

Cast in stone: monuments, geography, and nationalism

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Abstract. Since the 19th century at least public monuments have been the foci for collective participation in the politics and public life of villages, towns, and cities. They have acted as important centres around which local and national political and cultural positions have been articulated. I argue that monuments are an important, but underutilised, resource for the geographer interested in debates surrounding national identity. Through a variety of examples, I explore the ways in which examinations of the sociology, iconography, spatialisation, and gendering of statues reveal important ways in which national 'imagined communities' are constructed.

Introduction

The building and unveiling of a statue to Sir Arthur 'Bomber' Harris in London in June 1992 aroused a small but vocal protest in London. Commemoration of the loss of 55 573 aircrew during the Second World War was the impulse for erecting the public monument. The commemoration, however, witnessed a protest from the Peace Pledge Union in London and from the mayors of Koln and Dresden, the two cities most affected by the saturation raids initiated by the commander (MacKinnon, 1992). A visit by Queen Elizabeth to the city of Dresden was greeted with a demonstration by local people for the role Harris played in the carpet-bombing of their city.

The changing political organisation of eastern Europe has precipitated the mass removal of public statuary that celebrated leaders of communist rule. In Budapest the city council has removed in excess of twenty monuments including those of Marx and Engels. Veterans of the 1956 uprising were among those seeking their removal. The Red Army Monument, however, has been retained in one of the city's main squares, but it is under constant police protection. According to the deputy Mayor of the city "History should not be re-written again. Despite what happened later, the Russian army played a very important role in the Second World War and actually did free this city from the Nazis. The Russian soldiers who died—and many died—deserve a monument" (quoted in Dent, 1992, page 10). The city plans to build a statue park to house the monuments that have been removed. No longer to adorn public space these monuments will now enter more explicit 'heritage space' and will be subject to the tourist gaze (see Urry, 1990). Ironically then, the Hungarian past will be used to generate foreign revenue through an open-air museum display, yet that heritage is rejected in the civic landscape of the city. The space which these monuments occupy is not just an incidental material backdrop but in fact inscribes the statues with meaning. A civic square is an altogether different space from a specialist theme park.

Particularly since the 19th century public monuments have been the foci for collective participation in the politics and public life of towns, cities, and states (Agulhon, 1981; Mosse, 1975; Warner, 1985). Despite their location in public space and their role as sites of shared unity or protest, geographers, in general, have

underutilised public monuments as a vehicle for conceptualising the nation-building process. In this paper I seek to highlight the usefulness of public monuments as a source for unravelling the geographies of political and cultural identity especially as they relate to conceptions of national identity.

Geography and the study of national identity

—A nation? says Bloom. A nation is the same people living in the same place.

—By God, then, says Ned, laughing, if that's so I'm a nation for I'm living in the same place for the past five years.

So of course everyone had the laugh at Bloom and says he, trying to muck out of it:

—Or also living in different places.

—That covers my case, says Joe.

—What is your nation if I may ask? says the Citizen.

—Ireland, says Bloom. I was born here. Ireland.

(James Joyce *Ulysses* 1922)

The above extract from Joyce's *Ulysses* amply captures some of the principal issues surrounding the vexed question of defining the nation and concomitantly national cultural identity. Drawing on the temporal (over time), ethnic (same people), and geographical (same place) elements implicit in a commonsense knowledge of the constituent features of a nation, Joyce manages to parody and render complex Bloom's seemingly straightforward definition of a form of political organisation that dominates the global map. Today we have a huge academic literature proposing a variety of definitions of the nation (for an overview see Hobsbawm, 1990) and Anderson's (1983) assertion that it is an 'imagined community' has been generally received as one of the most authoritative accounts. For geographers, however, Watts (1992) warns that "imagination and territoriality are employed often quite loosely, as though individuals cook up some sort of ideal world out of thin air" (page 125). An examination of public statuary, I argue, highlights some of the ways in which the material bases for nationalist imaginings emerge and are structured symbolically.

