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**Site, Space, and Memory:  
the Construction of Meaning  
in Commemorative Public Space**

Submitted by  
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## Abstract

The term public art conventionally refers to an artwork that is situated in a space in the public domain, typically intended to be accessible to all. Among the most significant artworks in this category are public monuments and memorials. Their role can include the commemoration or celebration of a significant event, person, or idea, thus representing memory in visual and material ways. However, monuments are not without inherent problems including the possibility that they may lose significance and become forgotten as sites of meaning if they do not engage with public memory in a relevant way. Issues of memory-- its public context for commemoration, collective memory, and forgetting-- are inherent to such artworks.

Also central to these sites is the question of space (both constructed space and spatial use). Monuments can dominate their surrounding environments, creating coded social spaces and interactions with the public. They can carry significant meanings for the communities which construct them. For example, the Canadian War Memorial in Ottawa perpetuates the memory of Canada's role in twentieth-century wars. In this way monuments can act as physical focal points for collective memory.

This thesis examines certain works of public art in the urban environment of the Ottawa downtown core, with a focus on the role of the monument and memorial as a hub of visual memory and collective consciousness. Using the Canadian War Memorial as a central focus, and buttressed with examinations of the Champlain Monument and the Tribute to Human Rights, this study largely affirms the theories of Nora and Winter, without entirely rejecting others in areas where several facets of theory overlap. This thesis engages with issues of memory and commemoration, as well as the ways in which monuments and memorials define space, their role in perpetuating collective memory and contributes to our understanding of the deeply ingrained relationship between Ottawa's monuments and memorials, the ways in which they codify their own spaces, and the viewer.

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## **Table of Contents**

<b>Abstract</b>	<b>i</b>
<b>Acknowledgements</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>Table of Contents</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>List of Illustrations</b>	<b>iv</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Chapter 1: The Construction of Monumental Space at the National War Memorial</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Chapter 2: The Activation of Monumental Space at the National War Memorial</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>Chapter 3: Counter-narratives and Contested Space: The Champlain Monument and Canadian Tribute to Human Rights</b>	<b>70</b>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Illustrations</b>	<b>104</b>
<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>112</b>

## List of Illustrations

<b>Figure</b>		<b>Page</b>
Figure 1.	The Canadian National War Memorial, Ottawa Photo: Herman H. Cheung <a href="http://www.flickr.com/photos/hermancheung/2654008863/">http://www.flickr.com/photos/hermancheung/2654008863/</a> 14 December 2009	104
Figure 2.	H.M. King George VI and Queen Elizabeth unveiling the National War Memorial, May 21, 1939 Collection of Library and Archives Canada Photo: National Film Board of Canada (C-002179)	105
Figure 3.	The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at the War Memorial Photo: Rick Carroll <a href="http://www.flickr.com/photos/rick-carroll/3627895234/">http://www.flickr.com/photos/rick-carroll/3627895234/</a> 14 December 2009	106
Figure 4.	Poppies on the tomb of the Unknown Soldier Photo: Melanie Hayes <a href="http://www.flickr.com/photos/mellyjean/63349936/">http://www.flickr.com/photos/mellyjean/63349936/</a> 14 December 2009	107
Figure 5.	Champlain Monument, Nepean Point, Ottawa, 1924 Collection of Library and Archives Canada Photo: W.J. Bolton (PA-031354)	108
Figure 6.	Champlain Monument and Scout figure after alterations Photos: <a href="http://urbsite.blogspot.com/2009/10/anishinabe-scout.html">http://urbsite.blogspot.com/2009/10/anishinabe-scout.html</a> 14 December 2009	109
Figure 7.	Canadian Tribute to Human Rights, Ottawa Photo: Taran Rampersad <a href="http://www.flickr.com/photos/knowprose/2401083166/">http://www.flickr.com/photos/knowprose/2401083166/</a> 14 December 2009	110
Figure 8.	Canadian Tribute to Human Rights, interior view Photo: Caro Lander <a href="http://www.flickr.com/photos/xuecaro/3327345982/">http://www.flickr.com/photos/xuecaro/3327345982/</a> 14 December 2009	111

## *Introduction*

*If we accept that the most fundamental purpose of the lieu de mémoire (memory-site) is to stop time, to block the work of forgetting... it is also clear that lieux de mémoire only exist because of their capacity for metamorphosis, an endless recycling of their meaning...<sup>1</sup>*

This thesis is not a comprehensive overview of the nature of art in public places, nor an analysis of the functionality of monuments and memorials in general. Rather, it examines certain works of public art in the urban environment of the Ottawa downtown core, with a focus on the role of the monument and memorial as hubs of visual memory and collective consciousness. Using the National War Memorial as a central focus, and supported by examinations of other significant monuments and memorials in Ottawa, including the Champlain Monument and the Canadian Tribute to Human Rights, this thesis engages with issues of memory and commemoration, as well as space, including activation of space, sacred space and forgotten space related to these monuments. This analysis will situate these issues within public art in Ottawa's urban centre, and will examine the ways in which monuments and memorials define space, and their role in perpetuating collective memory.

The ways in which monuments such as the War Memorial act as hubs of memory, as well as how meaning is retained within them, will be a primary question. In particular, this involves looking at how the War Memorial avoids depletion of significance through the continued renewal of the site, what happens when a monument's space fails to be activated, as well as what happens when a space has never worked in this way at all.

The term public art conventionally refers to an artwork that is situated in a space in the

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1 Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire," *Representations* 26 (1989), 7-25, at 19.

public domain, typically intended to be accessible to all. Among the most significant artworks in this category are public monuments and memorials, terms which are often used interchangeably. The role of these public artworks may include the commemoration or celebration of a significant event, person, or idea. In short, they render memory visible and material.

A monument can be briefly defined as a structure created to commemorate or honour a person, event, or idea that is significant to the populace for which it is constructed. Monuments are social in their production process - they are often conceived by committee, meant to reflect a community's values in their meaning, and to connect generations. They are also central in location, reflecting their importance as markers of the collective values and ideologies of a people. However, these monuments are not without inherent problems including the possibility (suggested controversially by Pierre Nora) that they may come to stand in for the commemorated event itself, releasing the audience from the obligation of thinking about that event. Issues of memory – such as how memory is represented in public commemoration, how collective memory is acted out, and the consequences of forgetting – are inherent in such artworks.

Also central to these sites is the question of space, both constructed space and spatial use. Monuments can dominate their surrounding environment, creating coded social spaces and interactions with the public. They can carry significant meanings for the communities which construct them, and can act as physical focal points for collective memory. Moreover, while the monument can act as a hub of visual memory and collective consciousness, it can only do this by maintaining its significance in the perception of the general public. It must have the capacity to absorb new meanings in order to maintain relevance with successive generations and new audiences, as well as serve as a reminder of the site's original meaning, for in some instances a monument can become static in meaning, encapsulating a certain time and culture for which it

was made, failing to resonate with the changing culture that surrounds it. In such cases, its function as a memory-space can atrophy.

A final consideration will be the ways in which people interact with public art and sites of memory, and in turn, the ways in which public art defines public space, with the aim of deepening our understanding of the changing relationship of public art and its audiences, as well as the shifting meanings of public space.

If a monument's meaning and importance in the dissemination of ideals, memories and values is to be considered, it will be beneficial to establish the groundwork on which it is to be analysed and considered. This will involve a precise understanding of the meanings of such multi-faceted words as 'public,' 'public art,' 'monument,' 'memorial,' and memory terms such as 'collective memory' and 'traumatic memory.' The latter terms are in the context of memory studies and relate to the ways in which the public receives and interacts with monuments. Collective memory, for example, can maintain a site's meaning in the imaginations of the public, or can otherwise be lost, and traumatic memories can be resolved or hindered by the values and narratives encapsulated in a memorial. These are not, however, unified sites of memory, and contestation remains part of the discussion, particularly while notions such as 'the public' remain problematic.

The concept of what is meant by 'public' is perhaps the most debated and ambiguous amongst all of the definitions. The contemporary concept of the public as a collective of citizens who move about in a sphere belonging to no one in particular, with freedom to engage in discourse, has its origins in the work of social theorist Jurgen Habermas and his view of the eighteenth-century 'public sphere' and 'public opinion' as institutions arising from the Enlightenment notion of a reasoning, bourgeois society exercising its power (both political and

social).

Habermas used the term *Öffentlichkeit*, which can be translated to mean either 'public sphere' or 'public space.' This proposes a metaphorical public space in which exists all public human activity including institutions, public figures and ceremonial events. It is in relation to this sphere that the public and private exist in dialogue with one another.<sup>2</sup> Habermas argued for many defining characteristics of the public; notably, he differentiates the public sphere from the public, which is simply a group of people gathered together, such as a crowd. The key difference between the two is that the public sphere becomes an institution through the participation of its members. In the words of Habermas, "'the public sphere' [is] first of all a realm of our social life in which something approaching public opinion can be formed. Access is guaranteed to all citizens."<sup>3</sup> Here, the term is defined with several important characteristics, notably that its members must have freedom to assemble; and that they "behave as a public body when they confer in an unrestricted fashion."<sup>4</sup> The public sphere also acts as mediator between citizens and the state, a sphere in which public opinion forms based on democratic participation, the sharing of information and opinion-making.<sup>5</sup>

Habermas favoured a nostalgic conception of the public sphere as "a dimension distinct from the economic, the private, and the political. This ideal realm provides the space in which disinterested citizens may contemplate a transparent emblem of their own inclusiveness and

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2 Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991), 32. (This publication was the first English translation of the original 1962 German book.)

3 Jürgen Habermas, "The Public Sphere: An Encyclopaedia Article," *New German Critique* 3 (1974): 49-55, at 49.

4 Ibid.

5 Habermas (1974), 50.

solidarity, and deliberate on the general good, free of coercion, violence, or private interests."<sup>6</sup>

Thus for Habermas, the public exists in both physical and psychological space.

For Patricia Phillips the idea of the public is a purely psychological entity. She questions the assumption that art is public because of its location, saying instead that the concept of 'public' "is a difficult, mutable, and perhaps sometimes atrophied one... the public dimension is a psychological, rather than a physical or environmental construct."<sup>7</sup> Phillips questions whether or not public art derives this characteristic from where it is located. Rather, she argues that ideas and memories have their own 'locations' in the public realm, so the definition of a location as a "physical site assured to grant access to an unidentified public"<sup>8</sup> is too narrow. If 'the public' is a psychological construct, a definition of public art based on its being in a public space is limiting.

Monuments and memorials exist in both the physical and psychological realms, and for Habermas, so does the public audience who engages with them. Monuments are located in physical public space in order to commemorate their subject matter in a visible way (which is a defining characteristic), and collective memories can ground a monument's place in the mind. Phillips reminds us that public space is often very broad in meaning and offers a narrower definition than Habermas, while Habermas' definition of the public sphere opens up considerations regarding the physical aspect of a monument's space, and how it is negotiated by audiences. The ways in which members of the public interact with the space of a monument is an important part of its meaning. Given this, the discussion at hand will argue for the public as a psychological as well as a physical entity.

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6 W.J.T. Mitchell, *Art and the Public Sphere* (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 1993), 35.

7 Patricia Phillips, "Out of Order: the Public Art Machine," *Artforum* 27 (1988): 92-97, at 93.

8 Malcolm Miles, *Art, Space and the City: Public Art and Urban Futures* ( New York: Routledge, 1997), 84.

The term 'public realm' was coined by theorist Hannah Arendt. She echoes Habermas in her definition, and refers to the "arena in which members of the public meet to accommodate competing values and expectations and hence in which all goals are open to discussion and modification."<sup>9</sup> This definition is closely tied to that of public space. As Judith Mastai observes, "while an argument can be made for a place to be known as a public space simply because a broad range of people or publics pass through it ... notions of "public," "the public," "public places," "public spaces" and "public art" are slippery; their meanings shift depending on who is using them and for what purposes."<sup>10</sup> There is no consensus in the field of art regarding what constitutes public art or public space; the terms suffer from what might be called "discursive slippage,"<sup>11</sup> although several guiding characteristics have been put forward. Phillips, for example, offered an excellent definition of public art in 1989, based not on its visibility, or its location outdoors in a space of civic importance, but that it is "public because it is a manifestation of art activities and strategies that take the idea of public as the genesis and subject for analysis. It is public because of the kinds of questions it chooses to ask or address, and not because of its accessibility or volume of viewers."<sup>12</sup>

Thus public art is also defined as such in that it engages with collective public issues, locating it in both the public sphere and the physical sites that the art occupies. These sites are able to make the art a prominent part of the urban landscape, but in many cases the art tends to

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9 As cited by Barbara Hoffman, "Law for Art's Sake in the Public Realm," *Critical Inquiry* 17:3 (1991): 113-146, at 114.

10 Judith Mastai, *Art in Public Places: A Vancouver Casebook* (Vancouver: Vancouver Art Gallery, 1993), 7.

11 Miwon Kwon, *One Place after Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity* (London: The MIT Press, 2004).

12 Patricia Phillips, "Temporality and Public Art," Harriet F. Senie and Sally Webster (eds), *Critical Issues in Public Art: Content, Context, and Controversy* (Washington: Smithsonian, 1998), 295-304, at 297. Originally published in 1989.

fade from notice. Yet it is initially created with the intent to embody the ideals of a community, crafted with care, and placed on prominent display. It creates what scholars Robert Hariman and John Louis Lucaites, writing in 2007, call “an [visual] image of the model citizen in order to define a public space and, with that, a democratic polity. It was a work of public art... [y]et even as such artworks fade from explicit view, every effort to communicate with the public creates something beyond itself. Art constitutes culture, and public art constitutes a public culture.”<sup>13</sup> Monuments can echo the values shared by a group, contributing to social stability and a community identity. However, in the reinforcement of collective cultural identity, monumental spaces can fail to capture multiple voices, and the question of who has the right to be represented in public space comes into question. It then becomes contested space.

Space is contentious in nature. In a cityscape such as a nation's capital, spaces in which the values and narratives of the community are acted out in sculptural form are heavily invested with symbolic meaning, since these spaces subliminally reinforce the message that whichever message is represented in the public realm is the dominant and acceptable one. In the case of public art, ownership of space is a mutable topic, for it belongs to all by nature. Thus, the question of who has the right to decide what to place in monumental space, and who ought to create art for it, is a topic of extensive debate. It is also a defining characteristic of most public art, including Ottawa's monuments. One memorial, located just outside the south entrance to Parliament Hill, commemorates Henry Albert Harper, a friend of Prime Minister Mackenzie King's who died in 1901 while trying to rescue a young lady, Bessie Blair, who had fallen through the ice during a skating party on the Ottawa River. Mackenzie King proposed that a statue of Sir Galahad would be a fitting tribute, and wanted the monument to be placed on the

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13 Robert Hariman and John Louis Lucaites, *No Caption Needed: Iconic Photographs, Public Culture, and Liberal Democracy* (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 2007), 25.

grounds of Parliament. The Parliamentary precinct was generally reserved for grandiose images of royalty and political figures, however, so the monument to Harper was placed just outside the grounds. Harper's statue did not conform to the thematic or visual representations of other monuments on Parliament Hill. Aesthetics are often a consideration in debates over ownership of public space, and of who is able to decide the ideas and symbols that are represented in it. Theorist Rosalind Krauss has proposed that aesthetics make public art "useful" in that such values make art universally accessible to the 'public' through visual appeal.<sup>14</sup> For much public art, aesthetics have traditionally been the dominant consideration, but other issues come into play for symbolic sites such as monuments. It might be less important for a monument to be generally considered aesthetically pleasing and more important that it speaks symbolically to the values that it represents, or that it activates a certain memory for the public. If monuments and memorials invoke considerations aside from aesthetic ones, such as memory activation and political meaning, they appear to belong to a different category of public art than the purely decorative or gentrifying. Not all public art is comprised of public monuments and it can be argued that not all public monuments are public art, especially where artistic concerns take second place to political or ideological ones.

The monuments examined in this discussion all have prominent aesthetic considerations as well as symbolic significance, and so fit into both categories. As the discussion centres on monuments and memorials to the exclusion of all other public art, these words ought to now be defined, particularly as there are several differences between a monument and a memorial.<sup>15</sup>

The terms 'monument' and 'memorial' are difficult to define, as they are often used to

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14 As cited by Rosalyn Deutsche, *Evictions: Art and Spatial Politics* (London: The MIT Press, 1998), 259.

15 Although there are distinct differences between the two, the word 'monument' is used for both in this thesis when the distinction bears no relevance to the discussion at hand.

mean the same thing.<sup>16</sup> A monument, for example, can be a "self-aggrandizing locus for national memory,"<sup>17</sup> which usually involves commemorations dignified events, triumphs of culture, or people who gave their lives for a noble, national cause, but monuments can also "tend to naturalize the values, ideals, and laws of the land itself. To do otherwise would be to undermine the very foundations of national legitimacy, of the state's seemingly natural right to exist."<sup>18</sup>

The word *monument* "derives from the Latin 'monere', which means not just 'to remind' but also 'to admonish', 'warn', 'advise', 'instruct'."<sup>19</sup> This suggests that monuments serve as instructive tools in order to remind the public of the past, and reflect the values that the public embraces. As historian Charles Griswold has suggested, "the architecture by which a people memorializes itself is a species of pedagogy. It therefore seeks to instruct posterity about the past and, in so doing, necessarily reaches a decision about what is worth recovering."<sup>20</sup> In these terms monuments are focal points for the collective values of a city, region or nation, and can be differentiated from memorials by their sense of glorification or celebration of narrative, rather than a more sombre act of remembrance. Monuments can be seen to legitimate the dominant narratives embodied in their subject matter. In the words of Judith Baca, "the purpose of a monument is to bring the past into the present to inspire the future. Monuments may be like the adobe formed from the mud of a place into the building blocks of a society; their purpose may be to investigate and reveal the memory contained in the ground beneath a 'public site,' marking our

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16 P. Gough, "'Invicta Pax' Monuments, Memorials and Peace: An Analysis of the Canadian Peacekeeping Monument," *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 8.3 (2002): 201-223, at 201.

17 James E. Young, "The Counter-Monument: Memory Against Itself in Germany Today," *Critical Inquiry* 18 (Winter 1992): 267-96, at 270.

18 Ibid.

19 Charles Griswold, "The Vietnam Veterans Memorial and the Washington Mall," *Critical Issues in Public Art: Content, Context, and Controversy* (Washington: Smithsonian, 1998): 71-100, at 74.

20 Griswold, 71.

passages as a people and re-visioning official history."<sup>21</sup>

Given the nature of monuments it is not surprising therefore that they can be said to reveal an adherence to an official version of history, or a singular narrative within many versions, legitimating the version of history told by the group who constructs the monument. This can serve to shape the identity of a community, make cohesive a group behind a shared sense of the past, or be problematic, particularly when differing versions of history are held by conflicting groups. Historian Malcolm Miles, for example, sees the monument as a device that is used to construct a sense of authority in Western nations, as a tool to maintain order in society.<sup>22</sup> This recalls the theories of Marxist Antonio Gramsci, who introduced the concept of cultural hegemony as a tool used by capitalist states as a means of maintaining control over an under-class. By this he meant that in a capitalist society, the ideologies of the elite often became the accepted 'cultural norm' for the populace as a whole, thus enforcing a consensus of values that maintained order, but that were not necessarily in the best interest of society as a whole. Louis Althusser, writing after Gramsci, echoed this idea, arguing that members of society from a young age are subjected to societal practices that indoctrinate them to the very power structures which shape their identities.<sup>23</sup> If, as Gramsci argues, the ideologies of the elite are typically the accepted ones for all classes, then monuments and memorials which are built according to these values (and often commissioned by the state) might reflect narratives that have become dominant by official sanction. Social groups may be misrepresented in the version that is commemorated and might find that message to be naturalized so that society accepts the official version as the

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21 Judith F. Baca, 'Whose Monument Where?' Harriet F. Senie and Sally Webster (eds), *Critical Issues in Public Art: Content, Context, and Controversy* (Washington: Smithsonian, 1998): 131-138, at 131.

22 Miles, 58.

23 See Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," *Lenin and Philosophy and other Essays* (New York: New Left Books, 1971): 121-176.

correct one.<sup>24</sup>

Both monuments and memorials can be used as tools of legitimization for a particular or dominant world-view, but a memorial can sometimes play a role in reminding a society of a less than glorious past. The monument tends to evoke a sense of heroism, of the glorification of values and efforts of a people, whereas a memorial evokes a more sombre sense of something lost, which must be remembered. Memorials mainly appeal to the healing process, acts of remembrance and reconciliation, whereas monuments largely speak to celebration and triumph.<sup>25</sup> In memorializing victims of wars, perceived atrocities or injustices, a memorial can represent events which the public might otherwise wish to forget. A memorial's narrative can also affirm commonalities and cohesion between diverse groups who suffered casualties. The War Memorial, for example, was not only a state-sanctioned commemorative tool; it also spoke to a sense of loss felt by all Canadians across class and ethnic boundaries (despite political or social disagreement over the war) and acted as a focal point for veterans of multiple wars.

The word memorial has origins in the Latin *memoria*, meaning to be 'mindful' or 'remembering.' Theorist Christine Boyer calls memorials "rhetorical topoi", defined as: "those civic compositions that teach us about our national heritage and our public responsibilities and assume that the urban landscape itself is the embodiment of power and responsibility..."<sup>26</sup> Memorials to war in particular serve a twofold function; they commemorate both the dead and the national values which were defended. In the view of W.J.T. Mitchell, the memorial is also capable of absorbing new meanings in new times, and all memorials are essentially participatory, for

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24 One example of this is the case of aboriginal groups who felt misrepresented in the Champlain Monument, discussed in Chapter 3.

25 Arthur Danto, "The Vietnam Veterans Memorial," *The Nation* 241 (1985): 152-155, at 152.

26 M. Christine Boyer, *The City of Collective Memory* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996), 32.

all such sites depend for their memory on the passerby who initiates it- however involuntarily ...the site alone cannot remember... it is the projection of memory by visitors into a space that makes it a memorial. The site catches visitors unaware, but is no longer passive and intrudes itself into the pedestrians' thoughts. Of course, such memory can also be avoided by simply crossing the street... but even this would be a memorial act of sorts, if only in opposition. For to avoid the memorial here, we would first have to conjure the memory to be avoided: that is, we would have to remember what it is we want to forget.<sup>27</sup>

P. Gough observes that "definitions of 'memorial' focus on the intention to preserve memory and on their iconographic role in evoking remembrance... Memorials... are often intimate, local and personal, though they are still required to be durable and open to the public gaze."<sup>28</sup> Thus memorials have a tendency to evoke memories of high personal significance, while monuments often tell narratives at the collective or national level. Memorials allow for the remembrance of personal loss in a way that a monument, with its tendencies of glorification of collective narratives, cannot as effectively evoke.

