumartojo, 2012). From March 2013 until April 2014, the program featured ten specially commissioned artworks that aimed to engage both art lovers and the usual inhabitants of the park. The plinth has remained empty until the installation of its current occupant, Adam Stones' 2015 sculpture, *A Fall from Grace II*, composed of polyurethane, fibreglass, steel and automotive paint. This figure, as with those earlier forms that temporarily occupied the plinth, stand out markedly from those sculptures that usually occupy supportive structures of this kind. As such, these temporary occupants draw attention to the plinth and also summon up its original resident.



Adam Stone, A fall from grace, Edinburgh Gardens, Melbourne (photo by author)

The absent statue and plinth belong to a spectral imperial network that connects places formerly associated by their inclusion within the British Empire. These statues, most of which are now unmoored from the colonial regimes that erected

them, ensure that the ideological impress of empire continues to echo across formerly colonized space. They are part of a wider infrastructure installed by systems of colonial rule that deployed symbolic as well as military, legal, bureaucratic and political sustenance, and besides numerous statues also resounds in neo-classical architecture, street names and public parks and squares. This everyday geography in which squares, parks, streets and official buildings are saturated with signifiers and monuments was integral to the geographical imposition of colonial power. As with the symbolic impositions of national statues exemplified in Albert Square, these widespread commemorative features express a banal colonialism that exceeds the spatial confines of the nation.

Whether temporary artistic installations are present or not, the absent presence of Queen Victoria resonates through the park whose existence she granted and whose name commemorates her son. Surveying what was her colony at the time from the elevated position of the plinth, this absent presence marks this space out as indelibly marked by her power and that of the British Empire that she represented. Crucially, her long lingering absence amplifies Australia's unsettled relationship with this colonial past. The emergence of temporary occupants of what was once Victoria's plinth and the derisive inscription on the message board suggests that the reverence once accorded the imperial queen is fading. Yet at present, the British monarch remains the Australian head of state, a situation reiterated following a referendum in 1999, ostensibly because a convincing alternative electoral system was not proposed. Thus an archaic vestige of institutionalized colonial rule continues to haunt the present and it also haunts the future, for in all likelihood, the issue will be raised again and once more Australians will be required to choose whether to cast themselves adrift from this royal connection. On such an occasion, perhaps the ghostly presence of the wooden queen will be exorcised from Edinburgh Gardens, overwhelmed by a succession of temporary installations or replaced by a more enduring artistic fixture situated on the plinth originally intended for her majesty.

Scotland's warrior hero: William Wallace as *Braveheart*

The final statue I discuss is more recent in origin though it commemorates a much represented figure in Scotland. In 1998, as part of the National Wallace Memorial complex in Stirling, Scotland, a more singular commemorative site than a square and park, a new statue was installed. The Wallace Monument was completed in 1869, a 67-metre sandstone tower in the style of the gothic revival. Containing a statue of Wallace, an exhibition space and audio-visual accounts, a replica of Wallace's mighty sword, a viewing platform atop the structure, and a 'Hall of Heroes', containing other male Scots esteemed during this era – busts of religious

reformers, explorers, statesmen, poets, engineers and scientists. The monolithic tower, radiating grandeur and import from the summit of the wooded Abbey Craig hill, specifically commemorates the 1297 Battle of Stirling Bridge close to the site of the monument, where a Scottish force commanded by Wallace defeated an English army (Edensor, 1997a; 2005a). The site has remained a popular tourist destination and has progressively become tinted with a more contemporary nationalist allure. What was intended as a site of Victorian romantic nationalism that simultaneously celebrated Wallace's heroism in overcoming English military dominance but also the claim that the subsequent raising of Scotland's self-respect and pride through achieving independence was essential to the eventual union of the English and Scottish crowns. 19th century celebrants of Unionism thus devised the monument. In underpinning my assertion that the symbolic values that accompanied the design and installation of memorials do not necessarily persist, these meanings have been largely replaced with a contemporary understanding that Wallace is an exemplar of Scottish valour and prefigures a future national independence. The power of those who originally funded and installed the monument to impose meaning on space has weakened.