Cultural geography has recently witnessed an increased concern with the articulation, constitution, and representation of identity—be it social, ethnic, or gender identities (Cosgrove, 1990; Jackson, 1989), yet much of this literature has been somewhat hesitant in addressing the ways in which national cultural identity at the *popular* level is constructed, maintained, or challenged. Thus we have studies which look at how particular landscape images are constructed, largely through the imaginings of what Gramsci (1971) would have considered an intellectual elite (that is, spiritual or political leaders, artists, writers, architects, critics) (see Cosgrove and Daniels, 1988; Duncan, 1990), but we have a comparatively sparse literature on how these sorts of images are popularised, consumed, or resisted by groups within the state. As Jackson (1989) has pointed out, there is an increasing emphasis on the fluid and fragmented nature of political or cultural identity, yet the empirical focus has largely been on minority cultures within states.

One could peruse the geographical literature over the past decade, for instance, and find precious few in-depth studies which address the conflict of identity in Northern Ireland. Yet, in a British context, it is here in particular that conceptions of national political culture are contested and where the popular imagination is highly territorialised at a variety of geographical scales. Research, outside of geography, on the location and semiotics of murals, the routes of marches or parades, and the spatialisation of prison life (Jarman, 1992; Rolston, 1987; 1988; 1991) all

confirm Cosgrove's assertion (1989) that "geography is everywhere". It is the absence of sustained geographical research on these topics that requires some attention. Recent suggestions that Northern Irish Protestants have no 'intrinsic' identity outside of an oppositional politics antithetical to the Republic of Ireland, or no collective landscape imagery (Graham, 1994) could be furthered through empirical investigation. Indeed Jackson (1992) in an analysis of unionist myths in Northern Ireland claims that "the cult of 1912-14 ... is central to the historical consciousness of modern Unionism ... [and] the contemporary memory of 1912-14 has been tailored by dead partisans to a degree unusual even in twentieth-century Ireland" (pages 183-184).

Historians have paid considerable attention to the processes involved in the articulation of a heroic version of the past and the invention of traditions (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983) which are subsequently popularly consumed within a nation-building framework. This process has been taken on board by others interested in nation-building (McCrone, 1992; A D Smith, 1986; 1991). Geographers too have analysed the invention of traditions, especially in an American context. A special issue of *Journal of Historical Geography* (1992) offers insights into how some discourses about American identity emerged historically and the specific role of particular actors or interests in the promotion of certain types of landscape image (for example, the Great American desert, a New England colonial village). The persistent power of some of these myths, as Watts (1992) has shown, was exposed in the uproar precipitated by the 1991 exhibition "The West as America: Reinterpreting Images of the Frontier 1820-1920". The exhibition evoked comments such as "perverse" (Senator Ted Stevens, Alaska) or "historically inaccurate, destructive exhibition" (Daniel Boorstin, former Librarian of Congress) and resulted in the cancellation of some of the venues for the exhibition (all quoted in Watts, 1992).

Thus, although the invented nature of some traditions associated with nations' histories have been exposed, their persistence in the popular consciousness is rather less understood. Nation-building is, as Smith (1986) has observed, an ongoing historical process—whose myths prevail at particular moments is the crucial question. The connections between elite and popular 'imagined communities', where subaltern voices are not always assumed to be epiphenomenal to identity formation, is crucial to an investigation of nationalism. I now wish to provide a brief overview of some of the literature on public monuments.

Monumental studies or the study of monuments?

The transformation of urban space through monumental architecture and statuary has been explored by urban historians, art historians, and some geographers. Schorske's (1979) compelling investigation of the redesign of the Ringstrasse in 19th-century Vienna under the liberals "as a visual expression of the values of a social class" (page 25) meshes an analysis of the economic, political, and aesthetic values of Vienna's 'triumphant middle class' in the reconceptualisation of late 19th-century urban form. Although Schorske (1979) makes some reference to individual statues, the overall focus is placed on specific buildings or street blocks constructed at a monumental scale.

Whereas Schorske's study focuses on the rise of a particular social class in Vienna rather than on the evolution of Austrian nationalism, Mosse's (1975) investigation is of the 'new politics' which "attempted to draw the people into active participation in the national mystique through rites and festivals, myths and symbols which gave concrete expression to the general will" (page 2). Through a broad-ranging analysis of monuments, architecture, theatre, and public festivals Mosse

traces the various ways in which the masses were nationalised in Germany from the Napoleonic wars to National Socialism. Deviating from studies which consider the economic and political evolution of the nation-state Mosse is concerned with the aesthetics and symbolism central to the new politics of the 19th century and convincingly argues that “the reality of nationalism and of National Socialism represented itself to many, perhaps most people, through a highly stylized politics, and in this way managed to form them into a movement” (page 214).