Michael Rowlands proposes that memorials "should ideally allow the fusion of the living with the dead as an act of remembrance whilst in time providing a way out of melancholia through an act of transcendence."<sup>29</sup> He asserts that memorials should function through celebration, although they do not all function in this way. Many memorials to the Great War in particular have taken on multiple roles as memorials for all 20th-century wars and as Gough says, "in this way they are periodically re-inscribed with values and meanings beyond their original remit."<sup>30</sup> These meanings are often less glorified, more personal, and cathartic. What is certain is that memorials play a prominent role in the act of remembering, and in resolving

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27 Mitchell, 68.

28 Gough, 202.

29 Michael Rowlands, 'Remembering to Forget: Sublimation as Sacrifice in War Memorials,' A. Forty and S. Kuchler (eds), *The Art of Forgetting* (Oxford: Berg, 1999): 129-146, at 131.

30 Gough, 203. Also see Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

traumatic memories. Memorials can often function as healing tools for the living, to help alleviate traumatic memory and create cohesiveness through collective memory.

These two terms - collective memory and traumatic memory – merit clarification in the context of this discussion. Collective memory is a term coined by theorist Maurice Halbwachs, who describes the collective experience as being separate from individual memory. Collective memory is dependent on others, rather than oneself, for construction, and is shared and passed on by members of a group.<sup>31</sup> Jan Assmann furthered this theory in 1992 by defining cultural memory in his book, *The Cultural Memory*. Assmann asserts that communication which is remembered and passed on takes the form of “text,” which is based on prior communication. His theory of cultural memory examines the conditions that enable these texts to be established and transmitted.<sup>32</sup>

Others have suggested that collective memories and the many ideologies that they represent are disseminated through the public via the media, popular culture, historical record (photographs, documents), gestures, acts, and any semiotic sign in the public sphere that is repeated and remembered. In the case of monuments and memorials, these are often constructed to honour values, events or individuals that are important in collective memory for the people who construct the monument. Truly significant monuments become loci of remembrance, articulating what they represent, encapsulating and absorbing meanings and transmitting them back to the public in reciprocal interaction. This activation of a monumental site creates a hub of collective memory, which French theorist Pierre Nora terms a *lieu de mémoire*. In his words,

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31 See Maurice Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory* (New York: Harper & Row Colophon Books, 1980).

32 Jan Assmann, *Religion and Cultural Memory, Ten Studies* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 110. (Translation from the German published in 1992.)

these "anchor, condense, and express the exhausted capital of our collective memory,"<sup>33</sup> forming physical reminders of public narratives that may not be often remembered. The essential ingredient to this, Nora argues, is the action of engaging with a site. People can sometimes fail to reciprocate, or believe that there is no longer a need to make an effort to remember (since what needs to be remembered is represented by a physical marker). If a site of memory is not activated by interaction with people, its narrative resides in the monument more than in living memory, relieving the public of the duty of remembrance.

The notion of collective memory is not without controversy, and some have pointed to the difficulty in mapping the transition from individual memories to collective ones, and how these two relate. Mikhail Bakhtin, for example, proposes the notion of dialoguism, in which everything that is said or thought is in response to words and language that have preceded it, and anticipates a response. In other words, nothing is ever said in isolation; communication through language engages in a continued dynamic relationship. The individual and the collective, for him, are in constant interaction and are influenced by one another.<sup>34</sup> Individual memories and commemorations would thus originate from collective ones which have already been made, and in turn would contribute to future collective and individual memories.

While collective memory implies a remembrance that takes place on a mass scale, traumatic memory might be considered the opposite of this in some cases, because trauma is often an intensely personal experience which can be difficult to comprehend as a collective experience. The individuality of this type of memory is similar to what Nora calls "the task of

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<sup>33</sup> Nora, 24.

<sup>34</sup> See Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin and London: University of Texas Press, 1981).

remembering,<sup>35</sup> involving a preoccupation with one's own personal past. In a shift away from memory that is shared by members of society, many wish to recall on a more personal level. Nora calls this a "preoccupation with the individual psychology of remembering."<sup>36</sup> He traces the emergence of this individual preoccupation to the turn of the twentieth century, when the fragmentation of the rural style of living in which memory was kept alive by local storytelling was succeeded by a disjointed type of urban living. He suggests that it was at this point in history that traumatic memory as an object of study first emerged, pioneered by psychologist Pierre Janet. Others such as Sigmund Freud also took up the study of traumatic memory.

While both analysts dealt with the subject of the effect of traumatic memories on human consciousness, Freud believed that such memories were repressed by the mind and Janet located traumatic memory in dissociation, meaning that the traumatic experience is not properly integrated into the "memory system."<sup>37</sup> The difference between repression and dissociation is that repression describes a memory that is pushed down into the unconscious and made irretrievable. Dissociation suggests a horizontal movement in the mind, where the trauma is stored in an alternative vein of memory, separate from the rest of the mind and still unable to be recalled.<sup>38</sup>

Janet believed that extreme or traumatic events may be so unfamiliar to memory processes that the experience may not be assimilated properly, thus causing it to be vaguely recalled or not retrieved at all. In Janet's terms, trauma is dissociated from one's conscious thoughts, and may only be recalled fragmentally: "It is only for convenience that we speak of it

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35 Nora, 15.

36 Ibid.

37 Bessel A. Van Der Kolk and Onno Van Der Hart, "The Intrusive Past- the Flexibility of Memory and the Engraving of Trauma," *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, ed. Cathy Carath (Baltimore: The Thomas Hopkins University Press, 1995): 158-182, at 163.

38 Van Der Kolk and Van Der Hart, 168.

as a 'traumatic memory.' The subject is often incapable of making the necessary narrative which we call memory regarding the event..."<sup>39</sup>

Freud argued that lack of such memories was not a failure to integrate traumatic memory into existing memory systems, but instead a repression of "conflict-laden sexual and aggressive ideas and impulses, centering on the oedipal crisis at about age five." In his book *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud asserted that memories from childhood are stored in the mind, but cannot be accessed due to repression.

According to Van Der Kolk and Van Der Hart, two contemporary memory specialists, "while psychoanalysis thereby came to emphasize the force of forbidden wishes, it ignored the continued power of overwhelming terror."<sup>40</sup> Van Der Kolk and Van Der Hart explain further: "With regard to trauma, the use of the term 'repression' evokes the image of a subject actively pushing the unwanted memory away. Personal consciousness stays in its place, as it were; it is the traumatic memory that is removed. It is highly questionable whether this is actually the case... there is little evidence for an active process of pushing away the overwhelming experience; the uncoupling seems to have other mechanisms."<sup>41</sup>

Today, contemporary memory studies side with Janet's theory of dissociation and agree that psychoanalysis fails to take into account the nuances of the problem. Recently the process of memory creation and its effect on everyday perceptions of reality has been re-examined, based on renewed interest in the role of traumatic experience in mental development.<sup>42</sup> Most contemporary scholars agree with Janet, who had a century earlier observed that, contrary to the theory of repression, some memories left permanent marks on the mind, and asserted themselves

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39 Pierre Janet, *Les Médications psychologiques* (Paris: Société Pierre Janet, 1984), 2:274.

40 Van Der Kolk and Van Der Hart, 168.

41 Ibid.

42 Van Der Kolk and Van Der Hart, 166.

through the process of dissociation. It is now believed that categorization is the basis of memory-making, and the connections between events are what enable the mind to create a map of the individual's 'reality'. Modern neurobiologists have found that memory is formed through connections between individual neuronal groups in the brain, so that, "with sufficient experience, the brain comes to contain a model of the world."<sup>43</sup>

If modern researchers are correct in agreeing with Janet, then it is equally important to attempt to intervene in the process of traumatic memory, because "what memory processes best are not specific events, but the quality of experience and the feelings associated with it."<sup>44</sup> This is where memorials can play a part in the healing process. The role of the memorial in mitigating traumatic memory lies in its capacity to channel highly personal memories in ritualized acts of remembrance, and if these acts are collective, they can generate a sense of not being alone. A memorial can act as a receptacle for the memory, or as an object that stands for the memory, so that a person attempting to resolve traumatic memories has a point of focus and no longer needs to carry it alone, because the traumatic event is located symbolically within the memorial. It thus can act as a healing tool.

The role of the memorial where traumatic and collective memory meet is also as a healing tool for the general population who have a 'second-hand' experience of the war or traumatic event being memorialized. Those who did not go to war, for example, experienced the societal effects of it, creating a collective memory for everyone that lived at the time. A memorial which commemorates traumatic events such as war unites such memories in one public place, reducing isolation in much the same way as a support group provides catharsis and public acknowledgement for those with similar experiences. The memorial becomes a locus for

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43 W.H. Calvin, *The Cerebral Symphony* (New York: Bantam, 1990), 261.

44 Van Der Kolk and Van Der Hart, 167

expressions of grief, thereby reducing isolation in traumatic memories, and incorporating them into the collective consciousness.

Historian Jenny Edkins notes that memorialization and remembrance can be powerful tools in the alleviation of traumatic memories on an individual level. At the same time, remembrance is often used by the state as a means of constructing meaning and maintaining power. But, she argues, the strength of collective remembrance can also work the other way, and challenge or change power structures which committed those events that led to the creation of traumatic memories.<sup>45</sup> In this way traumatic memories can be a catalyst of collective remembrance, which in turn can be a tool of reparation on a political level.

Janet believed that traumatic memories can be repressed due to the extreme circumstances of their production, but that "in the case of complete recovery, the person does not suffer anymore from the re-appearance of traumatic memories in the form of flashbacks, behavioural re-enactments, and so on. Instead the story can be told, the person can look back at what happened; he has given it a place in his life history, his autobiography, and thereby the whole of his personality."<sup>46</sup> Memorials to traumatic events assist in this effect by giving collective traumatic memories a place in public consciousness (via public performance of remembrance). They can thereby be assimilated as part of its heritage and history.

In 1989 Nora first put forth the idea of public space as a significant carrier of shared memory, as literal 'sites of memory' (*lieux de mémoire*).<sup>47</sup> More significantly, he argued that memorials act as hubs of memory. This is the core of several of his writings on commemoration, and will be a central focus of this thesis. His writings reveal the relationship between the

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45 See Jenny Edkins, *Trauma and the Memory of Politics* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

46 Van Der Kolk and Van Der Hart, 176.

47 Nora, 7.

collective memories of a group and how those memories are manifested physically, including the shifts in meaning between lived memories and archived or stored memories. Nora argues that memory maintained through lived experience in the form of tradition, ceremony, or customs, has been replaced by static markers of memories that are no longer embedded in the collective mind, but displaced into monuments and memorials. He identifies these as *lieux de mémoire*, explaining, "there are *lieux de mémoire*, sites of memory, because there are no longer *milieux de mémoire*, real environments of memory."<sup>48</sup> He notes that the real lived experience of memory is achieved through rituals, tradition, and other participatory forms, but that this has been diluted with the introduction of globalization, displacement, and modern mass culture.<sup>49</sup>

Nora suggests that there is a possibility that a monument can come to stand in for the public's "memory-work," so that once a monument or memorial has been built to act as a reservoir for collective memories, the public has a means by which to release itself from the responsibility of remembering. This results in a monument that is contained within itself and left alone rather than being attached to the daily life of the public. It is in such cases, where monuments can possibly release a community from the burden of remembrance, that the activation of site and the maintenance of living memory becomes of vital importance, for, "under the illusion that our memorial edifices will always be there to remind us, we take leave of them and return only at our convenience. To the extent that we encourage monuments to do our memory-work for us, we become that much more forgetful."<sup>50</sup> It is as a bulwark against this forgetting that Nora emphasizes the importance of a *lieu de mémoire* and its significance as a locus of memory, and importantly, as a link between lived memories and a culture which tends to

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48 Ibid.

49 Ibid.

50 W.J.T. Mitchell, *Art and the Public Sphere* (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 1993), 55.

forget. The activation of a monument's site is an important tool against the danger of forgetting.

A central task of a monument or memorial (for they both are structures of commemoration) is to keep the events, individuals and narratives that it represents alive and active in the collective memory of the public. The problem of sustaining meaning is a significant issue in this thesis, and has been investigated extensively by Nora, who believes that memories and lived experiences are separated from history. The activation of memory and the interaction between the public and the space in which this occurs lend a monument much of its significance.

Nora differentiates between real memory and history in several ways. Memory is described as living (active), always evolving, and not self-referential because it exists in the present, whereas history is characterized by "the reconstruction... of what is no longer." It is a more academic representation of what is past, rather than an organic, living system of recollections, subject to analysis and criticism because it is intellectual. Memory is a social function, prevalent in 'primitive' cultures, particularly in the form of oral tradition. Nora sees memory as more pure than history which "is how our hopelessly forgetful modern societies, propelled by change, organize the past."<sup>51</sup> In short, memory has been superseded and erased by history.

Nora privileges memory because of its ability to create social cohesiveness, in that memories can be both collective and individual. History on the other hand belongs to no one in particular, while asserting academic authority regarding the past.<sup>52</sup> Memory is also lived - it is found in rituals, spaces, objects, gestures, acts - while history is formed in the analysis of the events that trigger these acts. Nora believes that in many cases the public has departed from the 'real' lived experience of memory - through rituals, tradition, and other participatory forms – and

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51 Nora, 8.

52 Ibid.

relegated these forms into historical record. If contemporary culture were to live within memory (everyday acts infused with meaning and tradition) there would not exist as great a need to create so many *lieux de mémoire*, or activators of memory. Memories would be constantly active within social interactions, rituals and stories. It is in Nora's concept of lived memory that the importance of a monument's engagement with the public is found. For a monument to be effective, it must activate and sustain lived memories.

According to Nora, the meaning in a monument is an intrinsic feature. It is the materiality, the object, and not always the site which produces significance, so that monuments can be located in any number of places. In Nora's words, "statues or monuments to the dead... owe their meaning to their intrinsic existence; even though their location is far from arbitrary, one could justify relocating them without altering their meaning."<sup>53</sup> *Lieux de mémoire* in fact often lack a site altogether, taking the form of archives, museums, and commemorations.

The key to monuments that are *lieux de mémoire* is activation of their commemorative function. Above all, they must be activated by a public who perceives them as representations of a collective memory, removed from the mind and symbolized in a permanent medium. They must remain constantly in interaction with the act of remembrance or commemoration in order to remain a site of memory, for "without commemorative vigilance, history would soon sweep them away. We buttress our identities upon such bastions, but if what they defended were not threatened, there would be no need to build them."<sup>54</sup>

Nora's theories, though influential, have also proved controversial. Jacques Le Goff, also a leading figure in French memory studies, opposes Nora's approach of separating memory and

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53 Pierre Nora, 'From Lieux de Mémoire to Realms of Memory,' *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past*. Vol. 1: *Conflicts and Divisions*, eds. Pierre Nora and Lawrence D. Kritzman (New York and Chichester: Columbia University Press, 1996), xv-xxiv, xv.

54 Ibid.

history. Le Goff rejects the idea that memory is “more authentic, 'truer' than history, which is presumed to be artificial, and, above all, manipulative of history.”<sup>55</sup> He favours a holistic approach to reconstructing the past that incorporates anthropology, geography, and other social sciences, and calls memory “the raw material of history.”<sup>56</sup> Le Goff's approach highlights the dispute which still surrounds Nora's theories. For many monuments and memorials, though, there does appear to be a separation between memory and history. This is especially evident in monuments where the version of the commemorated event is not cohesive with the memories of all social groups (for example, the disparity between the Eurocentric version of history commemorated by the Champlain Monument and aboriginal versions). Memories are at the same time experienced on a more personal level than history. The memories of veterans, for example, are difficult to embody in a memorial. The War Memorial encapsulates the history of Canadian conflict, rather than the memories of survivors, and it is collective memory that is disseminated into the mind by public engagement with the memorial. This separation of history and memory reflects Nora's concept of *lieux de mémoire*. His theory will be one of several through which the relationship between monuments, memory and history is framed.

Historian Jay Winter, whose writings succeed Nora's, has a useful approach with which to examine the construction of meaning in monumental space. Winter proposes a model in which a monument evolves over three distinct periods: the first is the initial creative phase in which the monument is physically constructed, ceremonies evolve around it, and the “construction of a commemorative form”<sup>57</sup> takes shape. The second phase, that of “the grounding of ritual action in

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55 Jacques Le Goff, *History and Memory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), xi.

56 Ibid.

57 Winter, 7.

the calendar, and the routinization [sic] of such activities,"<sup>58</sup> is achieved through the establishment of rituals associated with the site. This is done through creating routine and institutionalized actions around the monument, which reinforces meaning. Thirdly, the site undergoes either transformation or disappearance of meaning, which is largely dependent on whether the subsequent generation maintains the earlier meanings given to the place, or adds new meaning - otherwise the monument's function as an active site of memory can be lost. As Winter puts it, "without frequent re-inscription the dates and places of commemoration simply fade away as memory atrophies; the monument loses its potency to re-invigorate memory."<sup>59</sup> For a monument to remain significant, the third phase must involve continued interaction with the public and continued reinforcement of the memories associated with the monument so that its meaning can keep pace with the passage of time.

Winter links the act of commemoration with the physical structure of the monument, and calls commemoration a "matrix of activity,"<sup>60</sup> in which society demonstrates what Assmann calls "a collective shared knowledge... of the past, on which a group's sense of unity and individuality is based."<sup>61</sup> In the last century most of what Winter calls "commemorative work" has arisen out of a desire to remember war and its casualties. The important action which keeps this collective memory alive is the continuation of ritual and ceremony, but as its forms change, so can meanings. He believes, like Nora, that a loss of this desire to keep memory alive in successive generations can result in a loss of meaning entirely: "the group that organizes the commemoration inherits earlier meanings attached to the event being remembered, as well as

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58 Ibid.

59 Gough, 202. Also see Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning* (1995).

60 Winter, 1.

61 Jan Assmann, "Collective Memory and Social Identity," *New German Critique* 65 (1995): 125-133, at 130.

adding new meanings. Their activity is crucial to the presentation and preservation of commemorative forms. When such groups disperse or disappear, commemoration loses its initial force and may fade away entirely."<sup>62</sup> This is a key point, for when the social group that begins the process of commemoration fades away, so does the place of commemoration - and often the memory itself. The consequences of this loss and how it is prevented at sites of commemoration are a central consideration of this thesis.

A large body of literature has been devoted to the means whereby monuments communicate meaning, one example of which is the prevalent use of allegory and archetypes in nineteenth/early twentieth-century commemoration. The cenotaph (central arch) of the National War Memorial and the allegory of Peace atop it are highly recognizable symbols of Canadian war remembrance. Scholar Sergiusz Michalski has suggested that the cenotaph as a shape forms part of a larger language of allegory and symbol.<sup>63</sup> Part of the reason that the figures of Peace and Freedom are so well suited as symbols is that they, like the cenotaph, follow certain historical traditions in the treatment of allegorical concepts.

In the 19th century, monuments were mostly allegorical in form, or were portraits of heroes, but the cenotaph (an arch or large monumental structure meant as a symbolic tomb for those buried elsewhere) emerged as a form in the 20th century, as did the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.<sup>64</sup> The word 'cenotaph' derives from the Greek 'kenos,' meaning empty, and 'taphos,' meaning tomb. These forms differed from earlier representations as they "stood as a singular

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62 Winter, 1.

63 See Sergiusz Michalski, *Public Monuments: Art in Political Bondage 1870-1997* (New York: Reaktion Books, 1998).

64 The first of these were created in France and England in the early 1920s and became a common motif in war memorials worldwide.

abstraction of mass death."<sup>65</sup> Allegory was nevertheless still used on monuments throughout the British Empire, particularly the personification of Victory, as an angel or mythical figure (a notable example of which is the figure atop the Aberystwyth War Memorial in Wales). The personification of Peace was less common. Peace was always female, and a dove, olive branch or other symbol of peace was often placed in her hand, and she was, as Gough says, "often regarded as a partner to the representation of Victory, but usually on a lower level."<sup>66</sup>

Winter explains that public remembrance is not only political and material, "it is also an art form, the art of arranging and interpreting signifying practices."<sup>67</sup> Some commemorative motifs are widespread, and others purely national. Medieval imagery in particular became widespread after the First World War on European memorials, recalling the language of glorious, brave knights. Classical imagery was also widespread on war memorials, used to represent those lost in combat. This has associations with great Greek and Roman heroic stories, and creates a temporal link to the perceived great civilizations. Concepts such as Liberty and Victory are often given female personifications, and often borrowed from Greco-Roman imagery. Marianne, for example, is the name given to the female symbol of the French Republic. She is personified as a woman wearing Classical garments, and commonly depicted in art to represent the French State. Christian motifs such as praying figures, angels and Madonna-like grieving women are also used in monumental art, recalling the role of faith in consolation and remembrance. Winter calls all of this the "aesthetic landscape" of monuments.<sup>68</sup>

Viewers read monuments and memorials visually based on certain codes (such as classicism's idealization and associations with stability, for example), and monuments from the

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65 Gough, 204.

66 Ibid.

67 Winter, 5.

68 Winter, 6.

late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries are interpreted largely through allegorical traditions. The figures at the top of the National War Memorial draw on this allegorical language of statuary. According to Michalski, there are several 'archetypes' in this language: the actual person, who is meant to be exactly as the representation depicts (a specific person), the social archetype (a farmer, a miner, a soldier) and the personification (French Republic as a woman, Victory as a winged woman, etc.).<sup>69</sup> The significance of this monumental language is considered when examining spatial characteristics of the War Memorial.

In terms of methodology, the work of Nora on memory-spaces and Winter on commemorative forms is used extensively in this thesis, and comprises a large part of the framework through which this analysis of monuments is conducted. Nora's definition of *lieux de mémoire* is recognized as a linking concept in the interaction between memory and monuments. Winter's analysis is adopted in the context of this thesis based on the premise that the War Memorial, Champlain Monument and Tribute to Human Rights perform commemorative functions with varying degrees of effectiveness.<sup>70</sup> The Tribute to Human Rights has either not completed Winter's process at all, or moved directly to the third stage, as it has not successfully fulfilled the second stage (in which a monument is invested with meaning through signs which ground the monument's role in public consciousness), while the War Memorial and Champlain Monument provide contrasting examples for the final phase (in which a monument can either atrophy, or continue in the vein of the second stage, and be invested with new meanings, depending on whether or not successive generations adopt the collective memories and practices

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<sup>69</sup> Michalski, 13.