Tom Church, Spirit of Wallace with the National Wallace Monument in the background, Stirling, Scotland (photo courtesy of Rosemary Williams)

The new addition does not accompany the fantastic gothic structures that adorn the Abbey Craig but occupies the more mundane space of the visitor centre's car park, nor is it akin to their aesthetics. Rather, it is an example of vernacular creativity wrought by a local stonemason, Tom Church, who embarked on the project as part of undertaking effortful physical labour to overcome illness. The 12 tonne, four metres high *Spirit of wallace* is fashioned from two blocks of sandstone. The statue is garbed in rough medieval dress of tartan jacket, belted tunic, cape and thick leather boots, and features a shield emblazoned with the word 'Braveheart' and two weapons: in one hand the figure holds a short claymore or stabbing sword, in the other, he grasps a large ball and chain flail. The head of the decapitated Duke of York lies at his feet, upon a base upon which are inscribed in large letters, the word 'Freedom'. Most strikingly, the roaring face of the figure is rendered in the likeness of Mel Gibson, the director and actor who played the role of Wallace in the 1995 Hollywood blockbuster, *Braveheart*. The statue thus simultaneously honours Wallace as well as Gibson and the movie; indeed, the sculptor explicitly states that the work expresses how the spirit of Wallace is expressed anew via the movie.

At the time of its installation, the work reverberated with the political acclaim and media commotion that greeted the release of *Braveheart*. The popular impact of the film generated a wealth of media commentary that prompted much reflection about the constitution of contemporary Scottish identity, which chimed with the imminent vote in support of the formation of a devolved Scottish Parliament, with contesting arguments staged that considered whether Wallace was a progressive or regressive icon (Edensor, 1997b). *Braveheart* played upon renewed desires for Scottish autonomy and independence, and was eagerly grasped by politicians and commentators of all political hues for its metaphorical message. Socialists claimed that Wallace was a 'man of the people', nationalists drew strong parallels between the medieval English colonization of Scotland and current Scottish subservience to Westminster, whereas Tories were willing to consign him to insignificance.

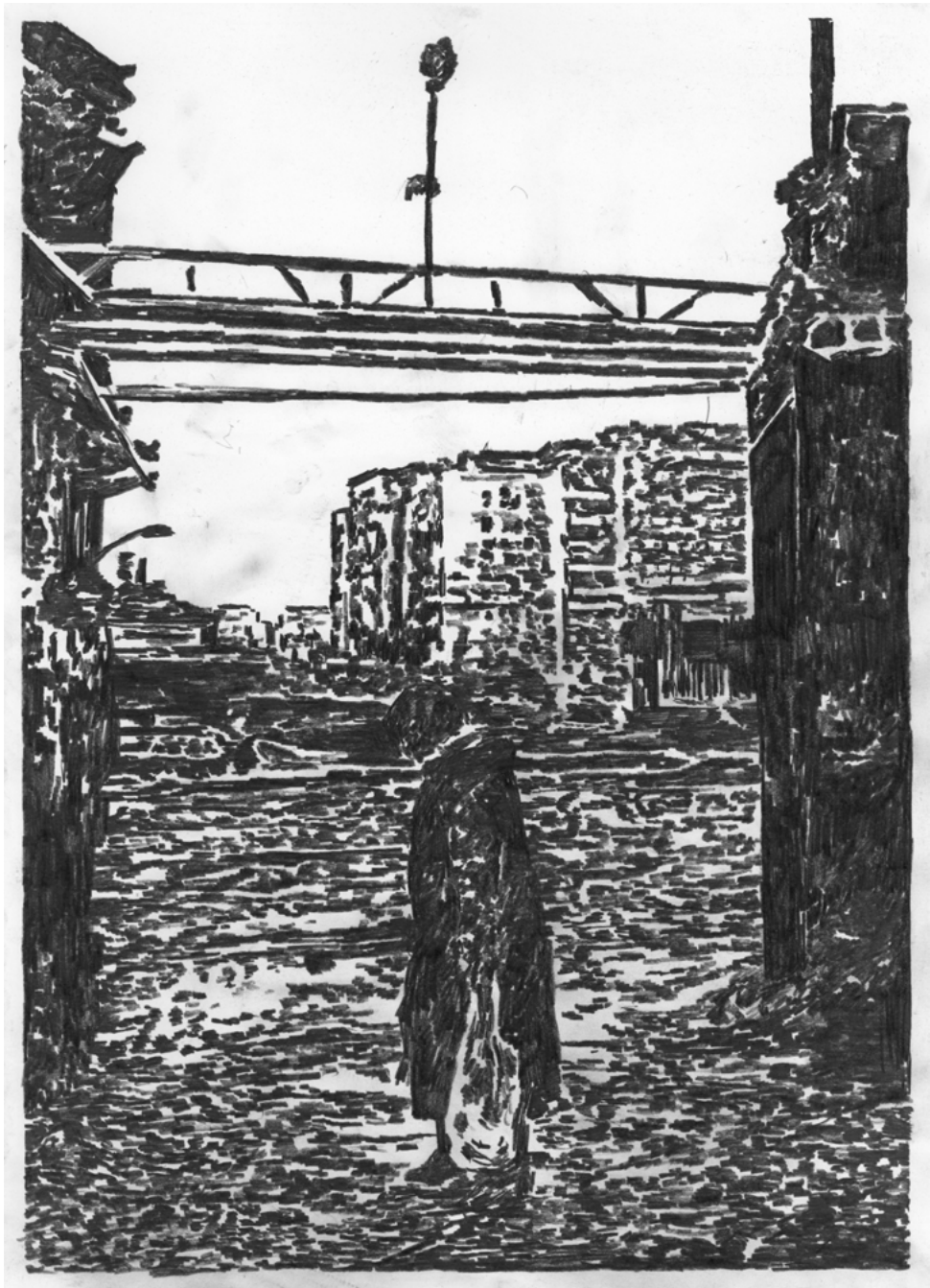
However, in subsequent years, after the commotion around the film subsided, the statue became subject to greater controversy, generating an especially visceral and affective response to the representation of this lauded nationalist figure. It was labelled in some sections of the media as Scotland's 'most loathed monument' (Hurley, 2004) and rather hyperbolically claimed to be 'the most controversial symbol of Scottish culture in recent times'. The *Stirling Observer* (Wilson, 1997) bemoaned that the memory of Wallace was being exploited, and he reported that a local SNP councillor declared that the statue would 'detract from the *true*, very important history which the monument stands for' (my italics). Though popular amongst many visitors to the centre, others vilified the work, which they accused of exemplifying cultural mediocrity and banality.