It was beyond the remit of Mosse’s study to examine the ways in which the new politics of style was challenged both from the right and from the left, nor are the connections between the geographical constitution of identities (Agnew, 1987; Agnew and Duncan, 1989; Watts, 1992) discussed in any detail. Although Cosgrove (1990, page 564) rightly suggests that the nation-state sought to “promote a single identity within the bounds of its territory”, it is important to stress that this process has been strongly spatialised and frequently resisted in particular regions of the state where subaltern symbols and alternative versions of history prevail. The reluctance of Ireland to cohere with the Union of Britain and Ireland, for instance, reinforces this contention and resistance was inscribed visually through monuments erected on the island (Johnson, 1994).

Harvey’s (1979) brilliant study of the Basilica of the Sacre Coeur in Paris highlights the contested political meaning of the site at Montmartre, where both conservatives and communards could lay symbolic claim. The eventual alliance of monarchists and intransigent Catholics guaranteed the building of a monument dedicated to the cult of the Sacred Heart. Uncovering the politics underlying the development of the Sacre Coeur not only reveals the deep fissures informing late 19th-century Parisian and national politics but also opens up the ways in which the building can be read which “rescue that rich experience from the deathly silence of the tomb and transform it into the noisy beginnings of the cradle” (Harvey, 1979, page 381).

War memorials

Memory and commemoration have become an area of increased academic interest especially among historians. Although political geographers have long been concerned with studies of war or peace, geopolitical discourse, and geostrategy, they rarely examine the symbolic fallout associated with national or international conflict (see Reynolds, 1992). Similarly cultural geographers concerned with landscape interpretation and iconography have largely ignored war sculpture in their analyses of the relationship between politics and culture (for instance, Agnew and Duncan, 1989; Cosgrove and Daniels, 1988; Duncan, 1990). Yet war memorials are of special significance because they offer insights into the ways in which national cultures conceive of their pasts and mourn the large-scale destruction of life. Wagner-Pacifini and Schwartz (1991) posit that “Memorial devices are not self-created; they are conceived and built by those who wish to bring to consciousness the events and people that others are inclined to forget” (page 382).

Historians have begun examining the relationship between memory and history. Nora (1989) claims that with the demise of peasant society sites of memory have replaced real environments of memory—“true memory, which has taken refuge in gestures and habits, in skills passed down by unspoken traditions, in the body’s inherent self-knowledge, in unstudied reflexes and ingrained memories” (page 13) has been replaced by modern memory which is self-conscious, historical, individual, and archival. This distinction between true and modern memory becomes more persuasive when connected with the style of politics associated with the rise of the national

state, where extralocal memories are intrinsic to creating 'imagined communities' and new memories necessitate collective forgetting or amnesia (Anderson, 1983; Hobsbawm, 1990).

Space or more particularly territory is as intrinsic to memory as historical consciousness in the definition of a national identity. These new sites of memory are not simply arbitrary assignments of historical referents in space but are consciously situated to connect or compete with existing nodes of collective remembering. Thus the claim that "Statues or monuments to the dead ... owe their meaning to their intrinsic existence ... [and] one could justify relocating them without altering their meaning" (Nora, 1989, page 22), warrants some revision. The meaning of the Vietnam Veterans' Memorial in Washington DC, for instance, is partly defined by its location in the capital of the USA (MacCannell, 1992) linking it to US foreign policy and geopolitical discourses (Sturken, 1991). It could be interpreted rather differently in Ho Chi Minh City.

Zelinsky (1988) has commented on the paucity of literature on American monuments in general, but Civil War statuary (especially Confederate statues) have been considered in some detail both by geographers and by historians (Davis, 1982; Foster, 1987; Gulley, 1993; Winberry, 1982; 1983). Although the location of Civil War statues reflects the geographical division of allegiances, the historian Savage (1994) demonstrates how statues which ought to have reflected a serious divide between antislavery and proslavery lobbies in America gradually became transformed and "Americans perceived this kind of monument building as part of a healthy process of sectional reconciliation—a process that everyone knew but no one said was for and between whites" (Savage, 1994, page 132). The differences between those supporting the Union and those supporting the Confederates was disguised through a racial politics which, each in its own way, denied black memory. The South's defence of slavery became blurred. In the commemorative statue of Lee, for instance, he was depicted as an American hero who fought out of loyalty to his home state. In the North, memorials generally omitted cultural representation of blacks in the war effort. Only three Civil War statues represent blacks, the most famous Shaw memorial designed by Augustus Saint-Gaudens "facilitates opposing readings of its commemorative intent" (Savage, 1994, page 136). Overviews of Union monuments have received far less scholarly attention and the connections between the two traditions are only beginning to be explored (Foster, 1987; Savage, 1994). Yet even preliminary investigations of Civil War statuary highlight the ways in which the physical memorialisation of war adds fresh interpretation to the events themselves. The treatment of civil war in geographical scholarship is sparse, yet it is precisely at these points of fracture that some of the particularly interesting questions regarding the spatialisation of historical imagination which Watts (1992) has commented on, come to the fore.