<sup>70</sup> It is important to note that while the words monument and memorial can be used interchangeably in many cases, the Champlain Monument and Tribute to Human Rights are more of a monumental nature than the War Memorial, so that a comparison of their commemorative functions must take context into effect, as it does in this thesis.

associated with the monument).

The narratives and ideologies which shape the production of monumental space are never singular and this discussion of memory-space favours the notion that public space is contentious in nature and most often shaped by the state; however, the public is considered an entity that is not always in conflict with these narratives in terms of remembrance, and that has the capacity to engage in critical dialogue with monuments (recalling Habermas' notion of the opinion-making role of the public sphere). The state and the public are often positioned in a push-pull relationship, but can also be in agreement with one another if a central role of the government is to act in accordance with popular opinion. Collective memory and traumatic memory are suggested as forces which define and give shape to a site's importance, usage and perception. Moreover, linking the act of commemoration with the physical structure of the memorial will provide a grounding for the complex relationship between the physical site and collective memory.

The first chapter establishes the National War Memorial within the framework of issues of physicality and commemoration, particularly the production of monumental space: how and why memories are constructed through commemorative forms, the purpose of commemoration within collective memory and how this is disseminated, as well as the question of voice, in other words, whose memory is monumentalized. It addresses issues relating to time in the context of the War Memorial and its origins, including the ways in which meanings change over time, and the challenges inherent in keeping meaning from becoming static. This chapter discusses how the War Memorial has transcended shifts in meaning and loss of its significance through the motives and ideologies behind its construction, its spatial use over time, and the physical nature of the site.

The second chapter forms an analysis of the War Memorial's significance as it relates to its use as a site of memory. This chapter explores the relationship between a monument and its space and the importance of public, social performances such as ritual and commemoration in the construction of meaning. The ways in which a memorial site can be activated are discussed, as is what these spaces mean to the public, and how they construct those meanings.

One example in the discussion of the problem of space includes the concept of sacred space, which, within the context of this thesis, is an aspect of the spatial and locational identity of the War Memorial. The introduction of the idea of sacred space will give shape to the discussion of the function of monuments and memorials as places of reverence, determining the nature of this space as it relates to the National War Memorial. The ceremonial use of the site for Remembrance Day services, as one example, perpetuates the collective memories embodied in the monument, creating an active space that depends on its audience for dissemination.

The third chapter discusses how public space carries shifts in meaning and significance, through examinations of contested and controversial sites. A central premise is that public art spaces are contested spaces, especially when dealing with collective memory. The discussion introduces the Champlain Monument and Canadian Tribute to Human Rights as contrasting examples to the War Memorial's construction of meaning, because these two monuments do not generate spaces of memory and site activation nearly as successfully. The reasons for this are diverse. Although all three of these monuments are situated in Ottawa's downtown core, they were commissioned for different reasons, have different contexts and engage the public with different levels of success. The Champlain Monument is examined as a site that has shifted in meaning, so that its significance as a relevant memory-site has been diminished through the contestation of its narrative. Its subsequent alteration reflects the difficulties of maintaining

relevance for a monument that embodies static memory. In contrast, The Tribute to Human Rights monument is an example of a site that has suffered from loss of meaning and separation from its audience. It illustrates the ways in which a memorial site can fail to function as a space of memory, how forgotten space is situated in the urban landscape, and how this might be remedied.

Public art is an underdeveloped discipline, particularly the study of monuments and memorials and their meaning. Several theses have been written on the topic of Ottawa's monuments, their construction and context, and these works have largely examined monuments from a historical perspective. In contrast, this thesis approaches the topic from the other end, looking backwards from the present at how meaning has been constructed over the lifespan of certain monuments. Although the areas of memory studies and the production of space have come under increased focus in recent years, few scholars apply the two to how meaning is constructed in spaces of memory. In addition, the public monuments of Ottawa are under-represented in literature given the role of commemoration in a capital city, although some individual monuments in the region have been examined, and several cultural geographers have studied the role of commemoration in Ottawa. Brian Osborne and Geraint Osborne, for example, have identified the sculptural group on Parliament Hill as a sacred and memorial space, and in particular have examined the unveiling ceremonies of the Laurier monument on Parliament Hill as a device meant to "load the memorial-complex being constructed in the national capital with another layer of symbolic meaning... reinforce Canadians' collective memory... and propogate... the nation-state."<sup>71</sup> Additionally, Brian Osborne and D. Gordon have examined the national

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<sup>70</sup> Brian S. Osborne and Geraint B. Osborne, "The Cast[e]ing of Heroic Landscapes of Power: Constructing Canada's Pantheon on Parliament Hill," *Material History Review* 60 (2004), 35-47, at 37.

identity of the War Memorial and Confederation Square. They argue that the Square was intended to be an important civic plaza, influenced by Prime Minister Mackenzie King's vision for a captivating national capital. The Square for them is a weak space due to poorly defined border definition and enclosure, but the National War Memorial is a successful symbol that inhabits a prominent place in Canadian national identity. This symbolic status, they explain, comes from its importance as a locus of remembrance for all Canadian combat.<sup>72</sup> Most studies of public art in Canada focus on the nation as a whole. One recent and important compilation entitled *Public Art in Canada: Critical Perspectives* entails a survey of the diversity of Canadian public art, including interventionist and graffiti art, but is indicative of the discipline as a whole in that contributions dealing with monuments or commemoration are a minority.<sup>73</sup>

In light of the relatively limited material relating to Ottawa's monuments, my thesis draws diverse studies together in order to address how memory and usage produce significance in the context of nationally-oriented narratives in Ottawa. The uniquely Canadian focus of this discussion pulls memory studies in a new direction in a unique application of this field to the National War Memorial, Champlain Monument and Tribute to Human Rights. Together, these three examples comprise an analysis of not only why, but also how, meaning is constructed and how significance can be maintained or lost. These three monuments provide case studies for how memory-spaces are produced within the narrow focus of Ottawa's downtown core, adding a new facet to discussions of this field of study.

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<sup>72</sup> See Brian Osborne and D. Gordon, "Constructing National Identity in Canada's Capital, 1900-2000: Confederation Square and the National Monument," *Journal of Historical Geography* 30 (2004): 618-641.

<sup>73</sup> See *Public Art in Canada: Critical Perspectives*, eds. Annie Gerin and James S. MacLean (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009).

## ***Chapter 1: The Construction of Monumental Space at the National War Memorial***

Monumental space is constructed through interactions between physical space, commemorative acts, and sustained memories over the progression of time. Issues relating to time are inherent in monuments and memorials because the progression of time can change their meaning, influence, and perceived value for the public. This progression can change or diminish a site's usage, rendering the monument static along with the memories that it represents.

Alternatively, a monument can be reinforced through use and maintain continued significance over progressive generations. The site of the National War Memorial (or War Memorial) which is constantly in use and continually reinvested with new meanings, has transcended shifts in meaning and loss of its significance through the physical nature of the site and its spatial use over time. The construction and setting of the War Memorial is a central focus of this discussion because of its successful engagement with the public and thus its successful creation of meaningful memory-space.

The physicality, location, and prominence of the War Memorial within its context of the city are a significant factor in its value as a symbolic location, which has been amplified by renovations in the past twenty years that expanded the plaza in Confederation Square. The result is increased prominence for the Memorial instead of diminishing relevance. Its initial construction, site, and importance as a symbol narrating Canada's collective remembrance of its war dead, as well as its history, can all be considered as ways in which its monumental space has been established.

Completed in 1939, the National War Memorial was commissioned to recognize the response of Canadians in the First World War but has since come to commemorate the sacrifice of all Canadians who have served in times of war. The actual construction and completion of the project came after many years, delays and changes, but the initial plan for the construction of a war memorial to commemorate Canada's fallen in the First World War was proposed shortly after the end of that war. In 1920 the Department of Public Works and Government Services assembled a committee of Canadian urban planners and architects,<sup>1</sup> which advised that the Canadian government ought to construct a memorial building to house artefacts, war artworks, documents and official war records. However, the parameters of the mandate changed slightly after the initial announcement of the competition and indicated that "any form of memorial would be considered, from towers to obelisks to sculptural groupings, so long as it expressed 'the feelings of the Canadian people as a whole to the memory of those who participated in the Great War and lost their lives in the service of humanity.'"<sup>2</sup>

An international design competition for the War Memorial was announced in 1925. The competition called for the design to "be expressive of the feelings of the Canadian people as a whole,"<sup>3</sup> and, according to the requirements determined by the committee's architects, urban planners and government officials, had to represent the sentiments and values Canadians wished

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<sup>1</sup> The three members of the selection committee were Henry Sporatt, an architect noted for his work at the University of Toronto; Herman MacNeil, president of the National Sculpture Society of New York; and Dr. F.J. Shepherd, a medical doctor by profession who was also president of the Art Association of Montreal and on the board of trustees at the National Gallery of Canada.

<sup>2</sup> Jonathan F. Vance, "The Great Response: Canada's Long Struggle to honour the dead of the Great War," *The Beaver: Journal of Canadian History* (Oct. - Nov. 1996): 28.

<sup>3</sup> P. Gough, "'Invicta Pax' Monuments, Memorials and Peace: An Analysis of the Canadian Peacekeeping Monument," *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 8.3 (2002): 201-223, at 212.

to remember after the war. They expressed these values as: "the spirit of heroism, the spirit of self-sacrifice, the spirit of all that is noble and great that was exemplified in the lives of those sacrificed in the Great War, and the services rendered by the men and women who went overseas."<sup>4</sup> Entries were received mainly from Canada, England and several Commonwealth countries. The winning creation was submitted by Vernon March, an English<sup>5</sup> sculptor whose design called for twenty-two bronze figures representing various branches of the Canadian forces to be depicted marching through a granite arch, over which two allegorical figures representing peace and freedom would preside.

The construction of a War Memorial was part of a desire to commemorate the Great War in print, artistic, and other forms. The Canadian government published pamphlets during and after the war, containing war art drawn on the front lines, and documentary films were produced examining life at war. In the years following the First World War, almost every Canadian town erected its own veterans' memorial because almost every community had lost loved ones in the Great War. This push for monument building which occurred across Canada was the result of a need to commemorate the massive loss of life on both a local and national scale (more than 66,000 died out of 600,000 Canadians who served in the First World War), as well as the increased sense of nationalism following the war. For communities that wished to construct monuments to their fallen, there were often financial difficulties involved, particularly during the Depression. In both small and large urban centres monuments to the Great War were built mainly by public subscription, with the exception of two built by governments, in Ottawa and St John's.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> T. Wayling, "Untitled," *MacLean's Magazine* (Toronto) 15 December 1938: 23.

<sup>5</sup> Although the competition was open to all countries, some Canadians expressed anger that a Canadian sculptor was not chosen. This will be examined later in the chapter.

<sup>6</sup> See Robert Shipley, *To Mark Our Place: A History of Canadian War Memorials* (Toronto: NC Press, 1987).

The original sculpture maquette that Vernon March submitted for the competition in 1925, with the theme of "Canada's Great Response," included seventeen bronze figures (which was later increased to twenty-two), and represented all branches of the Canadian Armed Forces. These included aviators, nurses, and men from the infantry and navy, and were meant to convey a sense of determination and action.<sup>7</sup> *Maclean's Magazine*, commenting on the piece, declared "they are pressing forward in simple earnestness, not marching to the fanfare of trumpets or the skirl of the pipes."<sup>8</sup> March saw the arch as a gateway: "The arch in the centre is the gateway to peace, and through it young people representing branches in the war service eagerly seek hope and respite from the travails of battle. At the top, standing on the architrave, are two figures holding up symbols of peace and freedom."<sup>9</sup> The bronze allegorical figures of Peace and Freedom were "alighting on the world with the blessings of Victory, Peace and Liberty in the footsteps of the people's heroism and self-sacrifice."<sup>10</sup>

In 1926 March saw the proposed site of the monument for the first time, and decided that the structure needed to be much larger to fit the grandeur of the site, and to be on a scale that matched the Chateau Laurier and nearby railway station. He and his brother Sidney, an architect, designed an enlarged pedestal, higher arch, and increased the figures in size.<sup>11</sup>

Vernon March died in 1930 before the monument was finished, resulting in a two-year delay until his estate was settled. His brother Sidney March was able to finish the bronze castings. A temporary exhibit of the monument was set up in London's Hyde Park while Confederation Square was being completed in Ottawa. This brought to light yet another problem.

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7 Vance, 28.

8 Wayling, 23.

9 Quoted in Jim Garner, *Ottawa Citizen* (Ottawa), 27 May 1978.

10 Wayling, 23.

11 Vance, 28.

The original plan for the archway was too narrow for the figures to fit through it. Sidney March promptly widened the arch, added three more figures to give continuity to the overall design, and, at the Canadian government's request, redesigned the steps around the base. The first figures to be mounted on the arch in September 1938 were Peace and Freedom, with the project being completed the same year.<sup>12</sup>

The design followed some broader trends of commemorative and public sculpture that were prominent in Europe at this time. Michalski tells us that in the late 19th century, there were several European schools of public monuments. According to him, the French erected fluid, allegorical types with dynamic and circular compositions, that "evoke the illusion of free-flowing, soft bronze,"<sup>13</sup> while the English late Victorian monument often took the form of static, sober statues. Urban planners in Paris, facing the difficulty of monument placement following Hausmann's extensive reconstruction of Paris, "were inspired by the English system, according to which many public monuments were placed in gardens and public parks seemingly at random."<sup>14</sup> The War Memorial's use of archetypal figures, allegory and a tall central cenotaph was in a similar style and form to the war memorials that were being constructed at the same time in England, France and other allied nations. Gough points out that monuments to the Great War had taken the form of parks, hospitals, and other civic works in Commonwealth countries, but that "in 1919 the need to find a tolerable meaning to the Great War more often demanded monumental form. Reverential structures such as cenotaphs had several functions. Initially they acted as a focus for personal, public and civic displays of grief. Their iconic form helped to reassure non-combatants and relatives that the dead had died for a greater cause, one that was

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12 Ibid.

13 Sergiusz Michalski, *Public Monuments: Art in Political Bondage 1870-1997* (New York: Reaktion Books, 1998), 24.

14 Michalski, 29.

linked to abstract values of nationhood, camaraderie or Christian citizenship."<sup>15</sup> This also supports Gramsci and Althusser's assertions that monumental forms reinforce the values of the state, for a monument which celebrates those who died in defence of their nation also justifies the ideologies that embody the nation.

The War Memorial followed the language of classicism and allegory that was prevalent in 19<sup>th</sup> century monuments, particularly the ways in which concepts such as peace and freedom were personified. The Memorial's original design for the bronze figures at the top of the cenotaph called for either the combination of Peace and Victory, or Liberty and Freedom to be used. Eventually the combination of Peace and Freedom was accepted - but strangely, the Ottawa figure holds a laurel wreath in her hand, the symbol for victory.<sup>16</sup>

Although the language of archetypal figures and personified virtues can be easily read and interpreted by viewers, the War Memorial's reception after its unveiling varied greatly. When March began construction, complaints began to arise from some officials who visited the artist's studio. Many of these complaints centered on historical accuracy - why, for example, were not all of the Canadian units who had participated in the war represented in the bronze figures? Or, how could a single soldier and horse pull such a large field gun as was depicted? To these objections, March responded that although each element of the uniforms depicted was historically accurate, the grouping was meant to be taken symbolically.<sup>17</sup> Approximately 2600 units had served in the war, making it impossible to represent them all, and there was not room enough to include

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15 Gough, 203.

16 Ibid.

17 Notably, this is one reason that the bronze figures work so well as a part of the War Memorial's function as a hub of remembrance - like the Unknown Soldier, the figures can stand in for anyone who has fought in war and shared the same look of earnestness and determination as is depicted on the figures' faces. They are not so detailed as to represent specific soldiers who fought in the First World War, so that they become universal representations of 'soldier,' or 'nurse,' or 'pilot.'

elements such as a whole team of drivers and horses to pull the gun. The sculptures were instead meant to "symbolize Canada's response through representative figures... to stand for all members of [the] service[.]"<sup>18</sup>

There was also great concern over the choice of an English sculptor rather than one Canadian-born. Additionally, although many Canadians hailed the piece as a triumphal and majestic monument, some were angry at its name. Titled *The Response*, it seemed to indicate a passive answer to the British homeland's call to war, rather than a strong Canadian presence. Canada had emerged from the war with a greater sense of its own nationhood (particularly after the decisive victory at Vimy Ridge), having rallied under a uniting cause, and the monument's title appeared to refer to a dependence on Britain rather than an independent decision by Canada to come to Britain's aid. The location of the monument was also in question. This was an element that was widely debated, for as Gough observes, "Created by a non-Canadian, constructed almost entirely overseas, ideologically shackled to a distant empire, Canadians could at least decide where the memorial should be located."<sup>19</sup>

A monument's site determines its audience and has symbolic undertones. For example, a prominent plaza gives greater symbolic importance and invests a monument with more significance than a site which is tucked away in a seemingly random park. Once Vernon March's sculpture was selected from the 127 entries, next came the problem of where the great monument ought to be sited.<sup>20</sup> There were lengthy debates to decide its location, which prolonged the process. The prime minister at the time, Mackenzie King, wanted to use Connaught Square (renamed Confederation Square in 1927) because he wished to transform the downtown core. He

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18 Vance, 28.

19 Gough, 212.

20 Vance, 28.

argued that "a neutral space could be transformed into a politicized plaza worthy of Canada's emergent national identity."<sup>21</sup> This location also carried symbolic significance because it was already used for rallies and other public events. Its close proximity to several hotels contributed to its convenience. The proposed new purpose would expand on an existing use of the site, appropriating for it a national role and recognizing its centrality in the public sphere. Its proximity to Parliament was another consideration; there existed a prominent visual axis directly from the Hill to the square, so ceremonial processions could easily move between the two sites.

King's chosen location attracted some opposition, however, particularly among members of Parliament. The arguments against the site and project included: concerns about why the monument was being erected at all when the Memorial Chamber in the Peace Tower, which was dedicated in 1927, and housed Canada's Book of Remembrance, already served the purpose of commemoration. Also, why was the location so far from Parliament Hill? Some argued that the site should be directly on Parliament Hill, amongst the buildings, on "national property."<sup>22</sup>

King remained steadfast in his wish for the Connaught Square location, and expressed this to Ottawa city council: "He mused that Napoleon had razed a whole section of Paris to create a huge open space in the centre of the French capital. If he were Napoleon, King said, he would expropriate everything around Connaught Square and turn it into a majestic plaza. Only this would provide a worthy setting for Canada's war memorial."<sup>23</sup>

Practical problems also arose with King's plan, including the surrounding buildings that could not be torn down except at great expense. As well, some politicians questioned whether or not the square was substantial enough for such a monument. Some believed it would cause traffic

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21 Gough, 212.

22 See Jonathan Vance, *Death So Noble: memory, meaning and the First World War* (Vancouver: UBC Press, Canada. 1997).

23 Vance, 28.

problems, and many MPs opposed the \$3 million that King was prepared to spend on his scheme. The plan did eventually go forward, albeit slowly, and it was only in 1937 that the square was ready for the monument's construction.<sup>24</sup>

The unveiling was postponed until Remembrance Day 1939, so that King George VI, who was to visit Canada, could participate in the ceremony. The dedication finally occurred on 21 May 1939, and approximately 100,000 Canadians crowded the streets for the 11 a.m. ceremony. King George VI was received by the prime minister and prominent members of Parliament. His Majesty inspected the Veterans' Honour Guard, and unveiled the memorial.<sup>25</sup>

In his address, the King told the assembled crowd that "the memorial did not just symbolize the zeal with which Canada responded to the crisis in 1914... it revealed 'the very soul of the nation.' March's sculptures demonstrated the willingness of Canadians to fight for the principles represented by the allegorical figures of Peace and Freedom."<sup>26</sup> The unveiling ceremony also included mass singing of 'O Canada,' 'God Save the King,' and 'O Valiant Hearts,' and a pipers' chorus.<sup>27</sup> The combination of reverence and pomp reflected the monument's status as a tribute to the fallen, a reminder of great national loss, as well as a site of patriotism and pride in Canadian national values – and given that WWII began only months after the unveiling, also appealed to the necessity of defending these values.<sup>28</sup>

The ceremony with which the monument was unveiled reflects the national pride prevalent at the time of its completion, and since then the site has offered a stage for public

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24 Ibid.

25 "Program for the Unveiling of the National War Memorial in Ottawa" (Ottawa: May 21 1939), 3.

26 Vance, 28.

27 "Program," 3-5.

28 The King was not wearing a military uniform at the dedication of the War Memorial; this can be an indicator of the general desire for peace despite the looming possibility of war.

performances of commemoration for those who served in both world wars, and as a reminder of the great costs of war. If Canadians' eventual reaction was so favourable, why had there been so much controversy over the site? Mastuda has observed that there is often fierce competition between groups to decide how to commemorate in public spaces. These groups can include veterans' organizations, relatives of those being commemorated, city councils, and urban planners. The result can be conflict between the ambitions of city planners to execute a particular style of remembrance and those who claim the prerogative of proper homage to the deceased.<sup>29</sup> As Gough puts it, "it may seem odd that the siting of a monument should arouse such anxieties, [and] perplexing that icons of national reverence and remembrance such as the National War Memorial should have once seemed so complex and elusive, but this is to ignore the debates about the way in which memorials encapsulate and perpetuate memory. Containing and conveying memory, monuments to war exist not only as aesthetic devices but as [an] apparatus of social memory."<sup>30</sup>

The urban landscape is in itself a landscape of signifiers of political power. In the case of the War Memorial, Mackenzie King's wish for a cohesive, symbolic downtown core that represented his government, and in turn, Canada's power structures, won over several objections to the siting of the monument. Site is linked to power, and the victory of Mackenzie King's vision to transform Ottawa's space into a reflection of great urban centres such as Paris, reinforces "the dominance of the cultural [or political] elites in the city."<sup>31</sup> The siting of the War Memorial to reflect Canada's national values seems to reflect Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony. He argues that the consensus of elite values on every level of society is a form of ideological

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29 See M.K. Mastuda, *The Memory of the Modern* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

30 Gough, 214.

31 Tom Finkelpearl, *Dialogues in Public Art*. (London: The MIT Press, 2001), 44.

coercion, on the same level as coercion through violent methods, and has the effect of convincing the populace that working towards the benefit of those in power (rather than revolting against them) is also in their best interest. He defines the state as those power structures in control, (the law, court system, government) and claims that it is the capitalist state that controls society through cultural hegemony.<sup>32</sup>

Althusser defined ideology as “the system of the ideas and representations which dominate the mind of a man or a social group,”<sup>33</sup> a means by which one's self-identity is constructed. The effects of ideology, he claimed, are impossible to escape. Althusser developed these theories into the concept of ideological state apparatuses. In a capitalist state, he argued, any judgements, preferences, choices, and other actions that an individual takes are influenced by predetermined social conventions. These conventions, in turn, impose themselves on an individual's self-perception. The apparatuses that indoctrinate society into diverse ideologies include the family, the media, the church, schools, and the government. It is through these apparatuses, he argued, that self-identity is constructed.<sup>34</sup> The ideologies represented by the War Memorial can be argued to be a part of a governmental ideological state apparatus.