As a consequence of this opprobrium, the statue became subject to regular vandalism. Its face was gouged out, it was covered in white paint, it was struck with a hammer, and the decapitated head of the Governor of York that graced the statue's base was chipped away. In response to these attacks, the statue remained in situ but was enclosed by a security fence. In 2008, following development plans to expand the visitor centre to include a new restaurant and reception area, the statue was removed and returned to the sculptor who has sited it in his Brechin workshop. Here it has remained, though it will be relocated at a new visitor attraction in Ardrossan to commemorate a legendary military battle led by Wallace against the English occupiers in that town.

The several episodes through which the statue was defaced and that solicited the erection of a protective fence contrasts with the lack of any violent damage meted out to Fraser and other Albert Square statues over the decades and the ongoing maintenance that ensures their perpetually unblemished appearance. Yet in contrast to the common disregard of people towards these Victorian memorials, the hullabaloo created by the vandalism towards *Freedom*, including the extensive media coverage of these acts, made the statue the object of intense attention. Accordingly, as Michael Taussig (1999) has observed in detailing the outcry and physical attack that greeted the installation of another controversial piece of sculpture, such defacement initiates the animation of an inert form, wherein the statue becomes hyper-visible. Instead of being part of the ignored horde of fellow statues, following the attacks, *Freedom* was haunted by the swirling, vigorous debates that focused upon the appropriate way in which this key national figure should be commemorated, the contemporary symbolic value of this medieval warrior, and the identity of Scotland itself.

The absence of the notorious statue at the visitor centre has been regretted by some and un lamented by others. What is fascinating about the controversy is that the representational rendering of Wallace, the work of a stonemason rather than a sculptor, did not meet the artistic criteria usually mobilized around public statuary. Why might this be so? The uproar seems especially peculiar since Wallace, who has continuously remained one of the greatest mythic heroes of Scotland despite (and because of) the dearth of historical knowledge about his life and times, has been represented in a great range of sculptural styles. The potency of the Wallace myth depends on this flexible quality in being able to transmit a variety of cultural meanings and values, for as Samuel and Thompson have asserted, he is somewhat of an ideologically 'chameleon' form (1990: 3), possessing the capacity to transmit contrasting messages and identities. Accordingly, the mythic figure has been (re)appropriated by different groups to provide antecedence and continuity to a diverse range of identities and political objectives. Thus there is no dominant representation of Wallace but rather many Wallaces. He appears as a huge and





imposing warrior, an elegant statesman or a neo-classical figure garbed in robes, with some commemorative statues emphasising his physicality, others honouring his humble clothing to emphasise that he was a 'man of the people', and yet others suggesting an elevated and noble disposition. No visual or literary records testify to the physical appearance of Wallace, and because details about him are vague, representations of the national hero in sculpture and painting have been shaped through the predilections of artists and reflect the aesthetic tastes of their era.