There has been a recent upsurge of interest in collective memory, especially as it relates to the experience of two world wars. Historians have begun to trace the origins of a new, more democratic, style of war memorial, which iconographically moved away from the commemoration of generals or rulers to the acknowledgement of the role of ordinary soldiers and armies in the war effort (Fussell, 1975; Mosse, 1990). Sherman (1994) in his discussion of World War 1 memorials in France identifies two types of tension inherent in the commemoration of that event. He claims that "the decision to construct a monument implicated a community in several kinds of latent contestation" (page 188), one centring on the secular or religious question and the second centred on "the negotiation of local and national claims to memory of the dead" (page 188). This negotiation produced numerous types of debate and

discrete outcomes in different national contexts. In France the government agreed, where possible, to pay for the return home of the bodies of dead soldiers and frequently the local memorials named the individuals killed (Sherman, 1994). This practice differentiated it from commemorations where memorials named the leader but very rarely the rank and file war dead (Laqueur, 1994). Britain decided to bury the bodies of its dead along the Western Front, resisting any attempt to return them to their families, but “the state poured enormous human, financial, administrative, artistic and diplomatic resources into preserving and remembering the names of individual common soldiers” (Laqueur, 1994, page 155). The national commemorative activity centred on the building of the catafalque at Whitehall and the burying of the unknown soldier in Westminster Abbey: “the unknown warrior becomes in his universality the cipher that can mean anything, the bones that represent any and all bones equally well or badly” (Laqueur, 1994, page 158). The unknown soldier has become a common motif for the sacrifice of the rank and file in Europe and beyond (Inglis, 1993).

Although seen by some as a legitimate form of collective commemoration these tombs have also been subject to parody. When passing the Arc de Triomphe in 1920 and asked how long he thought the eternal flame would burn, James Joyce caustically replied “Until the Unknown Soldier gets up in disgust and blows it out” (quoted in Ellmann, 1959, page 486). As a pacifist he, for one, found such public monuments offensive (Fairhall, 1993). The extent to which the public supported or dissented from such commemorative activity has yet to be documented. Geographers have just begun to examine some of the debates surrounding the Great War and the landscapes of remembrance produced (Heffernan, 1995), but this work is still in its infancy.

In the case of the United States’ commemoration of the Great War the populace refused to be treated solely as servants of the state. In a fascinating analysis Piehler (1994) examines the ways in which women articulated their response to the war, picking up from existing studies on gender relations and World War 1 (Higonnet et al, 1987). Despite the War Department’s wishes to bury US soldiers in cemeteries in Europe and inscribe the United State’s role in the world political order on the fields of France and Belgium, women demanded that their sons be repatriated for burial at home; eventually over 70% of soldiers were returned. The ways in which discourses of citizenship, motherhood, and peace were rearticulated in the interwar years in the United States provide preliminary insights on how the spaces of women were redefined (Piehler, 1994).

With the recent success of Steven Spielberg’s film epic *Schindler’s List*, memory of the Holocaust in the popular consciousness has been rekindled. Indeed the place where the movie was filmed is starting to become a tourist attraction as increasing numbers of people visit the site and make connections between their viewing of the film and the real landscape (Borger, 1994). Yet thousands of monuments to the Holocaust were erected after World War 2 and amongst them the Warsaw Ghetto monument has received much of the attention. On the consumption of this public monument and its role in popular memorialisation, Young (1989) provides a seminal analysis. Prefacing his discussion with a critique of the narrow conceptual framework adopted by art historians and the commentators of ‘high’ public art, Young suggests that “it may be just this public popularity that finally constitutes the monument’s aesthetic performance” (page 99).