The transformation of downtown Ottawa into something that reflected the Canadian government's choices, and the effect this would have on the nation's identity, partially motivated Mackenzie King to choose the site for the War Memorial. It has been common practice in the realm of monumentalization to attempt to aggrandize public space through the placement of commemorative works, particularly in the monument-building boom after the First World War. As Gough notes, it was “often regarded as integral to the reconfiguration of city space, especially

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32 See Antonio Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007).

33 Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," *Lenin and Philosophy and other Essays* (New York: New Left Books, 1971), 152.

34 Althusser, 168.

to the reordering of a new civic or state order."<sup>35</sup> As such, a highly visible site for the War Memorial was important for cementing Canada's role in the war and reflecting the nation's ideals in the space of the capital, and important to the creation of a space that monumentalized the role of the soldiers who had fought to defend that power.

The site of the War Memorial in Confederation Square has been used from the time of its unveiling to the present in the public performance of commemoration and shared rituals, reinforcing its role as a stage for legitimization of Canada's core values in regards to war. In addition, its importance was made more apparent by several changes which took place in Confederation Square in the 1980s which expanded the plaza and made the memorial a highly prominent landmark.

From its inception, the National War Memorial has been the site of annual Remembrance Day ceremonies, memorial ceremonies for specific battles and a tourist attraction at the heart of Ottawa's downtown core. Until changes were made to the site in the late twentieth century, it was isolated from its surrounding context by two bridges which were heavily-used thoroughfares. This made visits on foot and the accommodation of large crowds somewhat difficult. The square itself also lacked a connection to its contextual environment, making its use as public space less than ideal. This led the National Capital Commission (NCC), which has a general mandate to forward the city's symbolic and ceremonial landscape as much as possible, to consider a massive renovation of Confederation Square and its surrounding environment.

It is common to use monumental public art to gentrify public space. Just as the site of the War Memorial became a highly important central point of focus in the revitalization of several downtown public spaces in the 1920s and 30s, this occurred again in the 1980s with the

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35 Gough, 214.

expansion of the site (and was later paralleled in the siting of the Peacekeeping Monument down the street). The War Memorial dominated Confederation Square in its original configuration for most of the twentieth century, serving as the site of Remembrance Day ceremonies and providing a marker in Ottawa's downtown core where several streets and districts meet.

In the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, Jacques Greber, a French city planner, was commissioned to develop a long term plan for Ottawa's urban centre. Among his recommendations was the creation of vast open gathering spaces and ceremonial routes that would culminate at Parliament Hill. The NCC was given the task of carrying out the necessary changes. Besides practical considerations, the report formed part of the motivation for the changes made at the site in the 1980s. A larger, more prestigious plaza would mean larger Remembrance Day gatherings and a much greater symbolic importance for the War Memorial, encouraging gatherings in a more open and inviting space. Taking a "much more symbolically oriented approach compared to the physical planning of before," the aim was to communicate Ottawa's symbolic importance as Canada's capital, partly through monumental sites.<sup>36</sup>

In 1983 the NCC commissioned a further study on ceremonial routes that identified a 'Ceremonial Ring' to be named Confederation Boulevard, part of which was to run along Wellington street beside the War Memorial.<sup>37</sup> The War Memorial was a key site on this route, and a "symbolic pivot in the elaboration of Ottawa."<sup>38</sup>

The NCC began yet another study of the nature of commemoration, specifically as it pertained to Ottawa, in 1988. The architects and urban planners who wrote the report outlined an official policy in regards to commemorative works which would address both national and local

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36 John Roberts, *Nation-Building and Monumentalization in the Contemporary Capital*, M.A. thesis, Carleton University, 1998, 78.

37 Gough, 214.

38 Ibid.

monuments. They proposed that any monument or memorial funded by a private group, and placed on national property, ought to reflect national themes, and that those with local interests be directed to the regional government. They also mandated specific considerations for the funding, siting and maintenance of monuments, clarifying the NCC's mandate on monumental art. The report also recommended that large-scale monuments should be the primary focus, as these would contribute to the aesthetic and symbolic development of the capital's ceremonial routes.<sup>39</sup>

The expansion of Confederation Square was intended to demarcate the space as a central point along the Ceremonial Route that was recommended in the 1980s by NCC planners for new development in the downtown core. In order to distinguish the site as a major node along Ottawa's planned route, expansion plans for Confederation Square called for increased and more uniform lighting, tree planting, landscaping and the insertion of flag standards.<sup>40</sup> The design also needed to unify the surrounding context, notably the buildings of Parliament Hill, the National Arts Centre, the Chateau Laurier, and the Sparks Street Mall. Consequently, the plaza was widened and connected to Wellington Street on the north. A new underground passage was built to the east in order to create more surface area for the square, and plantings of shrubbery were placed around its perimeter to define the area dominated by the War Memorial. The widening had the effect of increasing the memorial's profile in its surrounding context, and varied levels of the plaza connected by stairs signified the importance of the approach that led to the cenotaph's base. The landscaping included increased uplighting and targeted lighting which illuminated the memorial's bronze figures, increasing the site's visibility at night.

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39 National Capital Commission, *National Capital Commission Commemoration on Federal Lands, Corporate Administrative Policies and Procedures* (Ottawa, 1994).

40 Roberts, 80.

In any analysis of a monument's physicality and site, as Griswold has noted, it would be a mistake to view such memorials only aesthetically: "we must understand the monument's symbolism, social context, and the effects its architecture works on those who participate in it. That is, we must understand the... iconography which ... is shaped by the public structure in question."<sup>41</sup> The War Memorial's twenty-two bronze figures, for example, were depicted with emotionally charged facial expressions and with a sense of movement. This iconography was meant to demonstrate the bravery demonstrated by Canadian soldiers as they marched into battle. Gough observes that the way light falls across March's bronze grouping as they progress through the arch occurs in a repetitious yet scattered way, so as to indicate a sense of action and forward motion.<sup>42</sup> The granite cenotaph, with its bronze figures of Peace and Freedom, reaches seventy feet in height, dominating the open plaza around it with strong vertical lines and a prominent silhouette. The cenotaph's silhouette is distinctive; both the cenotaph and "enlarged sculptural plinth [are] crucial to the spatial dynamics of the capital and renders it instantly memorable."<sup>43</sup> The memorable and recognizable silhouette of the Memorial would be distinctive for many Canadians. This makes it a highly effective national symbol and memory space.

Construction materials also contribute to the visibility of the monument. Its stone is inscribed with the years of the First and Second World Wars as well as the Korean War, all of which involved the loss of Canadian lives. Engraved words or symbols carved into stone are more permanent than a plaque, and carry greater meaning. A plaque can be changed if the meaning of history changes, but carved words form part of the very symbolic language of the

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41 Charles Griswold, "The Vietnam Veterans Memorial and the Washington Mall," *Critical Issues in Public Art: Content, Context, and Controversy* (Washington: Smithsonian, 1998): 71-100, at 73.

42 Gough, 219.

43 Gough, 214.

monument. The bronze of the allegorical figures and soldiers associates it with the copper of the Parliament buildings and Chateau Laurier nearby, two of Ottawa's most well known landmarks. It is also associated with the political authority of Parliament Hill, and surrounding it are government buildings, situating it at the hub of Canada's institutions of power. Its stone materials speak to permanence, and its dominant position speaks to the prominence of its narrative. It was observed in the NCC review of 1988 that “without [the National War Memorial], Confederation Square would simply be a rather formless and dispersed traffic intersection.”<sup>44</sup>

In a city that is filled with monuments, the War Memorial is among the most visible; located at a high point in the urban landscape. It intersects visual axes from many significant points in the city. For monuments, height represents power and importance (of subject matter or of its builder), and the War Memorial is clearly visible at the top of Elgin Street facing north, set against the sky and the Rideau Canal. Approaching it from east or west on Wellington, it is outlined in the sky as well, forming a clear focal point. The site functions as a 'hinge' for the layout of Ottawa's downtown core; it is a meeting point of several districts and the formal end of Elgin Street. The NCC's 1988 report addressed the importance of the site as well as other principal and distinctive features of Ottawa's centre. In the words of Gough, “[the report] drew lessons from the bold siting of March's Memorial... examined the other principal markers and nodal points of the city, identifying their importance as structural devices which linked nationally significant institutions and places while lending emphasis, distinction and a visual coherence to the streets. Historically ... principal markers - obelisks, fountains, arches – [have] helped [to] punctuate a sequence of streets, or terminated long vistas, and were regarded as crucial

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44 R. du Toit, *Competition Guidelines* (Ottawa: National Capital Commission and Department of Defense, 1990), 13.

landmarks in the reshaping of parts of a capital city."<sup>45</sup> Thus the context of the city is important in the creation of monumental space.

In a planned city, streets became areas for procession and display. The city's form represents order through careful design.<sup>46</sup> The changes made at the site of the War Memorial continue the long tradition of city planning that extends to Baroque Rome and the changes that Hausmann made in Paris in the 19th century, altering the cramped medieval city to create broad, expanded promenades and modern public spaces.<sup>47</sup> Such measures highlight a shift from organic growth to signify the power of city authorities (in Rome the Papacy, in Paris the local government), and open up spaces so that one is able to see signs of authority from far away. This is exemplified in the extended visual vistas leading to the War Memorial. The configuration that a city takes is not static, and can be transformed as social shifts occur.

When central Ottawa underwent revisions in the 1980s, the landscape surrounding the War Memorial was not only maintained, but increased, and with it the significance that had been established upon its initial construction. Often changes made to a public square can decrease its dominance, as office buildings and towers encroach on it in the sprawl of modern urban planning. In some cases, formerly grand monuments and memorials may have their visibility reduced by being constrained to ever smaller spaces, but the opposite has been true of the National War Memorial. The space that it occupies has been always given amplitude in the context of downtown Ottawa, and the recent redesigns in the landscape of the city's core have given it a vastly greater visibility and importance. It is a highly important landmark, a stage for

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45 Gough, 213-214.

46 Malcolm Miles, *Art for Public Places: Critical Issues* (Winchester: Winchester School of Arts Press, 1990), 23.

47 Of course, another unique motive for Paris' reconstruction was control of mobs and easier access for authorities to quell uprisings, reflecting Paris' revolutionary history. Wide boulevards were much easier to maneuver for soldiers than small, cramped streets.

public performances of ritual and commemoration.

## *Chapter 2: The Activation of Monumental Space at the National War Memorial*

The physical site of a monument and the ways in which it is negotiated by the public inform its reading, and the reciprocal relationship between the constructed site and its activation by people has the capacity to create meaningful spaces of memory, or negate such use through issues of location, space, or lack of relevance. As Miles explains:

The sanctification of time and space constitutes an important dimension in the process of constructing a national memory. The memory of certain historical events... may be anchored in a variety of commemorative sites; these can be temporal commemorative loci... or spatial commemorative loci... texts and rituals constructed around those temporal and spatial sites further reinforce their significance and contribute to shaping the memory of the particular event. Investigating the cultural meaning of the past and its construction and transformation over time, therefore, calls for exploring the specific commemorative loci associated with certain events.<sup>1</sup>

The production of meaning in a monument can be achieved not only through the activation of memory over time, but also through the production of monumental space; or the creation of sustained meaning through use and activation. This includes public ritual. The key differences between memory and history are examined as a grounding for the consideration of the ways that both contribute to the production of monumental space, and the performance of ritual acts is considered as central to the creation of a link between a monument and collective memory. The War Memorial site will be interrogated as a location which sees continued activation of its space; the ways in which activation is achieved and reasons for it will be a central concern.

Nora defines a site of memory as essentially a receptacle for the collective memories and

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<sup>1</sup> Malcolm Miles, *Art for Public Places: Critical Issues* (Winchester: Winchester School of Arts Press, 1990), 23.

heritage of a society, or "any significant entity, whether material or non-material in nature, which by dint of human will or the work of time has become a symbolic element of the memorial heritage of any community... [and for this to exist] there must be a will to remember."<sup>2</sup> The War Memorial functions as a site of memory because of its steady and constant use as a locus of remembrance for those who have died in war, who often have a personal connection to those participating in the ritual of commemoration, making their memories both collective and individual. Rituals such as Remembrance Day and other memorial ceremonies that take place at the site ground its function in the calendar, fulfilling the second step of Winter's life-cycle of a monument (in which a monument is constructed, made a site of significance through ritual, then either maintained by successive generations or forgotten). It is seen as a sacred space and as a site of healing of traumatic memories associated with war. Its activation by the public prevents the erosion of its meaning, and above all, highlights the complex relationship that time and memory play in grounding its significance.

Mitchell argues that the passage of time tends to disperse the past, while memory has the opposite effect of gathering it into the space of the mind: "the material of a conventional monument is naturally chosen to withstand the physical ravages of time, the assumption being that its memory will remain as everlasting as its form... but the actual consequence of a memorial's unyielding fixedness in space is also its death over time; a [monument with fixed meaning] created in one time and carried over into a new time suddenly appears archaic, strange, or irrelevant altogether."<sup>3</sup> In this, however, Mitchell's argument suggests that irrelevance is inevitable. Monuments do not necessarily remain static in meaning over time; their material

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2 Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire," *Representations* 26 (1989): 7-25, at 7.

3 W.J.T. Mitchell, *Art and the Public Sphere* (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 1993), 76.

permanence does not somehow reflect their autonomy, or create a sort of time capsule of unchanging meaning, independent of its surroundings. A monument will not hold the same memories for the public over time; it is not impervious to time, because its meaning must come from its relationship with individuals and groups who will of course change over time, bringing with them new interpretations of the past and new additions to the original memories represented in the monument. New contexts will lead to new meanings, but it is possible to retain as much of the original meaning as possible while still adapting it to new contexts such as a public whose collective memories are constantly shifting in relation to time, by acting out its meaning in the same way on a regular basis. At the War Memorial, this is done most notably through Remembrance Day ceremonies which have not changed substantively in form since they began in 1939. It is an example of a memorial that activates living memory, for many, and second-hand lived memories for many more, through both personal connections to its narrative and the collective experience of yearly remembrance.<sup>4</sup>

The Remembrance Day commemoration of those who served in war may aid, especially for those who still carry living memory, in the healing and reconciliation process. It is important to remember in such a way, because the recognition of war history can be a cathartic act for those who lived through war, and is a primary method of ingraining the events in the collective memory of successive generations. On the topic of reconciling traumatic memories, Janet wrote,

The person must... know how to associate the happening with the other events of his life, how to put it in its place in that life-history which each one of us is perpetually building up and which for each of us is an essential element of his personality. A situation has not been satisfactorily liquidated, has not been fully assimilated, until we have achieved, not merely through our movements, but also an inward

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4 In other monuments where this does not occur, the progression of time can erode memory, change its meaning or expose it to ridicule and disdain. For example, a monument to the Boer war, a largely forgotten war now held up in scrutiny, might raise questions of whether it was right of the British to conduct the war rather than inspire remembrance.

reaction through the words we address to ourselves, through the organization of the recital of the event to others and to ourselves, and through the putting of this recital in its place as one of the chapters in our personal history.<sup>5</sup>

Remembrance Day ceremonies may help in the healing process for veterans by aiding in the process of coming to terms with traumatic memories, and the recollection of elements of common experiences from a time of war may help the public assimilate the memory, in the sharing of a collective experience. Participation in this exchange contributes to the creation of collective memories. Such participation also transforms the role of the audience from an outsider, or observer, to a participant. If focus is shifted from the aesthetic to the spatial experience that public art provokes, then the relationship between art and viewer becomes participatory. In effect, the public becomes part of the sculpture; through active involvement with the site, the public enters the work.

In addition, participation in the ritual of remembrance can extend to other media. The Remembrance Day ceremonies are televised across Canada, and in this way the site is activated remotely. It is made into a mobile memory, and especially if watched with others, becomes a participatory event. The act of ritual, so significant to the meaning of a monument, is thus shared by as many Canadians as possible, activating the site through its dissemination in the media. In this way the media can act as a carrier of collective memories as well.

As noted earlier, in Winter's three-stage life cycle of a monument, a site must be continually activated through interaction and invested with new meanings in order to maintain relevance. The significance of the War Memorial to the Canadian public has been largely maintained since its original creation, largely through ceremonial use of the site during Remembrance Day. Recent anniversaries of world wars, for example, have involved ever larger

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5 Janet, *Les Médications psychologiques* (Paris: Société Pierre Janet, 1984), 2:273.

events, ceremonies and crowds. The War Memorial has had the ritual of Remembrance Day closely associated with it for most of the 20th century, and fulfills Winter's stage two model thus far. The construction of a commemorative form was accomplished when the site was completed, providing a space in which to establish ritual. However, rituals of remembrance have been so thoroughly ingrained into the function and purpose of the War Memorial that the decline to which Winter refers in the third stage has not occurred (nor is it likely to, given the Memorial's current function as a site for Canadians lost in more recent wars). Currently, the site retains the 'ritual action' which has been established by the routine of Remembrance Day, and is repeated yearly.

The original ceremony which took place at the War Memorial in 1939 provided the form that rituals of remembrance have taken at the site, the basic structure of which is still followed in the present. Upon its completion, the Memorial was immediately thrust into service as a site of memory. The program given out on-site for the unveiling of the National War Memorial ceremony recorded that the 21 May, 1939 service included such events as:

11.00 a.m.

Their majesties will be received by the Prime Minister of Canada [and other ministers].

His Majesty will inspect the Veterans' Guard of Honour....

...The Pipers will play a Lament for the Fallen.

Last Post - Brief Silence - Reveille.

The Prime Minister will invite the King to unveil the Memorial.

His Majesty will unveil the Memorial and will then speak.

"O God, Our Help in Ages Past"

The King will place a wreath at the Memorial.

The Minister of National Defence will place a wreath at the Memorial.

O Canada

God Save the King<sup>6</sup>

After the first Remembrance Day ceremonies began to be held at the War Memorial site, this ceremonial structure became a template. Present-day ceremonies repeat the actions of the arrival of dignitaries, the singing of the National Anthem, the Last Post - Brief Silence – Reveille progression, the address to the assembled crowd and the laying of wreaths. These ritualized actions form the 'routinization' of ritual activities that Winter describes. He states that the telling of stories to the next generation is an essential part of commemoration - when this connection is broken, "remembrance atrophies and fades away."<sup>7</sup> The yearly repetition of images and events that are familiar, accessible and repetitive at the War Memorial are well suited to mass-generated collective memory. Civic performances held at the War Memorial make for cohesive collective memories, reinforce the nation's sense of self with its past, and repeated rituals such as Remembrance Day tend to situate the space within a context of never-changing meaning, even as past and present life is transformed and new memories are added to the narrative (for example, lives lost in recent conflicts reinstate relevance, as does the ceremonial march of veterans)<sup>8</sup>.

It is significant that the memories associated with the Memorial are constantly being re-

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6 "Program for the Unveiling of the National War Memorial in Ottawa" (Ottawa: May 21 1939), 3-5.

7 Jay Winter, "Commemorating War," *At War*, Antonio Monegal et al., eds. (Barcelona: Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona, 2004), 8.

8 It is doubtful that remembrance will end when all veterans of World War II are gone, since the Remembrance Day march includes veterans of more recent wars; this allows for the continuation of remembrance for all veterans. In addition, memories kept alive by family members of lost veterans, as well as the inclusion of all war dead in Remembrance Day rituals contribute to the continuation of memory.

examined, re-awakened and made fresh in the minds of succeeding generations, in ways that maintain a relevance and connection with the audience. An excellent example of this is a recent project conceived by two Ottawa designers in 2008, in which the names of 68,142 Canadians killed in the First World War were projected onto the side of the cenotaph during the week leading up to Remembrance Day.<sup>9</sup> Similar projections occurred simultaneously in six other Canadian cities and in London, England, in a "huge collective thought that will fly across the country, take flight in London, land in Halifax, and continue on across the country,"<sup>10</sup> as one of the designers explained. The first names appeared following a two-minute carillon by the bells of Parliament and all downtown churches (the tolling of bells being a traditional signifier of loss), an element which added significantly to the reverential nature of the project. The vigil was attended by individuals who stood waiting for particular names, or performed an act of remembrance in general. Some laid flowers at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier after seeing a family member's name. One visitor told the *Ottawa Citizen* that "the vigil was a wonderful way to remember those who gave up their lives. 'It's good to see my grandchildren here,' she said. 'So they won't forget.'"<sup>11</sup>

The vigil, as what might be called state-sanctioned intervention art, or ritual in a contemporary format, is an important example of the activation of memory at the site because it uses technology, an element which can easily connect with younger members of the public, and links them with the memory of people from whom they are disconnected by time. Instead of forgetting, the newest generations are reminded of the names of fallen soldiers in a way that is

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9 The vigil was also performed on Easter 2007 on a smaller scale, as the names of the 3,598 Canadians who died at the Battle of Vimy Ridge were projected.