Despite this diversity of representation, nearly all of these stone and bronze memorials have followed traditions of memorialisation. The audacious rendering of a national hero in the likeness of a Hollywood star does not accord with any of these conventions. Yet even though contemporary expressions of these diverse styles are almost entirely absent, their institutional power lingers: they continue to haunt understandings in delimiting the range of what styles and motifs are deemed appropriate in commemorating an esteemed national hero. We have not yet moved on from their influence because these Victorian statues continue to radiate their power across our public spaces in such numbers.

In addition, though immensely popular at the time of its release, perhaps the present is also haunted by a now outmoded, somewhat recursive expression of Scottish national identity, values that saturate the content and ethos of the movie. Retrospective concerns about the cruder representations of English depravity and Scottish heroism seem simplistic in the light of the far more sophisticated political culture and more inclusive nationalist discourse that have subsequently emerged alongside the successful advance of the Scottish National Party. Another possibility is that the belief that the movie portrayal should not be allowed to contaminate other, more serious cultural forms is grounded in fears that Scotland will resemble a tartan theme park whose production is disembedded from a local and national context (Edensor, 1997b). There clearly remain popular notions about cultural trivia and substance, which appear to differentiate between 'art' (in this case, exemplified by serious memorial commemorative tradition) and the more ephemeral mass culture of film and television.

However, I think that the key issue is that conventions about how particularly esteemed figures ought to be represented remain haunted by conventions that otherwise have fallen into obsolescence. The contemporary sculptural representation of a nationalist hero therefore, cannot assume the form of a Hollywood star, even though this very same actor / director was responsible for rekindling enthusiasm amongst many Scots for the mythic figure. Perhaps the response has emerged from sentiments that Wallace is not sufficiently symbolically and physically elevated; he remains too closely bound to the representation of an identifiable Hollywood star rather than an abstract stone

figure that stands aloof from worldly and contemporary tastes and trends. These archaic yet still powerful sculptural conventions that linger in the multifarious presence of stone and bronze Victorian figures across public space have yet to be supplanted by representations that adopt different aesthetic and symbolic forms.

Conclusion

Authoritative institutional and organizational modes of commemoration have become decentred, so that contemporary expressions are now fragmented and multiple. There are no official, established conventions for erecting statues comparable to those of Victorian times. The established custom of erecting a larger than life sized bronze or stone figure upon a substantial plinth has become outmoded. Not only has this form of memorialization become outdated, but notions about who should be commemorated and how has become widely contested (Sumartojo, forthcoming).

The inscrutability of many venerable statues partly lies in contemporary obliviousness to the stylistic conventions that informed their creation and the cultural values they expressed. This resonates with Marina Warner's (1993) discussion about how a post-revolutionary elite sought to materialise particular ideals in the statuary along the Champs Elysees in Paris to provide an enduring testament to revolutionary values. However, the classical allusions upon which such monoliths depend for their meaning are no longer familiar to contemporary onlookers. This reveals that despite the desires of the powerful to imprint enduring meanings upon urban space, forms of knowledge, aesthetic conventions and political contingencies that supersede those of earlier times often thwart such aims. A contemporary example is the ensemble of the huge, heroic socialist realist statuary of post-socialist Bucharest, which remain despite the absence of the political and social conditions under which they were erected and which gave them legitimacy. According to Hedvig Turai (2009), in this setting, the past remains 'unmastered' by the totalitarian endeavours to fix its meaning.

Yet as Avery Gordon (2008) claims, such ghostly traces reveal that the power of such practices and meanings has not yet slid into obsolescence. In remaining part of the furniture of the city these ghosts have not been wholly exorcised. The statues I have discussed continue to haunt urban space with religious power, colonial power and national(ist) power respectively. Despite the disappearance of the tastes, styles, cultural values and motivations that once made the memorialization of these particular people customary, these statues continue to trouble the present in distinctive ways, spookily emerging at diverse junctures and moments.





I have discussed how a very much present statue has lingered for over a century in Manchester's Albert Square, haunting the present with its strange, outmoded religious values and style, and the wholesale passing of the social conventions and agencies that culminated in its erection. Yet this statue, along with its companions in the square, exerts a powerful influence on local power-holders that ensures that it remains in situ. Meanwhile the earlier marks made by stonemasons' chisels in the fabric of the nearby town hall remain unrecognized. The capacity of the statue of Bishop Fraser to haunt the present is intensified by its material solidity and by the very powerful, performative human form that has been created by the sculptor, inducing a phenomenological and affective response for those that engage with it (Waterton, 2014).