Although views differ on the ability of monuments in general, and figurative ones in particular, to engage the viewer reflexively with the past or future, and the antimonument movement seeks to reclaim memory as part of everyday life

(Gillis, 1994), Young's study suggests that monumental figurative statuary continues to engage the viewer. The iconographic effect and public popularity of Maya Lin's quasi-abstract Vietnam Veterans' Memorial in Washington confirms the continuing appeal of public statues (Sturken, 1991). Geographers attempting to conceptualise how the public memory works and how national imaginings unfold could do well to move beyond examining the elite landscapes of the ruling classes, and begin to broaden their own imaginative remit to the popular mind. Unlike creative literature or painting, the production and consumption of public monuments is more firmly part of a collective process—"Sculpture ... is, so to speak, more democratic than painting because it is simpler and more solemn, more appropriate to the public square, to huge dimensions, and to emblematic figures that are both a product of and a stimulus to the imagination" (Republican leader, Godefroy Cavaignac, 1834; cited in Agulhon, 1981, page 4). Statuary offers a way of understanding nation-building which moves beyond top-down structural analyses to more dialectical conceptualisations (for a critique of structural analyses of nationalism see MacLaughlin, 1986).

Gender and monuments

The relationship between gender and national iconography has become an area of increasing interest in studies of statuary. Warner (1985) provides seminal insights into the use of the female body in statues and other allegorical representations. She claims that "The body is still the map on which we mark our meanings; it is chief among metaphors used to see and present ourselves, and in the contemporary profusion of imagery, from news photography to advertising to fanzines to pornography, the female body recurs more frequently than any other: men often appear as themselves, as individuals, but women attest the identity and value of someone or something else" (page 331). In national commemoration the role of women is largely allegorical, and, although states use women as symbols of identity such as the figures of Liberty or Marianne (Agulhon, 1981), women rarely appear in sculpture as political or cultural leaders. Outside the Reichsrat (parliament) in the Viennese Ringstrasse, Athena was chosen as the symbol to adorn the new building, the Austrian parliamentarians avoided Liberty because of her association with a revolutionary past—"Athena, protectrix of the polis, goddess of wisdom, was a safer symbol. She was an appropriate deity ... to represent the liberal unity of politics and rational culture" (Schorske, 1979, page 43). Allegorical figures cannot be simply subsumed under a single model of gender relations but must be disaggregated in terms of the version of history being promoted (by men) in specific political contexts. The use and reading of female allegories are not fixed, as can be seen in the case of Hibernia in a late 19th century Irish context (see Johnson, 1994).

The female body in contemporary monuments in the city continues to reveal the ways in which 'gender performance' is articulated. Smith's (A Smith, 1991) fascinating interpretation of the monument Anna Livia Plurabella, erected in Dublin in 1987, highlights the fragility of women's position in the city under patriarchy. The statue, whose inspiration was drawn from Joyce's character, Anna Livia Plurabella, a representation of womanhood, of the city of Dublin, and its river Liffey in *Finnegan's Wake*, was proposed by the city's civic government, financed through private capital, and located in the city's principal street. After its unveiling the statue underwent a series of renamings—"the floozie in the jacuzzi", 'the whore in the sewer', 'the skivvy in the sink'—a strategy by Dubliners to deflate the high-art pretensions of the monument itself, to cut it down to size so to speak; but also a strategy which reveals a "male role-shift from that of Slave to Master" in a postcolonial context (Smith, 1991, page 11). The female figure in this instance does not represent the virtues

alluded to by Warner (1985) but invokes gender-coded stereotypes of woman in public space as whore, temptress, pollutant, and scaled to virtual anorexic proportions as she bathes in the waters of the city (figure 1). Although allegorical figures of woman as ‘motherland’ and protector of the private sphere of home and family enjoy acceptance in nationalist discourse (Nash, 1993), in the city woman’s role in public space, as suggested by the renaming of Anna Livia Plurabella, is confined to that of prostitute or seductress strolling streets normally occupied by men. Joyce’s character may be more complex than her representation on O’Connell Street, but the monument, I suspect, has far more viewers than *Finnegan’s Wake* has readers!