10 Thulasi Srikanthan, 'Bringing them home on a beam of light,' *Ottawa Citizen* (Ottawa) Nov 4, 2008, C1.

11 Brendan Kennedy, 'Some came to see a relative's name, others simply to say thank you,' *Ottawa Citizen* (Ottawa) Nov 12, 2008, A4.

accessible and familiar to them, thus maintaining the memory of war loss and connection to previous generations in the public's consciousness. It is a ritualized format that is entirely contemporary, providing a link to past generations of family. The family unit does matter to public commemoration, as rituals of remembrance survive best, as Winter notes, within "the rhythms of community... most of those who take the time to engage in the rituals of remembrance bring with them memories of family members touched by these vast events. This is what enables people born long after wars and revolutions to commemorate them as essential parts of their own lives."<sup>12</sup>

To understand the meaning of the War Memorial requires in Griswold's words that "we understand, among other things, what the memorial means to those who visit it,"<sup>13</sup> thus first-hand observations of Remembrance Day ceremonies held at the War Memorial will illuminate this examination of the commemorative discourses and practices that take place there. Remembrance Day is the event which most demonstrates the importance, reverence and place within living memory given to the site. Having been held at the Memorial since its construction, Remembrance Day ceremonies are routinely attended by 30,000 Canadians and evoke a solemnity rarely observed in a public space – and which I observed in particular on 11 November 2008. The ceremonies that took place on that day will provide grounding for examining the ritual of public commemoration, and how it acts as a "locus of communal and individual remembrance opening up a discourse of healing, regret and reflection."<sup>14</sup>

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12 Winter, 8.

13 Charles Griswold, "The Vietnam Veterans Memorial and the Washington Mall," *Critical Issues in Public Art: Content, Context, and Controversy* (Washington: Smithsonian, 1998): 71-100, at 73.

14 P. Gough, "'Invicta Pax' Monuments, Memorials and Peace: An Analysis of the Canadian Peacekeeping Monument," *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 8.3 (2002): 201-223, at 203.

On that particular day, a crowd gathered at the War Memorial on all sides, filling a five block radius which had been closed to traffic for this purpose. A sense of solemnity prevailed so that the only words spoken were in whispers, even though in many areas of the crowd nothing could be heard of the ceremony proceedings apart from the trumpet playing Reveille at 11 a.m., some bagpipes, and an artillery gun which was fired in intervals of five minutes.

Winter reminds us that "the observance of a commemorative moment of silence, an extreme example of a strictly symbolic action, serves as a concentrated appeal to memory by literally breaking a temporal continuity."<sup>15</sup> The moment of silence observed during this time was generally considered to be of such importance that a woman attempting to move through the crowd was interrupted by an observer who motioned that she ought to remain in place. The enactment of reverence, then, was not to be interrupted.

When the ceremony had officially finished according to the given schedule, a mass exodus from the site did not occur as one might witness at a typical crowd event (such as Canada Day, or a hockey game) which is usually indicative of a definitive end to a spectacle. Rather, leaving the site on Remembrance Day was a gradual process more akin to leaving a funeral. The majority stayed in place, perhaps not realizing that the ceremony was over, and perhaps still in quiet, private contemplation. The ceremony was both an act of collective reverence on a grand scale and individual, private remembrance.

Through its capacity to accommodate public and private, collective and individual commemoration, the Remembrance Day ritual gives the War Memorial the characteristics of two types of *lieux de mémoire* as defined by Nora- "The first, spectacular and triumphant, imposing and, generally, imposed - either by a national authority or by an established interest, but always

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15 Nora, 19.

from above - characteristically with the coldness and solemnity of official ceremonies. One attends them rather than visits them. The second are places of refuge, sanctuaries of spontaneous devotion and silent pilgrimage, where one finds the living heart of memory."<sup>16</sup>

Directly below the cenotaph, the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier houses the remains of an anonymous Canadian soldier who died in France during the First World War. It was created in 2000, when the Canadian government repatriated the remains from a cemetery near Vimy Ridge and laid them in a stone sarcophagus designed by Canadian artist Mary-Ann Liu. The remains were interred in a large-scale ceremony which glorified the unknown soldier, who represented any and all Canadians who perished in past wars. The significance of this addition to the War Memorial was overtly demonstrated by the presence of the Governor General, the Prime Minister, as well as members of the Armed Forces and RCMP. At the Remembrance Day ceremonies in 2008, its status as a site of reverence was evident not only by the laying of poppies at the tomb, but by observed actions which reinforce perception of the site as sacred.

Another ritual closely connected with Remembrance Day ceremonies is the wearing of poppies. Poppies grew profusely in many locations associated with the First World War, and became an international symbol of remembrance for those killed in action. It became common practice in the Commonwealth to sell poppies each year as a symbolic item in order to raise funds for veterans and their families. In the first year of the addition of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier to the National War Memorial in 2000, several poppies were spontaneously placed on the tomb in much the same way as the laying of flowers at a grave. This action has been repeated every year, such that in 2008, a crowd of hundreds patiently waited their turn to add a poppy to the overflowing pile atop the Tomb. It began as a spontaneous act of reverence at

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16 Nora, 23.

the first Remembrance Day after the Tomb was added, and has become a traditional, though unofficial, part of the Remembrance Day ritual in every successive year.

Jeffrey Durbin notes that spontaneous acts of memorialization often arise in the wake of collective experiences of tragedy and mourning. In the aftermath of the World Trade Centre bombings in 2001, for example, a phenomenon began of impromptu tributes and the leaving of objects of remembrance at the site. The size of the 'makeshift memorial' grew daily as thousands of mourners added to it.<sup>17</sup> In much the same way, the hundreds of poppies left at the Tomb began as a spontaneous act, grew to a collective one, and remains a participatory collective expression of mourning.

The wearing of a poppy is itself a form of both public and private commemoration. It is an element of one's personal appearance and thus a largely private form of remembrance, albeit displayed publicly. Carried on one's person, it is an outward manifestation of one's declaration of doing one's part to remember, and the remembrance itself takes place in the private realm while being declared in public. When placed together on the Tomb, the hundreds of poppies cease to signify an individual's remembrance. Instead they represent the anonymous collective act of public commemoration. This becomes an intersection between public and private remembrance.

At the site of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier on 11 November 2008, the crowd that had observed the Remembrance Day ceremony had largely dispersed, but remained gathered around the Tomb for an opportunity to immerse themselves further. The contrast between this spot where a significant crowd pressed in - even an hour after the ceremony ended - and the rest of the site, which was bare, was striking. Those surrounding the tomb were generally performing acts of remembrance, such as placing poppies, or photographing the other crowd members and

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17 See Jeffrey L. Durbin, "Expressions of Mass Grief and Mourning: The Material Culture of Makeshift Memorials," *Material Culture* 60 (Fall 2003), 22-47.

the tomb. Those placing poppies on it tended to linger and gaze at the tomb, in apparent contemplation. Some kissed their fingers and touched the tomb; others merely touched it in an act of visceral tribute. Other gestures of remembrance included people crossing themselves, praying, and most of those who were in uniform saluted the tomb.<sup>18</sup>

Tombs of Unknown Soldiers have become commonplace in the landscape of war memorialization, and as loci of remembrance evoke personal connections for many of us. They are treated as sacred and inviolable, and representing the Everyman of those who were lost in war, serving as a tangible focal point for the memory of particular lost soldiers.

The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier began to appear as a type of commemorative monument shortly after the First World War. Michalski points out that the use of romanticized, glorifying visual language in war memorials faded because of the horrors of the First World War, and "bloody but inconclusive trench battles like those of Verdun and the Somme put an end to any pretensions regarding the inherent romanticism of warfare and were difficult to glorify by means of traditional - especially allegorical - representations."<sup>19</sup> Though the French took the

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18 There was a sense of hostility towards photographers who overstepped perceived boundaries while recording the event. Some comments heard at the site directed at photographers included:

"Hey, don't kneel on the tomb - this is the tomb of the Unknown Soldier." (directed at a photographer kneeling to take a picture, with his knee resting on the ledge of the tomb)

"Too much photography, not enough remembrance." (from one crowd member to another, overheard in close proximity)

Does the act of photography, then, imply non-participation in the collective remembrance? Is the photographer here an outsider, intruding on the private and public performance of remembering? Questions about the role of the media in commemoration are beyond the scope of this examination, but are nonetheless worth considering.

19 Sergiusz Michalski, *Public Monuments: Art in Political Bondage 1870-1997* (New York: Reaktion Books, 1998), 77.

approach of creating likenesses of their military leaders and their soldiers in bronze, many of which can be found among the urban landscape in Paris, these sculptures did not become the focus of commemorative activities. They were not, for example, incorporated into larger war memorials. That task was given to the new visual trope of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, the first two of which were unveiled in England and France in 1920.<sup>20</sup>

This form of commemoration arose largely out of the mass scale of warfare, in which "the unprecedented mobilization of mass armies and the quasi-anonymous character of the war and of many of the fallen soldiers made this a universally understandable and seemingly pertinent solution."<sup>21</sup> The brutality of modern forms of warfare, compounded by unprecedented scale and loss, made this a form of memorialization to which many could relate. In the case of the Canadian war loss, it was an unprecedented number that lost their lives, many of whom were never recovered and properly buried, although some countries (France being a notable example) set aside cemeteries for allies whose remains were not repatriated.

The prevalence of unknown graves made difficult the task of grieving and remembrance for Canadian families who suffered loss. In the case of the Canadian Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, the British one in Westminster Abbey, the French one in the Arc de Triomphe,<sup>22</sup> indeed with all such tombs, the removal of a specific identity allows the visitor to imagine his or her own personal history and memories of lost loved ones imbricated in the site. The deceased has the chance of actually being anyone's lost relative or friend, and so the tomb acts as a blank slate on which one can impose private memory, while it is at the same time a symbolic locus for collective memory. Much of the importance of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, then, is that in

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20 Michalski, 78

21 Ibid.

22 Michalski, 79.

the absence of a grave for a loved one, it becomes the Everyman of the fallen. Any name could be ascribed to him and so stand in for a lost father, husband, brother or son. Winter explains that the First World War changed the landscape of who grieved - beforehand, career soldiers went to war, but then everyone did, so that almost every household lost someone. In the absence of known graves, "commemorative forms highlighted names above all. The names of the dead were all that remained of them and, chiselled in stone or etched in plaques, these names were the foci of public commemoration both on the local and the national scale."<sup>23</sup> The loss of the dead on the battlefield is why names play an important role on monuments such Maya Lin's Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, where the names of every dead soldier from the Vietnam War are soberly engraved into a black granite wall. This new form of commemoration was questioned by veterans' groups at first since it was an unfamiliar motif, but for many, seeing a loved one's name on the Vietnam memorial had the effect of emotional catharsis. Visitors can be observed touching a particular name on the wall, displaying profound emotional reactions, and leaving objects of sentimental value at the memorial. These displays of remembrance still occur, years after the end of the Vietnam war. This provides evidence that the attribution of a name to an anonymous grave, or the symbolic superimposition of a name onto a form of commemoration, can serve an important function in the process of grieving and resolution.

A writer for the *Ottawa Citizen* has observed that memorialization at the War Memorial has been built on "painstaking reverence for the lives of soldiers killed in battle. Soaring monuments, beautiful war cemeteries tended as sacred ground, ritual solemnities, ...all this constitutes our collective act of remembering, our collective determination not to forget. ...And --

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23 Winter, 6.

we can't help it -- we reflect."<sup>24</sup> It signifies a desire to maintain a connection to the memory of those killed in battle, and a particular way of honouring them through specified ritual performance at the Memorial site. The physical construction of the Memorial's site, its everyday use, constant activation by visitors (including items of remembrance left there) and the symbolic meaning ascribed to the site through ceremonies, all demarcate it as a place of reverence. There is a unique quality to the space of the National War Memorial, a sacrosanct element to be respected, and a general sense of reverence generated by the site with the potential to be desecrated. This collective perception of the Memorial might be called sacred space. This is not meant in a spiritual sense; rather, the term 'sacred space' is employed here to denote a particular way of thinking about sites of remembrance, which manifests itself in reverential interaction with the space. It is evident that such events as Remembrance Day Ceremonies, the prominent location of the Memorial in the landscape of downtown Ottawa, and the distinct size of the site contribute to veneration of the monument, which has been largely maintained since its creation, thus reflecting Winter's three-stage model of the life of a monument. Here, the third stage, in which either a monument can decay or undergo transformation and/or reinforcement of meaning in subsequent generations – has been fulfilled. The site's status as a sacred space demonstrates that the latter option has taken effect.

Winter discusses the importance of ritualized public commemorations in that they give life to memories of the past, they perpetuate the power structures and ideologies of a given society, and give meaning to events to which the public can relate.<sup>25</sup> For Canadians, Remembrance Day is a highly ritualized commemoration by and of veterans who have given

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24 Janice Kennedy, "The deeper duties of remembrance," *Ottawa Citizen* (Ottawa) November 9, 2008, A14.

25 Winter, 1.

their lives in war, and the site of the War Memorial serves as a stage for this public reinforcement of significant events in Canadian history. Moreover, the role of memory has been examined as a determining element in the creation of a site's importance; although monuments cannot activate memories in and of themselves, they serve as hubs for collective memory, but depend on a participatory audience engaging in the act of remembrance to perpetuate the meanings they are meant to embody. The meanings and memories associated with the War Memorial are re-activated yearly during Remembrance Day, and the ceremonies, actions and semiotic signs associated with this use of the site mark it as a revered space, of ritual and remembrance. In this way commemorative activities can not only create and reinforce public memory, but also create and reinforce physical sacred spaces.

It is both the Memorial's use for public commemoration and memory-making, as well as the physical location and structure of the War Memorial that demarcate it as a place of importance. It dominates Confederation Square, removed from its 'ordinary' surroundings by architectural features such as a border created by low cement walls and shrubbery. This separates it from the sidewalks and the road which surround the site on all sides, which is the public space of the everyday. Its location in the downtown core, a site which would otherwise be highly valued real estate, highlights its importance in that it has not been infringed upon by the surrounding architecture. The open plaza leads the viewer to a large, defining, and towering stone structure that dominates the space, and several architectural elements that evoke sacred space are present in its design. The cenotaph recalls a triumphal arch or shrine, the mosaic patterns embedded into the stonework add decorative elements that evoke splendour, and the steps gradually leading up to the monument as well as the uplights which flood the space at night draw the viewer's attention upward, towards a central point of focus, creating an environment of

awe and grandeur, what Gough calls a “heroic landscape”<sup>26</sup>. Thus the site is removed from the everyday, elevating the viewer's experience with the space to something more than an ordinary interaction. It is designed to be a site for veneration.

The addition of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in 2000 added another aspect to the perception of the War Memorial as a sacred space. In the summer of 2008, the National Capital Commission appointed tour guides at the site to inform visitors of the history and significance of the Memorial, and to “remind visitors that the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier is a sacred site and should be accorded our full respect.”<sup>27</sup> Most cultures perceive cemeteries and tombs with great reverence, as places of rest which are not to be disturbed. In addition, commemorative objects in a social space, such as a memorial or tomb, transform its spatial setting and the social practices which take place within the site.<sup>28</sup> The ways in which a culture perceives and interacts with sites of the dead are socially coded and can be manifested in collective reverence. The Tomb's particular importance as a representation of every soldier lost in war gives it a personal reading for many visitors, transforming traditional respect for grave sites into a recognition of the Tomb as the resting place of a symbolic hero. I observed this effect on Remembrance Day of 2008, in the numerous military officers who saluted the grave, and the onlookers who protected the grave from those who accidentally leaned on it. The presence of a grave at the War Memorial adds yet another layer to the inviolable nature of the site, marking it as a sacred space.

This sacrosanct element is perhaps most apparent when an act of perceived disrespect or desecration occurs. On Canada Day of 2006, some men who had become intoxicated during the

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26 Gough, 201.

27 Andrew Duffy, 'Guides to tell passersby of cenotaph's significance; 'Step forward' in protecting war memorial,' *Ottawa Citizen* (Ottawa) June 14, 2008, A3.

28 See Elizabeth Hallam and Jenny Hockey, *Death, Memory and Material Culture* (Paris: Berg Publishers, 2001).

festival were observed relieving themselves at the base of the War Memorial. They were caught on camera, and the images were disseminated by the Canadian media, with public discourse quickly condemning the men and expressing outrage. It was called “thoughtless and contemptible,”<sup>29</sup> and Prime Minister Stephen Harper denounced it as “a terrible thing to do.”<sup>30</sup> Dr. Michael Pilon, the former army officer who photographed the incident, called it “a national disgrace.”<sup>31</sup> After an investigation by the Ottawa police, two of the men formally apologized and performed community service, and the principal suspect, Stephen Fernandes, apologized to Canadian veterans in an official statement.

What does the outrage over this incident indicate about the importance of the site as a place of reverence and sanctity? Arguably there would not have been such an overwhelming response had the men urinated on a piece of public art without the implications of commemoration and memory that the War Memorial signifies. The amount of outrage at an act of ‘disrespect’ for a site is a determining indicator of its sanctity. The ability of a sacred space to be desecrated is an important sign of the significance it holds for the public to which it belongs. This significance was evident in several editorials and letters which appeared in a local newspaper following the incident, stating that “our most sacred site [is] the National War Memorial and Tomb of the Unknown Soldier,”<sup>32</sup> and that “those few who would desecrate it only show their own ignorance and disrespect, and in no way diminish the vast debt of gratitude owed by Canadians to our veterans.”<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Shannon Proudfoot, “War memorial now police ‘priority,’ *Ottawa Citizen* (Ottawa) July 4 2006, A1.

<sup>30</sup> Allan Woods, ‘60% want guard at war memorial: Tories considering sentry after summer urination incident,’ *Ottawa Citizen* (Ottawa) November 3, 2006, A1.

<sup>31</sup> Toulon, C3.

<sup>32</sup> Scott Fuller, ‘Letter: Most sacred site,’ *Ottawa Citizen* (Ottawa) May 23, 2008, A11.

<sup>33</sup> Proudfoot, A1.

Several solutions were discussed in response to a desire to protect the site's sanctity. These included the implementation of an honour guard to watch over the site (a measure supported by 60% of Canadians),<sup>34</sup> the placement of interpretive guides to perpetuate knowledge of the site's significance, and some suggested placing a barrier around the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. H. Clifford Chadderton, chairman of the National Council of Veteran Associations in Canada, has gone so far as to suggest "put a chain fence around it so that people can't sit on it and put plaques on the corners so people can read what it's all about but not get close enough to deface it.... you cannot leave unguarded a military icon -- something as sacred as the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier -- where the public can sit on it and desecrate it."<sup>35</sup> This extreme point of view, however, works contrary to the necessity of an active audience interacting with a sacred space in order for it to function effectively as a *lieu de mémoire*, so that a monument does not lose its potency. Many did oppose the idea of a prohibitive barrier, recognizing this necessity. A letter appearing in the newspaper stated, " [the War Memorial is] vulnerable to being defiled. But anything to prevent this would be to distance it from the public's ability to touch and be close to it."<sup>36</sup>

As a result of the Canada Day incident, and in response to pressure from veterans' groups, the Canadian government instituted an honour guard to stand watch over the grounds of the War Memorial in the summer of 2007. Two sentries were posted in full dress uniform, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. This addition of the uniformed guard adds yet another layer to the function of the space as a site set aside for ceremonial and civic performance. It is perhaps the best solution to demands from the public for protection of the site as a sacred space, yet still allowing the public to interact

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34 Woods, A1.

35 CTV News interview, Ottawa, July 3, 2006.

36 Michael R. Harris, 'Letter: Able to touch it,' *Ottawa Citizen* (Ottawa) May 22, 2008, A11.

with it, which is a necessary part of perpetuating the collective memories that the Memorial embodies.

Perceived desecration of the site highlights the symbolic and real importance of the monument as a hub of the values and memories that a society values, and as such, is highly susceptible to intentional destruction (though this has not occurred in the case of the War Memorial). Mitchell asserts that art in the public sphere is particularly prone to acts of violence and controversy, since a monument is extremely open to, if not inherently, violent; and that the use of stone as a primary building material is not a choice but rather out of necessity.<sup>37</sup> Monuments that glorify violence, he argues, often do so under the guise of memorialization, though they actually have a "direct reference to violence in the form of war or conquest."<sup>38</sup> As a bulwark against such violence, Alloway has prescribed that "a public sculpture should be invulnerable or inaccessible. It should have the material strength to resist attack or be easily cleanable, but it also needs a formal structure that is not wrecked by alterations."<sup>39</sup>

This, however, has not been the case at the War Memorial. The use of stone as a medium was chosen for its durability as a symbolic deference to the desired permanence of memory, and a monument ought not to be inaccessible when it narrates the commemoration of those lost in war. Whether it should be invulnerable is an open question, depending on whether one believes in the immutability of memory. The War Memorial also has the opposite effect to what Mitchell argues. The controversy that arose at its desecration was not against it but for it, manifested in a sense of protection of the monument. It appears to reflect a sacrosanct element in the monument that is highly prized by Canadians.

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37 Mitchell, 30.

38 Mitchell, 35.

39 Lawrence Alloway, "The Public Sculpture Problem," *Studio International* 184 (Oct 1972) 124.

Sacred space is a particular facet of the viewer's experience of sites of memory, and changes one's perception of, and interaction with, the site. The War Memorial evokes characteristics which mark it as a sacred space, separated from ordinary public space. It is a site dedicated to events and ideologies considered important to Canadian history, and encapsulates public memory. It is a place of community focus, particularly on Remembrance Day, and as such is venerated by the public, and its destruction can be seen as 'sacrilege.' The site is removed from the everyday by its physical location and structure, and its purpose is reinforced by public commemoration and ritual. These features can be also considered general defining characteristics of sacred space as it relates to monuments, of which the War Memorial is a significant example.

### ***Chapter 3: Counter-narratives and Contested Space - The Champlain Monument and Canadian Tribute to Human Rights***

Public spaces can be highly contested and controversial spaces, particularly when dealing with collective memory. While the War Memorial site is exceptionally successful in the display of significance and in dissemination of the collective memories that it embodies, there are other examples of monuments in Ottawa's downtown core that do not engage as well with the public or have suffered shifts in meaning and perception. The Champlain Monument and Canadian Tribute to Human Rights are examined in this chapter as a contrast with the War Memorial, because of the different ways in which these sites function, in terms of both structure and spatial use. The reasons for these differences originate from the varying motives and histories behind their construction and their diverse contexts (both physical and psychological). These differences illustrate the varying levels of success that these monuments achieve in terms of generating meaningful memory-spaces.

While the collective memories that are commemorated in monuments can reflect conventional tropes of Canadian identity, monuments may imply that everyone agrees with the same memory. However, the meanings of monuments change over time, especially as the modern urban space takes on an increasingly fragmented cultural dynamic. This makes it problematic to put one version of history or memory in stone. The controversy surrounding the Champlain Monument illustrates this clearly. Monuments may be a manifestation of their time or the political atmosphere in which they were created, more than a focal point for collective memory. The question of who has the right or ability to decide what happens to a particular site, as well as how competing interests might be mediated, come into focus when a monument contains one

version of a multi-faceted narrative.