I have focused on the no longer present statue of Queen Victoria from this same era in a Melbourne Park and the persistence of the plinth upon which it stood, arguing that her long standing absence summons up the queenly figure once mounted upon it. This haunting absence is reinforced by the installation of temporary artworks in their unlikely juxtaposition with the plinth upon which they stand. The absent monarch also signifies the wider imperial geography to which it once belonged and Australia's unsettled relationship with its colonial history that continues to haunt the present. Yet the installation of the temporary artworks and the irreverent reference to Queen Victoria on the plaque inscription suggest that the site is finally in the process of being resettled in ways that exorcise the ghosts of colonialism (Muzaini, 2014).

Finally, the also currently absent statue of William Wallace adjacent to the National William Wallace Memorial in Stirling, sculpted to assume the likeness of Mel Gibson, is also haunted by the Victorian statues I have discussed. For it is caught in a present in which no conventions of commemoration are, or perhaps can be, agreed upon (Stevens and Sumartojo, 2015a). There is no consensual institutional framework or organizational practice that fosters such a process, though the memorials that commemorate the First and Second World Wars and the coming of national independence continue to allure and solemnify space. Indeed, the multitude of national commemorative emblems and statues belong to the host of signifiers that remain part of a banal nationalism, which pervades everyday spaces and routines. In aggregation, they continue their largely unnoticed work in reproducing the nation as a common sense spatial container for identity.

In contemporary times, there are a medley of approaches that commemorate significant figures, most of which veer away from figurative representations. Other technologies and materialities are deployed to memorialize people and events. For instance, the most prominent memorial to the late Diana, Princess of Wales, is a circular watercourse that flows around an area of Hyde Park, while the 9/11 atrocity

in New York has periodically been represented by two pillars of light ascending to conjure up the vanished twin towers. Contemporary figurative sculptures continue to be installed in a variety of locations, celebrate distinctive different public figures, and are typically rendered in a different, more realistic and communicative style that adopts a far less elevated approach. The sporting heroes, pop music celebrities or comedians who are currently memorialised stand atop plinths of more modest size in contradistinction to the imposing bases granted to the aforementioned philanthropists, explorers, military commanders and statesmen. These less didactic memorials that are typically more closely integrated with everyday public space, incorporate natural elements and encourage close multi-sensory engagement (Stevens and Sumartojo, 2015b).

It is here that we might grasp why desires to fix meaning in place frequently fail, for this could surely hardly be otherwise if we consider the dynamism of the city, with its vagaries of fashion and taste, the creative destruction wrought upon its fabric by the impulsive decisions of politicians and bureaucrats, and the changing conventions of urban planning and architecture. Wide social accord would have greeted the erection of the Victorian monuments I have discussed; here, the effective transmission of memory in space depended upon the social practices and emotional bonds that connected communities to their environments. However, there is little equivalent contemporary emotional and affective connection to such modes of commemoration, in contrast to the broader enthusiasm for the memorial tributes to locally born, popular cultural celebrities.

The urban spaces that I have discussed are not like the spaces of rural abandonment at which Justin Armstrong (2011: 244) carries out his spectral ethnography, spaces that he argues are 'largely unimpeded by the continual and rapid accumulation of new and competing images, artefacts, and interpretations'. A dearth of dynamic spatial remaking allows the traces that are left to stand out with greater force. Neither are they akin to the industrial ruins that I have discussed in previous work where traces that would usually be removed proliferate to raise up multiple spectres of skilled and manual work, social exchange, playful creativities, outmoded styles and obscure industrial processes (Edensor, 2005b). They are also not comparable to the more marginal working class spaces in which a host of ghostly remains of travel, play and domesticity survive to haunt a present in which they have been superseded (Edensor, 2008).

On the contrary, these statues remain solidly present in everyday sites of vibrant movement and social activity, settings in which their dissonance with contemporary values and meanings means that they haunt the present with their outmoded values, their archaic styles and their unsettled political meanings. For those who regularly move among them, they are part of a common sense, banal

reality that extends from the local to the national to the colonial. Their very evident looming material presence or absence has an affective and phenomenological force that impresses itself upon the experience of space, and raises up the spectres of the often incomprehensible commemorative practices of the regimes that put them in place.

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