For many monuments, physicality and context reinforce their status as hubs of collective memory, whereas others suffer diminished visibility and relevance with the passage of time.

As Yael Zerubavel notes,

The creation of a national memory depends to a large extent on the nation's success in constructing... cultural texts that provide symbolic arenas for narrating the nation. These multiple commemorative forms establish a shared history and cultural heritage and highlight major themes of continuity between the past and present. Hence, significant social and political changes in the nation's life inevitably involve the negotiation and transformation of its collective memory. Under the pressure of a changing political landscape, existing commemorative forms may decline to be subject to reinterpretation, and new commemorative forms may emerge...<sup>1</sup>

The Champlain Monument has been one such example; it is generally treated as a decorative aspect of the urban landscape than a significant marker of memory, largely failing to act as an important site of commemoration. Inasmuch as monuments can encapsulate significant meanings for the communities that construct them and act as physical focal points for collective memory, they can also suffer from loss or transformation of meaning over time. This effect can occur when a monument narrates a version of history which may have been dominant at the time of the monument's construction, yet may not have been the only version of history. All monuments are ideologically invested, although some values continue to be shared while others do not. Consequently, if one narrative remains static, failing to successfully respond or adapt to changing cultural attitudes, its meaning for successive generations can atrophy as the narrative comes to be seen as outdated.

A monument must be re-invested with living memories to maintain relevance. As Nora

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1 Yael Zerubavel, "The Politics of Remembrance and the Consumption of Space," Daniel Walkowitz and Lisa Maya Knauer eds., *Memory and the Impact of Political Transformation in Public Space* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004:233-254, at 233.

wrote, "if we accept that the most fundamental purpose of the *lieu de mémoire* is to stop time, to block the work of forgetting... it is also clear that *lieux de mémoire* only exist because of their capacity for metamorphosis, an endless recycling of their meaning..."<sup>2</sup> Some monuments come to stand in for living memory but become static, failing to remind visitors to keep the remembrance of its narrative alive. Instead, as has happened with Ottawa's Champlain Monument, it is perceived as a relic of one version of a Canadian historical narrative.

Meaning may also atrophy when a site is inaccessible and easily forgotten, or if changing discourses affect the construction of memory, for as Gough notes, "if remembering is a social and often highly politicized process, so, too, is forgetting."<sup>3</sup> This has occurred for the Champlain Monument. Its meaning has shifted, so that it is seen by some as representing a colonial narrative of history, originally showing a dominant European and a subservient Aboriginal at his feet, thus demeaning the native contribution to Champlain's exploration.

In 1915 the sculptural ensemble was seen as a tribute to the early exploration of the Ottawa River by Champlain, with the scout being added to affirm the role of native people in that context. It was meant as a capsule not necessarily for the memory of Champlain (himself a central figure in Euro-Canadian history) but as a commemoration of his landing on the future site of Ottawa. This was a significant moment in local history, but by adding an aboriginal figure, another history was necessarily captured in the monument. The hierarchy of the figures eventually came to be seen as diminishing aboriginal history, and the memory that the monument perpetuated was thus considered a Eurocentric view. Though the reading of the monument was

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2 Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire," *Representations* 26 (1989), 7-25, at 19.

3 P. Gough, "'Invicta Pax' Monuments, Memorials and Peace: An Analysis of the Canadian Peacekeeping Monument," *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 8.3 (2002): 201-223, at 202.

vastly different at the time of its construction, political currents of the twentieth century have favoured a multifaceted, inclusive telling (sometimes re-interpretation) of Canadian history. This approach has cast older approaches to commemoration of historical figures in a different light, as evidenced by the shift in perception of the native figure (from contextual to demeaning). This overall change in our approach to history caused the ways in which people have interacted with the Champlain site of memory over time to be repositioned and its narrative retold.

The Champlain reinforces Nora's assertion that monuments can fall into the trap of remaining fixed within the time frame in which they were made. When this occurs, one effect that appears is diminishing relevance, or sometimes a shift in perception. The original meaning of the monument becomes less potent over time, its importance lost on successive generations. This occurrence was demonstrated in the case of the Champlain Monument by the removal of the Anishinabe Scout. This element of the monument was emblematic of its time, glorifying Champlain the great explorer and figure in Canadian history, with the scout figure a secondary, contextual figure. It coincided with the prevailing narrative of Canadian history at the time; the European explorers were privileged in the discussion of early Canadian history. When focus shifted in the later twentieth century to other narratives, including the identity and history of Aboriginal peoples, the monument no longer fit with contemporary attitudes regarding Canada's past.

The larger monument to which the Anishinabe Scout was annexed originally was created by Hamilton McCarthy in 1915. The project, initiated by the city of Ottawa and sponsored by a private citizen's group who raised funds for its construction, was inaugurated that same year. The monument was intended as a celebration of Ottawa's historical importance as a site in Samuel de

Champlain's second trip up the Ottawa River in 1615.<sup>4</sup> The sculpture which is located at Nepean Point, Ottawa, commemorated the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of this event. It depicts Champlain facing westward, holding high an astrolabe and looking upward. The monument's location holds symbolic value as one of the highest points on Ottawa's riverbank, making it a very visible and iconic landmark. The Champlain Monument's design has incorporated the surrounding high ground, as Champlain has been depicted stepping forward as if to claim the riverbank where he landed in 1615. The statue appears to forever preside over the site and recreate the moment when Champlain took a reading with his astrolabe. It is thus a prominent feature of the downtown area east of Parliament Hill and bordering the Ottawa River.

A kneeling aboriginal guide was originally positioned in front of and below the Champlain figure. Both figures are of bronze and approximately one and a half times life-size. The pedestal is made of hewn stone, to which is affixed a plaque that gives Champlain the title "The first Great Canadian." Originally the scout was meant to be depicted inside a canoe; however, the sponsoring committee had not raised enough money by 1920 to complete this design, so the scaled down figure was instead depicted holding a bow rather than a paddle, and kneeling as if scouting.<sup>5</sup> The scout figure was then added to the monument in the early 1920's.

Monuments can create coded spatial constructions through their physicality. The spatial dynamic set up between the two figures was constructed in such a way as to create a specific relationship. It may have been intended as a more egalitarian one; the scout ahead of Champlain, kneeling to gaze into the distance, with Champlain high above on a plinth, looking upwards into his astrolabe to indicate his use of the stars for navigation (though the artist mistakenly depicted

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4 Knauer and Walkowitz, 189.

5 Susan Hart, "Lurking in the Bushes: Ottawa's Anishinabe Scout," *Espace* 72 (2005): 14-17, at 14.

it upside down). The 19<sup>th</sup> century may have also accepted this implicit hierarchy as part of its view of history. But this spatial relationship was perceived differently over time to one of superior to subordinate, of the dominant figure to the dominated one. Additionally, the differences in depiction were eventually read as marking a further difference between the two, as Champlain is fully dressed in a seventeenth-century costume, and the scout was designed to be wearing only a loincloth. These elements were offensive to some of those whose history was represented in the figure of the scout, specifically aboriginal Canadians.

For much of the twentieth century, the Champlain Monument was not a site of much public attention. 1992 was the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Columbus' journey to North America, which began to cast particular focus on representations of colonial and aboriginal narratives in this context. This took material form at the Champlain Monument in 1992, when aboriginal artist Jeff Thomas, whose work focuses on his identity and culture, questioned the representation of the kneeling scout. He created a series of photographs in which he placed fellow aboriginal artist Greg Hill beside the bronze figure, recreating the original design by sitting in a canoe made of cardboard cereal boxes, and wearing a cereal box headdress.<sup>6</sup> Such artistic interventions demonstrated dissent among many in the aboriginal community, and a refusal to identify with the secondary position of the figure.

In June of 1996, the chief of the Assembly of First Nations, Ovide Mercredi, organized a ceremony at the base of the monument in which he covered the Indian figure in a blanket. He stated that the figure was demeaning and humiliating to aboriginals and demanded that the NCC remove it. Following a sustained public debate and several meetings, the NCC announced the

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<sup>6</sup> See Jeff Thomas, "What's the Point?" *Public Art in Canada: Critical Perspectives*, Annie Gerin and James S. McLean, eds. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009): 115-123.

removal of the figure in October 1996.<sup>7</sup> The NCC reasoned that “we're living in the 1990s now and the sculpture dates back to 1915. The interpretation of that time versus the interpretation of these days is different... we feel it is appropriate to update the monument.”<sup>8</sup>

News quickly broke of this development in the *Ottawa Citizen*, and the public responded in a mainly negative fashion. The NCC received several phone calls in regards to the issue; an article in the *Citizen* revealed that the newspaper's Touchline had received approximately five hundred phone calls, of which 75% were opposed to the NCC's decision to remove the statue.<sup>9</sup> Some felt the decision was “damaging a work of art and the representation is historically accurate,”<sup>10</sup> and several alternative solutions were proposed, including altering the arrangement of the two figures. One letter published in the newspaper argued, “send Champlain packing. ‘I wouldn't get rid of the Indian, I'd get rid of Champlain. If he's no longer there, the Indian is no longer subservient and, besides, he's holding the astrolabe upside down.’”<sup>11</sup> This comment is representative of the public's collective view of the monument as malleable - at issue was not the integrity of the monument, but the larger issue of altering history. The Champlain Monument itself was not generally perceived as a hub of collective memory, but rather as relic of the past for many people.

On 1 October, 1999, the scout statue (which acquired the name Anishinabe Scout during its removal) was taken from the base of the Champlain Monument and placed at the north end of Major's Hill Park, in a secluded spot surrounded by trees and shrubbery. The new location was

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7 Hart, 14.

8 Jack Aubry, "NCC agrees to remove 'offensive' indian statue," *Ottawa Citizen* (Ottawa) 1 Oct. 1996, A1.

9 Ibid.

10 Jack Aubry, "Indian scout figure no disputed statue was late addition," *Ottawa Citizen* (Ottawa) 1 Oct. 1996, C1.

11 Ibid.

agreed upon by the NCC and the Assembly of First Nations.<sup>12</sup> Ovide Mercredi commented that "the new site, with the scout looking up-river, is an excellent choice. This magnificent work of art is a noble figure that reflects the strength of our community and our place in society."<sup>13</sup> It is evident that the aboriginal community who opposed their representation in the original monument were pleased, however different the opinions of many Ottawans.

In the context of this discussion, there are two questions to be considered. First, why did there exist such a disparity between general opinion and some of the aboriginal population in regards to changing of the monument? Certainly it was not any attachment to the site as a representation of collective memory. The problem of representation, or voice, partly seems to answer this. The sculptural ensemble no longer meant the same thing for diverse segments of a multifaceted population who valued differing narratives of history. The monument represented a Eurocentric world view, and this was acceptable to much of Ottawa's population, however outdated such an interpretation might be. Some of the aboriginal community, on the other hand, saw only a manifestation of historical repression, believing the only solution to be the scout's removal. Others (including non- Aboriginal citizens) opposed the change for this very reason, that its removal would mask past attitudes of European superiority, diluting a past that ought not to be forgotten.

Secondly, did this change 'update' the monument so that it regained significance for its public? Not particularly. Many people were pacified, but meaning had atrophied to begin with, so the controversy was only a manifestation of current cultural attitudes regarding the monument. In other words, it was made less offensive to many people, but the meaning was not updated to

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12 Kelly Egan, "The battle of Nepean Point," *Ottawa Citizen* (Ottawa) 4 Oct 1996, D3.

13 Graham Hughes, "Native Statue receives own spot," *Ottawa Citizen* (Ottawa) 2 Oct. 1999, A3.

conform to contemporary world views, as some believed the change would achieve. A contributing reason may be that the Champlain Monument belongs to a certain genre of late 19th century monumental sculpture, with certain codes of movement and gesturing (such as stepping forward, arm raised high) that can still be read today, but have largely fallen out of use. It is representative of its time in form and meaning, and answered the community's desire to commemorate Champlain in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, but is no longer invested with active use.

If we again consider the issue of ownership of public space and contention over which memories are represented, which was discussed briefly in the introduction through Gramsci and Althusser, the case of the Champlain Monument makes clear that when monuments reinforce dominant narratives of a community, not all of which are universally agreed upon, it can lead to diminished significance for a monument. They may not stand the test of time despite the fact that monuments are intended to prevent the fading of memory. As Gramsci and Althusser have noted, the ideas and values of the ruling (dominant) class can come to be seen as the universal views of a culturally diverse society, and when the ideologies that this represents influence the self-identity of a people, there are narratives and histories that are left behind in the telling of official narrative. Dominant narratives can remain invisible and unexamined. If, however, individuals in the public sphere engage in critical discourse in which access is granted to all, employing public space as Habermas would advocate, dominant narratives can be uncovered.

Many monuments are, in the words of Hughes, "produced within a dominant framework of values, as elements in the construction of a national history... they suppose at least a partial consensus of values, without which their narrative could not be recognized, although individual monuments may not retain their currency as particular figures fade in public memories..."<sup>14</sup> If

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14 Hughes, A3.

this consensus is not reached in regards to a certain version of history, the question arises of whose memory and whose history is being honoured. Indeed the issues of whose history ought to be honoured within one monument, as well as the necessity for a monument to remain relevant for a public, are still under debate. If a particular version of Canadian historical narrative has been encapsulated, should it be rewritten, and how?<sup>15</sup>

The dismantling of a monument is another level of alteration that has not reached unanimous public consensus. The removal of the Anishinabe Scout put two publics into conflict; some members of the First Nations who are symbolized in the monument and who found it offensive, and much of Ottawa's population, who largely had no issue with what had become, for many, an irrelevant site (a drastic change from its initial role as a symbol of Ottawa's heritage). When the National Capital Commission decision was made, those against the removal did agree, like Miles, that while "history' should not be changed to suit the times, most also acknowledged the uneven power relationship the monument was now seen to signify."<sup>16</sup> The segment of the aboriginal community in favour of the decision felt, as did Chief Mercredi, that the new location of the Scout "reflects the strength of our community and our place in society."<sup>17</sup> Thus it would appear that most of the aboriginal community now sees itself more accurately represented in the Capital's public art, and the two versions of public memory in question have representation.

In many instances, as Hart says, a city's "effort to build a site for shared memory could

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15 The War Memorial has partially resolved this by an inclusive approach. Constructed for the remembrance of the First World War, it now honours the years of the Second World War in stone, and includes special groups such as the Merchant Marines in their own ceremonies. In recent years, a project that created light projections of individual soldiers' names onto the War Memorial has also contributed to a sense of inclusion, by creating a transient memorial superimposed onto the individual structure that includes the names of soldiers who have died in 21<sup>st</sup> century warfare.

16 Malcolm Miles, *Art for Public Places: Critical Issues* (Winchester: Winchester School of Arts Press, 1990), 58.

17 Hart, 14.

not help but expose the many conflicting and contested assumptions underlying 'public memory'. Few communities are prepared for this kind of controversy, and most are embarrassed by it, ashamed that such a seemingly unifying cause as public memory should betray so much real disunity."<sup>18</sup> However, debate is also a method of keeping memory alive, and as such keeps the early history of Canadian exploration from both the older Eurocentric point of view and the contemporary version that highlights aboriginal considerations.

Shifting approaches to cultural sites, as Young has pointed out, have the power to reshape "the historical meanings we impose upon, or derive from, a contested public space. In these cases memory becomes central to shaping how an event is understood and who authorizes the understanding."<sup>19</sup> It thus becomes difficult to incorporate a colonial past into a present national narrative when it is regarded as offensive by those it represents. The relationship between the two figures in the ensemble was seen to represent the power structure of a dominant, colonizing West and a dominated, subservient Native culture.<sup>20</sup>

This postcolonial reading was furthered by the difference in dress: Champlain in his fully clothed, majestic appearance, with all the markings of a wealthy and powerful European, and the scout dressed only in a loincloth, his musculature and exposed skin suggesting a less civilized 'savage' or a physical specimen (a difference that became less relevant when the Scout was moved to Major's Hill Park). Additionally, Champlain's astrolabe is a symbol of science and civilization, while the scout's hunting bow represents a simpler, 'primitive' culture. The artist

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18 Hart, 16.

19 James E. Young, "Holocaust Memorials in America; Public art as Process," Harriet F. Senie and Sally Webster (eds), *Critical Issues in Public Art: Content, Context, and Controversy* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1998): 57-70, at 64.

20 This leads to one reason for opposition to the removal of the Scout; if reminders of past prejudices were always erased in this manner, it might in effect pardon the actions of European colonialists, rather than remind future generations of the inequality of the past.

interpreted what was commonly perceived at the time as a romantic, idealized native culture that was thought to be quickly vanishing.<sup>21</sup> However, the attitude towards the scout has evolved from the idea of the 'noble savage', a romanticized ideal of a disappearing culture and people, to current reading by many of colonizer/colonized, of dominant/dominated.

Sleman argues that "subjugated peoples are 'troped' into figures in a colonial pageant, 'people without history' whose capacity to signify cannot exceed that which is demarcated for them by the semiotic system that speaks for the colonizing culture."<sup>22</sup> Certainly this was not the intended narrative, as the Scout was added in order to contextualize the monument. Yet the early 20th century perception towards native cultures believed them to be more spiritual, more connected to nature, and vanishing, and thus a cult of romanticism arose around their ways of life.<sup>23</sup> The monument was constructed for an audience of European heritage, and its reading would have been influenced by this. Monuments of earlier eras legitimated a Eurocentric view of history, but current cultural attitudes in Canada tend to favour a diversified view of the Canadian population, as evidenced by such recent initiatives as the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, introduced in 1982, with its provisions for aboriginal rights, and the earlier policy of the Canadian government to support multiculturalism (including aboriginal culture). The changes implemented at the monument's site are a manifestation of its lack of relevance for its current

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21 Knauer and Walkowitz, 2.

22 Hart, 15.

23 There are many examples of this trend; one of the best-known may be the work of American photographer Edward Curtis, whose romanticized portraits of native American peoples, though highly constructed, had the goal of documenting their way of life before it disappeared. His book, *The North American Indian*, contributed to the popular perception of a tragic, noble, spiritual, and vanishing race. For a more complete discussion, see Daniel Francis, *The Imaginary Indian* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 1992) or Robert Berkhofer, *The White Man's Indian* (New York: Random House, 1978).

audience in Ottawa<sup>24</sup> (as opposed to its origins as a celebration of Ottawa's history) and reinforce it as a site that no longer activates memories of our past - at least the particular version that it represents.

Given Canada's inclusive approach to politics, it is unsurprising that demands for the Scout's removal were met in order to avoid any perceptions of offence towards the aboriginal community, yet one must question the validity of attempting to erase history in such a fashion. Some of the participants in the public debate surrounding the scout's future suggested that although it is a "reminder of a discredited ideology,"<sup>25</sup> other historical artworks can be regarded as demeaning, including Benjamin West's *Death of General Wolfe* (a Canadian painting in which, some argue, aboriginals are depicted as 'noble savages'), and that other cultures suffer from stereotyping in Eurocentric art as well. If all offensive material were removed, it is argued, this would create a slippery slope, and thus editing history is not the solution.<sup>26</sup> It is a questionable approach to attempt to erase history, rather than leave monuments intact, but in such cases as that of the Champlain Monument, if a monument is no longer relevant and is found offensive, it seems more acceptable to alter it to suit current taste than to demolish it completely.<sup>27</sup> The author of a newspaper article published shortly before the removal wrote, "as to the integrity of the work... [Greg] Graham [of Canadian Artists Representation] argues that the Champlain statue is 'propaganda, as opposed to being an expressive work of art' so it doesn't deserve protection."

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24 It is important to note that the Ottawa monument is a particular case; a similar monument to Champlain exists in Quebec City, where it has been given an important space in the urban fabric, and is both a tourist attraction and a reminder of Francophone heritage.

25 Stephen Slemon, "Monuments of Empire: Allegory/Counter-Discourse/Post-Colonial Writing," *Kunapipi* 9.3 (1987): 1-16, at 5.

26 Susan Riley, 'Editing' demeaning works of art won't erase past stereotyping,' *Ottawa Citizen* (Ottawa) 2 Oct 1996, C8.

27 A notable example of this occurrence might be the removal/relocation of statues of Lenin and Stalin throughout Eastern Europe after the fall of the USSR, or the removal of Saddam Hussein statues in Iraq.

(The National War Memorial can be seen as propaganda as well, but since it is an emblem of generally accepted ideologies, has not been subject to such dismissal). This attitude is emblematic of the response of many to what has become neglected memory-space in the core of Ottawa's monumental canon.

Another example of failed narrative is the Human Rights Monument, located at the corner of Ottawa's Elgin and Lisgar streets. Where the Champlain Monument has shifted in meaning, and where the War Memorial maintains active, constant engagement with its audience, the Tribute to Human Rights monument has never quite achieved the status of a meaningful memory-space.

The monument is dedicated to Canada's interest in, and commitment to, worldwide human rights. It is, however, an example of a monument the space of which can be argued to have unsuccessfully engaged with the public on the level at which it was intended. Its space has essentially failed to generate sustained and significant meaning. Several possible reasons for this will be examined, including difficulties of location, the particularities of its abstracted form and issues of broad interpretation, and issues of subject matter.

In 1983, representatives of the Canadian Polish Congress lobbied unsuccessfully to have Daly Avenue in Ottawa renamed as Solidamosc Avenue in order to commemorate a Polish peaceful labour rights movement (the Solidarity Union). Out of this was brought forth the idea of a sculptural tribute to human rights, considered a more permanent and inclusive form of commemoration. The organizers of the initial street-naming group founded a group titled "Canadian Tribute to Human Rights Inc." shortly thereafter.<sup>28</sup> The organization, which depended primarily on volunteer efforts, was led by a member of the Canadian Polish Congress, Hania

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28 'Seven years to culminate in Sept 30 unveiling,' *Ottawa Citizen* (Ottawa) September 20 1989, B3.

Fedorowicz, as well as George Wilkes, a local community and political activist.

The central aim of the group was to mobilize, sponsor, and design a monument dedicated to the idea of human rights as a goal towards which all humanity ought to strive, rather than suggesting that Canada was a leader in this area. The interpretation was meant to be as broad as possible, in order to incorporate diverse activist groups and for its message to transcend national issues, reminding viewers universally of the importance of human rights.<sup>29</sup> Fedorowicz, speaking of the group's intent, explained that they were “always trying to find the broadest denominator which could represent all of our specific issues, projects, and goals.”<sup>30</sup>

The fundraising process took seven years, with hundreds of individual contributions, and the site was selected for its proximity to two major streets (Elgin and Lisgar). The Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carleton donated the land for the monument in 1984,<sup>31</sup> and this site was intended to strike a balance between having proximity to other national monuments, and being part of the everyday landscape. The competition process itself was conducted nationwide, but because of the broad and open-ended nature of their commemorative topic, the organizers had little idea of what they were expecting out of a monument: “the group had no experience in building a monument, and no one on the ad-hoc design committee had any idea as to what it should look like.”<sup>32</sup> The competition guidelines gave a starting point for artists by highlighting that

the intent of Canada's Tribute to Human Rights is to mark through artistic, inspirational and tangible form the struggles and continuing efforts of the people of Canada and of all nations to obtain and preserve fundamental human rights as these have been accepted in such landmark documents as the United Declaration of Human Rights and the Canadian Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms. Too it will celebrate

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29 Roberts, 110.

30 Roberts, 113.

31 Roberts, 120.

32 Roberts, 122.

our unwritten recognition that human rights underlie and give vital strength to the structure of human society and will demonstrate our respect for the dignity of each person and each community, our tolerance and cherishing of their difference and the bonds that unite us in human solidarity.<sup>33</sup>

Of the 129 entries received, the jury selected the design of Montreal artist Melvin Charney, whose entry was noted in part "for its integration with buildings adjacent to the site, and ... his rich use of symbols conveying many levels of meaning."<sup>34</sup> Construction began shortly thereafter, and on 30 September, 1990, the monument was unveiled, at a ceremony attended by the Dalai Lama.<sup>35</sup> The unveiling attracted a crowd of 2,000 people, but rather than consisting of officials making nationalistic speeches, the addresses were activist in nature, some coming spontaneously from members of the crowd. The monument committee made this decision deliberately, in order to "orient the unveiling ceremony to public participation."<sup>36</sup> In addition, the recognition given to aboriginal groups in the monument itself was marked by their participation in the ceremony, which included drumming, dancing and chanting.<sup>37</sup>

This informal, overtly political and activist ceremony was in marked contrast to the more official, sombre, and nationally sanctioned nature of other monumental unveilings. The messages were sometimes critical of government actions (including Fedorowicz's speech, which rebuked the prime minister for not meeting with the Dalai Lama on his visit to Ottawa). The participatory nature demarcated the ceremony as a community gathering, and a grassroots event, rather than a grandiose governmental ceremony. It has been suggested by Gramsci and Althusser that the state (or the dominant social group) often employs monuments and official acts of remembrance in

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33 Canadian Tribute to Human Rights Inc., *Competition Booklet* (Ottawa: 1985), 1-2.

34 Canadian Tribute to Human Rights, Inc., Audio Tape of Jury Deliberations (Ottawa, 1986).

35 Commemorative plaque on Tribute to Human Rights.

36 Canadian Tribute to Human Rights Inc., *Souvenir Booklet* (Ottawa, 1990), 2.

37 Canadian Tribute to Human Rights Inc., Video of Unveiling Ceremony (Ottawa, 1990).

order to establish control of the narratives and ideologies that shape the accepted standard of all societal levels. This use of monuments can be especially true for those in a nation's capital. For the Human Rights Tribute, however, an alliance with official policies and ideologies was deliberately rejected in its unveiling ceremony, in favour of use by activist groups, but the monument has taken official form by joining the ranks of the monuments in Ottawa's downtown core, most of which have been constructed by the state to reinforce its narratives. The Tribute is therefore not quite subversive although it is not used in an official capacity (government ceremonies are not held there, for example). This duality may be another reason the Tribute has not quite found its place in the Capital's canon of monuments.

The differences in the Tribute's unveiling ceremony from conventional ones reveals that although the piece was constructed to be part of the city's collection of national monuments, and was officially sanctioned, it is often perceived differently from such national symbols as the War Memorial. It is mentioned along with other, adjacent pieces of public art in tourist brochures published by the NCC, yet the space is not utilized in its capacity as an official monument. It has always functioned as simply another feature of the urban landscape, and fails to resonate with the public who encounter it daily. It has become largely forgotten space.

The unveiling ceremonies and statements made by organizers reveal intent to make this a participatory, active space; however, is this intent being carried out in an everyday setting? Personal observation during one hour of pedestrian movement between 11 am and noon on 13th August, 2008, and again between noon and 1 pm on 14th September, 2008, revealed several pedestrians sitting on the ledge of the monument eating lunch, and many people walking by without glancing at the monument. No one was observed walking through it the way it was intended by the artist: from the stairs, straight through the 'pathway' of columns, and down the

ramp on the other side.

A spatial consideration of the monument can reveal some elements of it that can make engagement with the space difficult. Mervin Charney's sculptures all incorporate abstraction and metaphor to some degree: "in his world, nothing stands for itself alone; everything is metaphor - even the blankest slab of modernist architecture."<sup>38</sup> Charney's winning design for the Tribute memorial incorporates a large rectangular space measuring ten meters in height and fifty meters in length. The entrance to the monument faces north, while the axis of the monument runs parallel to the sidewalk. Stone steps lead to an entrance formed of two pillars of granite supporting a slab which forms a lintel, on which is written in both English and French: "ALL HUMAN BEINGS ARE BORN FREE AND EQUAL IN DIGNITY AND RIGHTS," which is the first article of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Beyond this archway are six abstracted pillars, three on either side of the space, resembling figures holding signs. Three of these concrete pillars on one side are inscribed with the words "Dignity," "Rights," and "Equality," with the other three pillars bearing the same words in French, all flanking the pathway that the artist intended the public to traverse. A ramp at the rear of the monument faces Lisgar Street.

The monument is at the same time textual and abstract. It fosters both a very simplistic reading and a difficult one for many viewers. The engraved words, which form the very language of the monument, are quite literal, offering a key to engaging with the work. Beyond the literal aspects, the structure itself is an odd paradox in that despite its intended meaning (which is to be a welcoming space), there is a forbidding quality to the construction. The monument is meant to be first encountered from the south facade, which generates a towering impression upon close

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38 Roberts, 134.

proximity, yet one is not entirely compelled to enter the structure since the platform in front of the entrance is rather small. Although the archway does form a door, it is smaller in contrast to the rest of the space. Moreover, the space inside can be read as imposing and uncomfortable, the tall pillars forming a prison-like structure as one walks through the pathway. The use of unfinished concrete, meant to refer to human rights as an ongoing struggle, furthers this reading.

The location of the Human Rights monument is another hindrance to its approach. Situated to the side of the road, the entrance is parallel to the street. There is no processional plaza, and thus it is less inviting to its public audience, who are primarily passers-by on the sidewalk. Had the entrance been constructed facing the street, this would have created a natural pathway from the sidewalk into the monument. Instead, the entrance has been placed facing a secondary, less-used pathway. The buildings around the monument compete with it visually so that it becomes part of the background fabric. It attempts to provide a sense of enclosure when one is standing between the columns of pillars, but the chaos of the surrounding urban space constantly intrudes, both visually and aurally. What is meant to be a prominent emblem is dominated by Ottawa's Old Teacher's College building to the east with its eye-drawing architecture, and several towering buildings visible beyond the pillars. An average viewer might find difficulties in reading the monument, wavering between several interpretations such as whether it has narrative coherence, or whether certain elements represent something - if 'ruins' vs. 'whole' pillars refer to the destruction and rebuilding of human rights, for example.

The public's response to the monument has been neutral to somewhat negative, a position echoed by Ray Conologue, a newspaper arts journalist, who wrote, "[The artist] hampers himself by banning the human figure from his images. Can they be understood?... [the pillars are] in the form of 'Sonotube' stick-men with right-angled arms.... Their lifelessness to me encapsulates

Charney's discomfort for the heroic and his propensity for irony."<sup>39</sup>

The monument also presents difficulties in visually interpreting its aboriginal connection. The Tribute was to be built on land to which the Algonquin group had a claim, so they were invited to participate in the process. Thus, over seventy smaller plaques bearing Aboriginal language translations of 'dignity,' 'rights' and 'equality' were incorporated into the design and placed on the interior surfaces of the concrete archway.<sup>40</sup>

This does serve to link the Tribute monument to Canadian concerns of human rights, such as Native struggles with the government over land and recognition rights, but this fact is not mentioned on the commemorative plaque explaining the history of the monument, located several feet away, or elsewhere on the monument, and so is lost to the average viewer.

The commemorative plaque, in fact, is the only guide given to the viewer for how to interpret the site, but makes no mention of its symbolism beyond its resemblance to a pathway dedicated to human rights. The plaque also mentions the events which inspired its creation, the designer, and the date of unveiling. Thus, the viewer is still left to his or her own perceptions to decipher the monument, and if the average viewer has minimal knowledge of symbolism or abstraction, this task is rendered exceedingly difficult.<sup>41</sup> The abstract form is subject to broad interpretation, and though it may raise questions in the individual mind of one's treatment of others or of Canada's contribution to international human rights, to what action are these questions meant to spur the viewer? The monument is occasionally given an activist tone through

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39 Ray Conologue, 'An unerring instinct for in-your-face design,' *The Globe and Mail* (Toronto) Nov. 30 1999, E7.

40 Roberts, 145.

41 There is also no body of memory to draw on to aid in deciphering the monument, as there is for the War Memorial; at that site, the use of familiar/easily-read symbolism, the reinforcement of its meaning through collective events and its dissemination in the media make its interpretation very accessible.

protest gatherings, but overall cannot make a tangible link to collective memory because it does not evoke specific events in which everyone has a share, and which can ground the interpretation. Its rejection of official sanction also keeps it out of the collective consciousness.

It is, then, an example of a monument that does not successfully activate its space with memory. There are words inscribed which boldly cry out values such as 'dignity,' 'rights' and 'equality,' which are values central to Canadian cultural ideology, and which may cause passers-by to nod their heads in agreement with what is proclaimed, but which may not evoke the intended reflection on human rights as something for which Canada must still strive. It may not evoke memories of human rights violations in the minds of a Canadian audience who have enjoyed democratic freedom. If it does not speak to its audience in its intended manner, it cannot, then, be a carrier of collective memory and meaning.

The Tribute to Human Rights' construction is rooted in the idea that "public art can make a social statement and play a role in mobilizing citizens to awareness and action."<sup>42</sup> It was intended to "provide a space for all to visit, see it as a place of inspiration... as a place of refreshment of spirit, for release of challenged emotions and ideas, a place for... meeting"<sup>43</sup> Does this happen if the site is rarely visited with the express purpose of engaging with it? Some of the only times it has been used as a meeting place have been for protests about human rights issues; but these issues are often occurring in other countries, and are often violent.

The main reason that the human rights monument is used for these protests, though, is often because of its symbolic connection with the protest's ideals, and not for the space itself. One example of this has been a large-scale homeless protest which took place in 2004, whose

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42 Canadian Tribute to Human Rights Inc., *Schoolnet Proposal* (Ottawa, 1996), 8.

43 Wilkes in Canadian Tribute to Human Rights Inc., *Video of Unveiling After-Dinner Speeches* (Ottawa, 1990).

participants camped right on the monument, not only around it. In this case, the space was clearly not revered; the human rights ideology of the monument was merely a useful connection to the protesters' demands, and the location perhaps a convenient proximity to City Hall (as they had originally been camping on its grounds but had been banned from doing so, and thus moved to the monument).<sup>44</sup> Previous summers had seen this protest take place under the Rideau Centre overpass, a common homeless refuge. Numerous marches for various causes have also used the monument as their starting point, but have then marched up to Parliament Hill or other locations, where most of their time is spent. It was not used as a focal point for protest so much as a meeting place from which to move to other politically charged locations. Another example of this occurred in 2007, when a group protesting the violence in Zimbabwe against civil activists gathered at the Tribute. A newspaper article reporting on the protest, was titled 'Protesters march to Zimbabwe's embassy,'<sup>45</sup> and focused on the group's move to the embassy, thus decreasing the importance of the monument as a site of protest.

The Tribute is seen as a symbolic starting point for such events, and is generally perceived as a space that can have ideological ties to the concept of human rights. Holding the homeless demonstration around the monument adds symbolic emphasis that camping on a lawn would not have had, for example; but the site is not a locus for remembrance, reconciliation, or mourning in itself. It is often used for a symbolic stopping or starting point for marches and rallies, but these events often move elsewhere, instead of remaining at the monument itself. Officially mandated ceremonies are not held at this location, objects of memory are not generally

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44 Daniel Tencer, 'Night time raid ends protest at City Hall,' *Ottawa Citizen* (Ottawa) Aug 28, 2004, E3. It is interesting to note that by moving to the site of the monument, the protesters activated the site by aligning its message with their occupation of the space.

45 Jennifer Campbell, 'Protesters march to Zimbabwe's embassy,' *Ottawa Citizen* (Ottawa) April 18, 2007, C6.

left at this location as they are at the War Memorial (such as photographs or poppies) and demonstrations that do take place at this location are often focused elsewhere. This was evident in the demonstration against homelessness, in which signs were pointed at city hall and at the street; no one was actually turned to face or focus on the Human Rights Tribute. It was swallowed up in the crowd, and merely part of the scenery. The site was important because of the concept it was meant to represent, not because people identified with the memorial in its material self. Thus it is activated by occasional political or activist gatherings, but this activation of space is sparse at best. On a daily basis, the site is devoid of people passing through it, lingering, and reflecting on the concept of human rights, as they do at the War Memorial.

It is essential to note that although abstraction has been used in an ambiguous manner in the Tribute to Human Rights, many abstract monuments make meaningful connections with the public. One example of a highly effective and powerful monument in this style is Maya Lin's Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. It is constructed of slabs of black granite that form a triangular depression in the ground, resembling a gash in the earth. Visitors enter from either side of the monument and are able to read the names of the soldiers who died in the Vietnam War, ordered by date of death. The black granite allows visitors to see their own reflections superimposed on the names of the dead, which has a connecting effect. The memorial evokes powerful, visceral reactions for many people, and it is not uncommon for them to weep, touch the engraved name of a loved one, or leave memento-like objects at the wall (which, as has been seen in the case in the Tomb on the Unknown Soldier, are acts of private remembrance in a collective context).

This memorial was controversial at the time it was built, however, for its relatively unfamiliar abstract form, and many veterans' groups advocated for a more representative, figural

monument. A later addition was placed adjacent to the site in the form of a life-size grouping of three soldiers, but Lin's powerful abstract monument remains the focus of remembrance and mourning for visitors, and is a well-known example of how abstracted monumental sites can be highly profound and visceral.

Winter states that "by the latter decades of the twentieth century artistic opinion and aesthetic tastes had changed sufficiently to make abstraction the key language of commemorative expression."<sup>46</sup> The rising popularity of abstraction in the twentieth century has made abstract public art more popular, and a common form of commemorative sculpture, though the lines between public art and public sculpture have somewhat blurred in recent years.<sup>47</sup> This move away from figuration, seen in Charney's design for the Tribute, reflects changing contemporary ideas of expression, which can inform a monument's message, for as Michalski notes, "whilst nineteenth-century monuments convey messages of empire and patriarchy, contemporary public art may be no less ideological in its content, regardless of its subject-matter."<sup>48</sup>

Abstraction allows for multiple meanings or interpretations versus a dominant one, so it is not unusual for this quality to be found in a contemporary monument. This is also one reason it can be used in memorialization to great effect. The rise of abstraction as a basis for memorials coincided with the beginnings of Holocaust memorials, following the Second World War. For many memorials (or counter-monuments) to the Holocaust, abstraction's flexibility in allowing multiple discursive readings coincided well with the need for personalized outlets of mourning. In 1986, at about the same time as the Tribute's origin, artists Jochen and Esther Gerz designed a

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46 Jay Winter, "Commemorating War," *At War*, Antonio Monegal et al., eds. (Barcelona: Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona, 2004), 7.

47 Sergiusz Michalski, *Public Monuments: Art in Political Bondage 1870-1997* (New York: Reaktion Books, 1998), 169.

48 Miles, 58.

Holocaust memorial in Germany that consisted of a single black column which was slowly lowered into the ground over several months. Visitors were allowed to engage with the piece by writing on it, and segments were buried over time until the entire column was buried, in order to reflect the impermanence of memory and the loss that it often entails.

In the case of the Tribute, though, the broad and vague interpretations allowed for in the monument's form contribute to its loss of meaning through a lack of didactic keys with which viewer could engage, and navigate, the space, for, "if the style of the monument proves unintelligible to viewers, can one not expect that this in some way will affect his or her ability or motivation to consider the work further? This point is important in that monumental art has expanded to include more abstract expressions which have not always proven to be popular."<sup>49</sup>

A central factor to consider, and an issue facing the Tribute, is the question of how to represent human rights. Part of the problem may be that there is no visual iconography to symbolize 'human rights' to be drawn on in order to supplement the lack of visceral impact in the Tribute's abstract form (as there is at the Vietnam Veterans' Memorial). There is no personification for human rights as there would be for the values of Peace and Freedom, in the form of allegorical female figures, or an archetype of a human rights survivor, victim, or activist, as there is for the archetypes of 'explorer' and 'aboriginal' found at the Champlain Monument. Kwon has commented that "in order for a public art work to be meaningful to the public (thus, meaningfully public), it should not 'unsettle perceptions' but 'reassure the viewer with an easily shared idea or subject.'"<sup>50</sup>

The archetypes used in the War Memorial, for example, of 'soldier,' or 'sailor,' highlight

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49 Roberts, 27.

50 Miwon Kwon, *One Place after Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity* (London: The MIT Press, 2004), 96.

the Everyman nature of the thousands of soldiers who died, reinforcing that it was not only certain classes affected by loss, but all sectors of the public, making it not an individual, group or certain elite male class that was commemorated, but all. This in turn makes the War Memorial more universally appealing and easily read, thus internalized and ingrained into public collective memory. It is easily manifested as a hub of the memories and events that it represents.<sup>51</sup> Why doesn't this concept of universal appeal work for the Tribute? It may be that instead of representing everyone (i.e. the public) in an archetypal or accessible way, it does so in an abstract way. It represents everyone and no one in particular.

Few memorials exist to human rights as a concept - though there have been tributes to specific incidents of human rights violations, such as genocides or victims of dictatorships - therefore there is no commonly understood lexicon of iconography or visual language to draw on (as is often the case with Holocaust memorials as well). The artist then has a choice between creating his or her own iconography, which may not be universally understood, or employing alternative existing visual tropes and re-investing them with new meaning. In the case of this Human Rights memorial, it relies on words to spell out its meaning, literally.

In choosing an abstract approach for the shape of the monument, which can be successful in conveying its message, there is naturally no cenotaph or pedestal on which to place a central figure to be exalted, no central focus to direct the viewer to the central subject matter, and no visual iconography or symbolism to aid in its interpretation. For the Tribute, one relies on language of dignity and rights pasted onto an otherwise blank abstract sculpture. The result lacks

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51 It is interesting to again consider the case of the Vietnam Veterans' Memorial; some veterans did not feel sufficiently represented in the abstract memorial, and a lengthy debate ensued about whether a figurative memorial would be more suited. A compromise was eventually reached wherein a bronze ensemble of soldiers was placed in close proximity to Lin's memorial.

visual synthesis and is somewhat one-dimensional in its initial reading.

The idea of a monument to human rights is also a relatively new concept (in fact the Ottawa version claims to be the first in the world dedicated to the topic) and unlike a concept such as 'victory', has not had the time to be invested with universally accepted symbols or personifications to represent it, whereas victory has such semiotic language as the laurel wreath, or a winged female figure, all of which were developed as far back as the Greeks (Nike [Victory] of Samothrace, for example). In contrast, human rights tributes have taken the form of more transient commemoration such as events or performance art in the past - not necessarily possessing traditional elements of monumental space, and being somewhat elusive in its visual representation. A less tangible concept in this case leads to a less overtly readable monument.

The Tribute to Human Rights attempts to represent values that transcend ideas of nationhood or national identity, such as the War Memorial and Champlain Monument represent. It speaks to something more universal and abstract - the concept of human rights. Its inclusivity means that it does not display conflicting representations of cultural or community groups, as the Champlain Monument does and the War Memorial arguably does, but this also means that its links to politics and its relationship to Ottawa's monuments that tend to glorify existing power structures, is less tangible.

The siting of public art has traditionally been associated with places that are significant to, or closely associated with, existing structures of government and power. Jeff Kelley has highlighted a key differentiation between site and place, in that

one might say that while a site represents the constituent physical properties of a place - its mass, space, light, duration, location and material processes - a place represents the physical, vernacular, psychological, social, cultural, ceremonial, ethnic, economic, political, and historical dimensions of a site. Sites are like frameworks. Places are what fill them out and make them work. Sites are like maps or mines, while places are the reservoirs of human content,

like memory or gardens. A place is useful, and a site is used. A used-up site is abandoned, and abandoned places are ruins.<sup>52</sup>

The words site and place have been used interchangeably in the context of this discussion, but in light of this differentiation, it can be said that the Tribute remains primarily a site rather than a place with significance in the collective memories of its public.

What, then, can be gleaned from the physical site of the monument, and how does this codify its message or meaning? Although it is quite large, it is overshadowed by much larger, visually complex buildings; therefore size does not give it a great deal of prominence. The courthouse, several law offices and government buildings in its close proximity do allude to the connection to concerns of human rights that these administrative bodies share with the monument, but the various levels of government represented obscure which one(s) it is meant to engage. It shares a lawn and is directly in front of City of Ottawa administration buildings; this might identify it primarily with local rather than national concerns. The courthouse in close proximity might give contextual meaning, but the monument offers itself as an 'international' symbol, transcending provincial or even national ideologies, although human rights is a federal issue (as illustrated by the inception of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms). The siting was intended to link governmental or political space with that of the everyday, but connection to political buildings is not immediately apparent, and is largely overlooked in an everyday setting. It attempts to balance the two contexts but does not connect enough with either. The monument's narrative does not seem congruent with its placement, and offers an example of the importance of surrounding space in establishing meaning for a monument.

Has the Tribute to Human Rights failed, then, as a monument? The problem is not so

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52 Jeff Kelley, "Common Work," Suzanne Lacy, ed., *Mapping the Terrain: New Genre Public Art* (Seattle: Bay Press (Wa), 1994), 139-148, 142.

much that it has failed as it is the problem of difficulty of access, in terms of both physicality and meaning. It does not engage the viewer well, and so cannot be invested with significant meaning or common memories and experiences stored in the public memory. Public art is, after all, about commonality. Kelly explains that places are held within oneself by memory and that "at a given threshold, our commonly held places become communities, and communities are held together by what Wendell Berry calls 'preserving knowledge.' As he sees it, a community is 'an order of memories'."<sup>53</sup> Community is an important factor in the establishment of meaningful places. If the Tribute to Human Rights has no significant meaning to the community, it cannot be a meaningful place.

If the site is to be reclaimed at all, the question of how the Tribute can begin to gain such characteristics ought to be considered. One way would be for the space to be activated on a regular basis in connection with tangible events which can link it to visceral memories in the public mind. It need not take the form of official ceremonies; interventions such as the Remembrance Day light projection of names onto the War Memorial also have this effect. This can result in meaning being generated by the public, as has occurred at the War Memorial, where the development of that quality has grown in a very organic way.

The Tribute's axis lies parallel with War Memorial, which can be seen from the platform of the structure. This fact is often unobserved, and was intended by the artist to be a deliberate link between the two structures, linking the concepts of war and human rights in somewhat of a confrontational way. If the Human Rights Monument were integrated more into the monumental language of Ottawa's other pieces that speak certain ideologies more clearly, as is exemplified by

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53 Ibid.

the connection between these two sites, its context would become more apparent.<sup>54</sup>

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54 A final consideration may be to give the public didactic keys with which to decode the elements of the piece. A plaque already exists giving some background information, thus the same format might be used to point to dimensions of the monument that cannot be easily read.

## *Conclusion*

The narratives and histories that are important to a nation and people are told through the monuments they construct to the past. This thesis has explored the role of memory in monument-making and meaning, and specifically, the various ways in which a site can retain or lose its significance and power of dissemination amongst the community in which it resides.

Additionally, the construction and reception of three significant monuments have been examined in order to illustrate the factors which can determine such characteristics. These monuments were chosen for their centrality in relation to Ottawa's urban core, their unique spatial characteristics, visibility, and their varying public responses. Central to this thesis has been the question of memory and the maintenance or loss of meaning in memory spaces over time – or the lack of significance to begin with. Several key areas of inquiry also were questions about contested space, voice, and ownership of public space, and about the “nature of the monument in contemporary society - what does a monument of our age look like? Who gets to decide?”<sup>1</sup>

Several key theories, essential definitions and clarifications of vital concepts provided the groundwork for an interrogation of the ways in which the physicality, construction and passage of time affect a site's engagement with its audience. The construction and re-vitalization of the War Memorial site provided an example of continued and increased meaning over time. Additionally, the theories of Nora and Winter grounded an examination of the rituals and activities which activate the space of the War Memorial through usage, and the use of civic displays of ritual was established as essential to the construction of a memory-space.

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1 Danielle Rice, “The 'Rocky' Dilemma,” Harriet F. Senie and Sally Webster (eds), *Critical Issues in Public Art: Content, Context, and Controversy* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1998), 228-236, 235.

A case study of the Champlain Monument was used to consider the reasons for, and effects of, a monument's diminishing meaning. Issues of memory were explored, particularly the difficulties in reconciling different versions of memory and history for commemoration within a monument that reflects on dominant narrative. Finally, the Tribute to Human Rights was considered as a monument which has not succeeded in negotiating a meaningful relationship with the public's collective memory at the same level as the War Memorial. Though it has been the site of protests and has been associated with activist ideologies, aesthetic and interpretive considerations largely have limited it from achieving a role as a memory-space.

This thesis has set out to determine the links among memory, the public and monumental space, particularly in the context of monuments in the National Capital region, which by their location are closely associated with a national heritage. This study of the three aforementioned monuments largely affirms the theories of Nora and Winter, without entirely rejecting others in areas where several facets of theory overlap. The thesis has examined the ways in which spaces surrounding monuments are invested with collective memory and personal significance, why said significance can decay or remain static, and how this might be prevented, as well as how a monument might not achieve significance from the beginning. In doing so, the thesis has drawn together diverse fields of study in order to contribute a new understanding to the ways in which memory space is constructed in Canada's capital, and provide direction for factors to be considered when building monumental space in Ottawa. These three examples provide a grounding for an analysis of other existing sites as well, which can highlight the effectiveness of Ottawa's monuments in representing narratives and histories.

A central purpose of this research has been to provide insight into questions such as: why is it important to keep memory alive? Why is it important to keep monuments activated, to keep

the space invested and connected with people and to keep memorials as hubs of collective memory? And, what can we learn from the examples of the Tribute to Human Rights and Champlain Monument? Conversely, it has been shown how a monument might circumvent loss of relevance, by examining the successful example of the War Memorial. Re-activation of space through rituals, usage and relevance that progresses with successive generations, as well as the demarcation of sacred space in appropriate cases, has proven successful in this respect. The durability of monuments, their messages and narratives against the societal changes brought about by time has shown to be preventable.

Recently, the National Capital Commission has taken a leading role in activating Ottawa's monuments through interactive walking tours; in particular, a tour was planned for National Monuments Day in 2008 and 2009, which included on-site guides who explained the significance of several sites to visitors.<sup>2</sup> Locations in this endeavour include the National War Memorial and the Canadian Tribute to Human Rights, though not the Champlain Monument. This omission may reflect the limitations of a walking tour as well as the low importance given to the Champlain Monument itself. The inclusion of the Tribute to Human Rights indicates the desire of the City to establish the Tribute as a place of significance; whether the site is invested with meaning through activation by the use of interpretive guides, and accessible public interaction, remains to be seen.

This thesis, in examining some of the monuments and memorials in the centre of Ottawa's urban environment, has aimed to further the study of public art into issues of memory and commemoration, as well as space, including activation of space, sacred space and forgotten

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<sup>2</sup> 'NCC plans walking tours of downtown monuments,' *Ottawa Citizen* (Ottawa) April 18, 2008, C7.

space related to monumentalization. In situating these questions within the context of public art as it manifests itself in Ottawa's urban core, the ways in which monuments and memorials define space, and their role in perpetuating collective memory, this thesis has aimed to add to the existing body of research regarding monuments, memorials and memory-spaces as they relate to Canadian sites of commemoration. As time progresses and cultural attitudes shift, the narratives and meanings ascribed to monuments also shift or suffer loss, thus it is of vital importance to ascertain the varying ways in which hubs of collective memory are negotiated by the public.

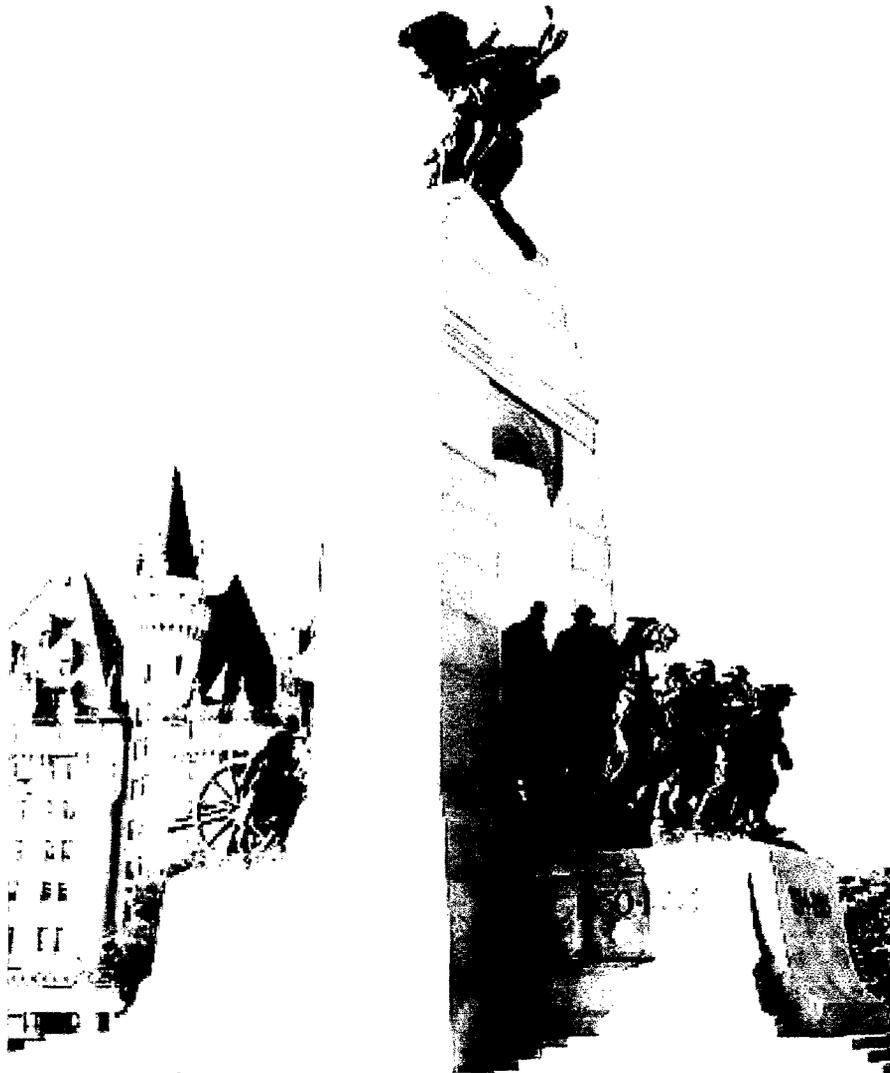


Figure 1. The Canadian National War Memorial, Ottawa

Photo: Herman H. Cheung

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/hermancheung/2654008863/>, 14 December 2009



Figure 2. H.M. King George VI and Queen Elizabeth unveiling the National War Memorial, May 21, 1939  
Collection of Library and Archives Canada  
Photo: National Film Board of Canada  
(C-002179)



Figure 3. The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at the War Memorial  
Photo: Rick Carroll  
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/rick-carroll/3627895234/>, 14 December 2009

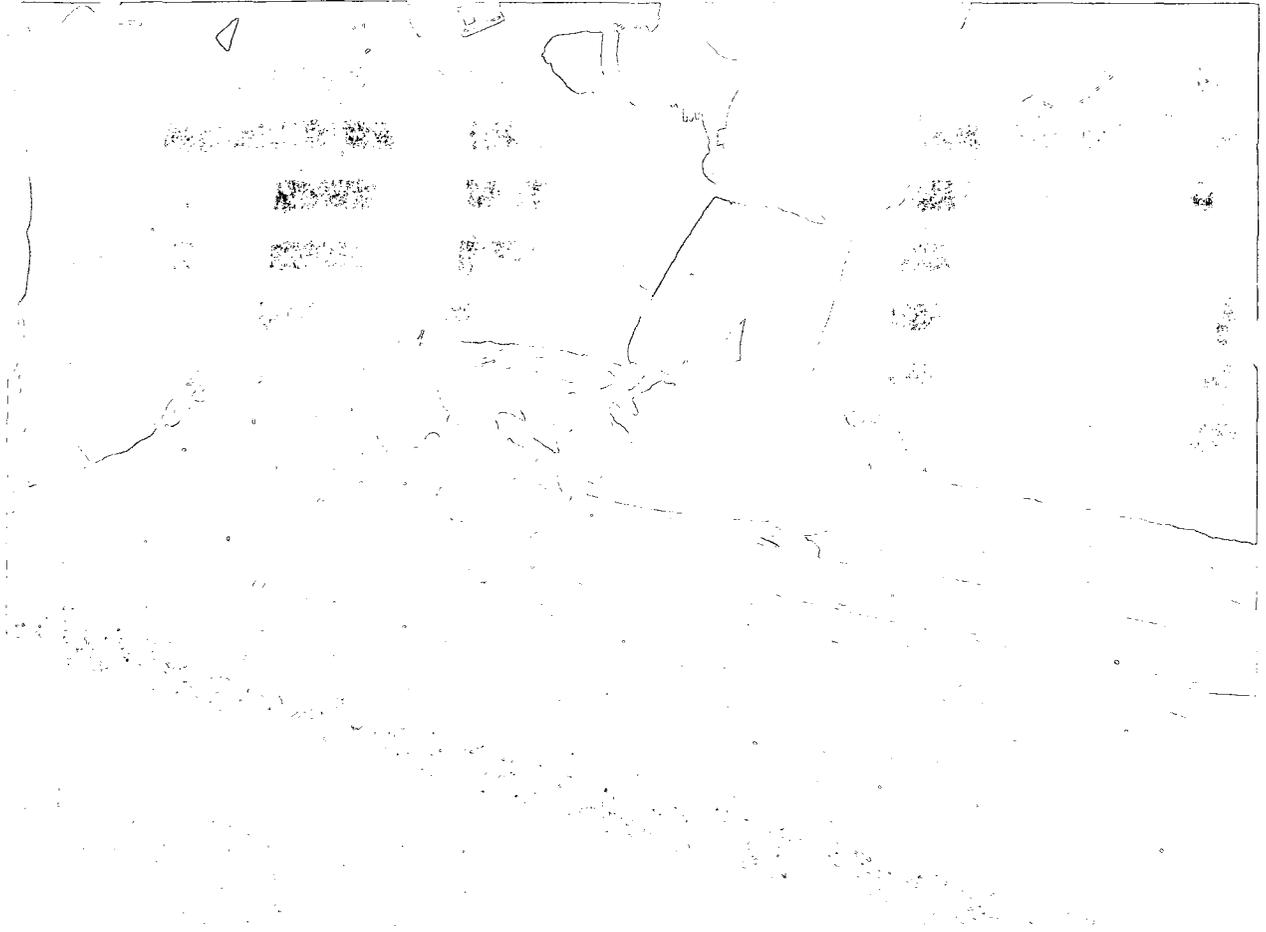


Figure 4. Poppies on the tomb of the Unknown Soldier

Photo: Melanie Hayes

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/mellyjean/63349936/>, 14 December 2009



Figure 5. Champlain Monument, Nepean Point, Ottawa, 1924  
Collection of Library and Archives Canada  
Photo: W.J. Bolton  
(PA-031354)

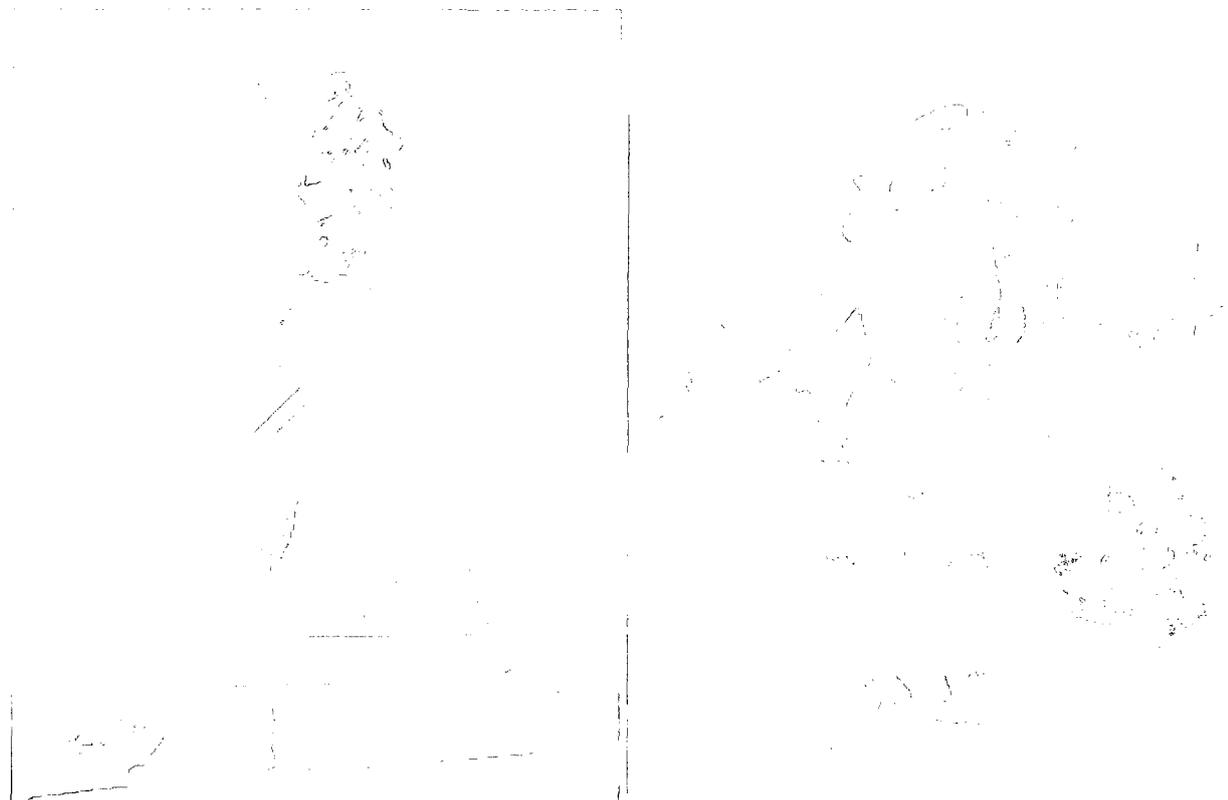


Figure 6. Champlain Monument and Scout figure after alterations  
Photos: <http://urbsite.blogspot.com/2009/10/anishinabe-scout.html>, 14 December 2009

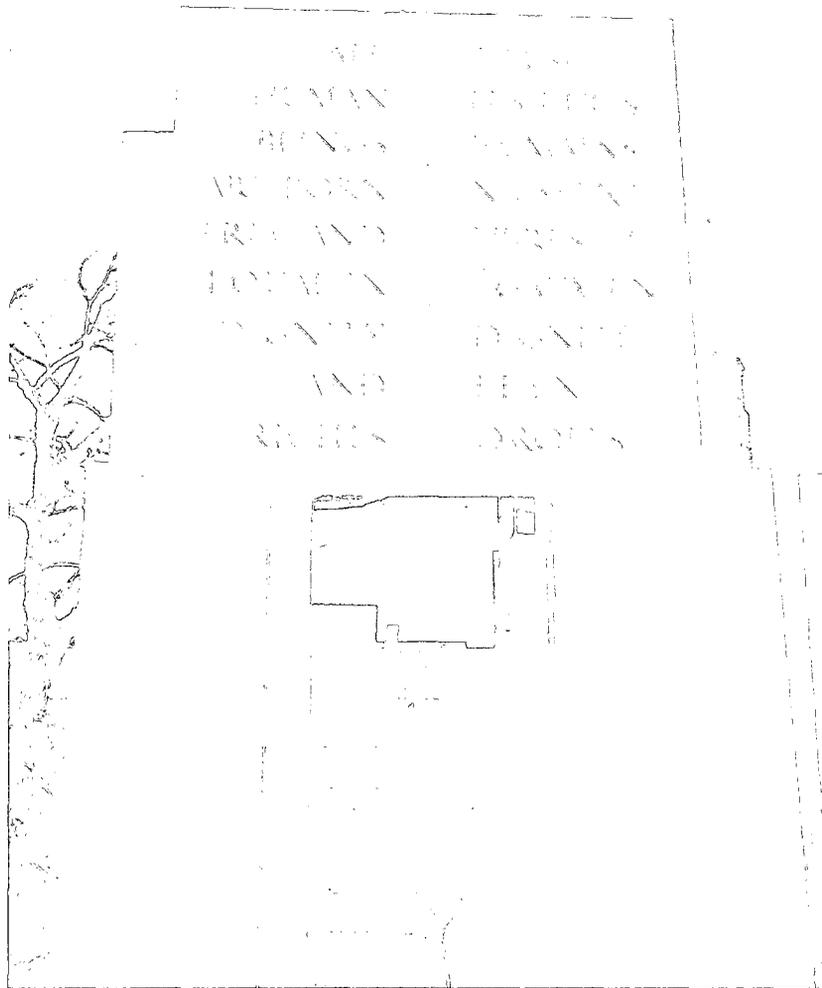


Figure 7. Canadian Tribute to Human Rights, Ottawa  
Photo: Taran Rampersad  
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/knowprose/2401083166/>, 14 December 2009

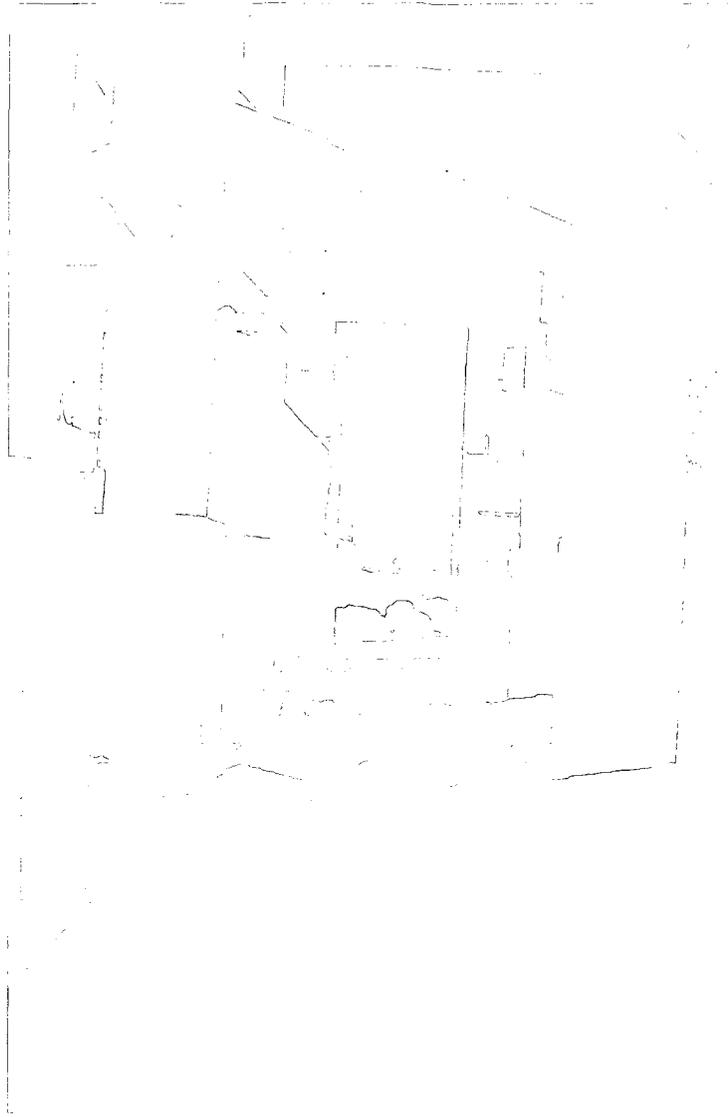


Figure 8. Canadian Tribute to Human Rights, interior view

Photo: Caro Lander

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/xuecaro/3327345982/>, 14 December 2009

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