Women not only feature in monuments themselves but recent research has been emphasising their role in the organisation of commemorative activity and in the debates surrounding the articulation of public memory (Gulley, 1993). Women have been active in mobilising support for statue building, most notably in the context of war dead. As mothers, wives, and sisters of soldiers women have been an active, if underrepresented, grass-roots lobby for the repatriation of killed men and in postwar peace movements (Gillis, 1994). Occasionally they have also been the sculptors (the Vietnam memorial is the best-known example). By considering the role of women in this context we may begin to reveal and challenge how the imaginary unfolds in the discursive practices of identity formation.

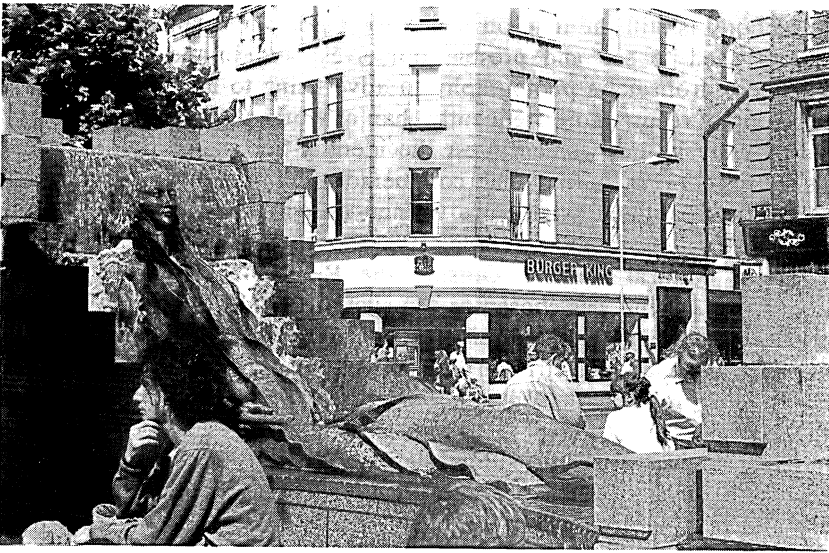


Figure 1. ‘The floozie in the jacuzzi’—Anna Livia Plurabella monument, O’Connell Street, Dublin.

The sculptural mapping of Dublin—the Parnell monument

Nineteenth-century Dublin, like other European capitals, had its streets and parks decorated with public and private statues. Public monuments were listed in the catalogue for visitors to the Great Industrial Exhibition of 1853. It was noted in 1856, however, that “No public statue of an illustrious Irishman has ever graced the Irish capital” (quoted in Murphy, 1994, page 202). Until the middle of the century there were two principal types of statue. The first were royal monuments such as the King William III statue erected in 1701 in College Green or the equestrian statue of George I in the gardens of the Mansion House (the Mayor of Dublin’s official residence). The second type were those erected to commemorate the prowess of

military leaders. Unlike war memorials commemorating the efforts of ordinary soldiers (Gillis, 1994) these statues reserved public reference to military (imperial) leaders. The two most significant in Dublin were the Wellington and the Nelson monuments. Designed as an obelisk and column, respectively, each was "rising to a soaring height and visible from some distance, [they] employed scale in an aggressive manner" (Murphy, 1994, page 203). Rather than soliciting collective public memory of war casualties, these monuments functioned in iconography, location, and subject to solicit public knowledge of heroes in British military campaigns. Unlike civil war memorials in the USA or memorials to the Great War in Europe, these statues did not attempt to evoke collective reconciliation with the past or mourning for 'national' sacrifice, but further inscribed Dublin as a provincial capital within a Union whose centre was London.

The first attempts to counterpoise the sculptural mapping of Dublin with Irish people came with the erection of statues to honour literary figures. The credentials of the city as a literary capital are now well documented as any glance at current tourist brochures attests (Lincoln, 1993; Titley, 1990). Yet before Dublin was publicising its 'production' of three winners of the Nobel Prize for Literature, the city was erecting statues to Oliver Goldsmith, Thomas Moore, and Edmund Burke in the 1850s and 1860s. As respectable figures, pedestalled outside their alma mater Trinity College, these Protestant men of letters were comparatively uncontroversial and could comfortably coexist with the more imperial statues gracing the city.

It was in the second part of the 19th century that Dublin began to celebrate overtly nationalist leaders, with the O'Connell monument on the city's main street being the only statue of a Catholic erected in the 19th century (Murphy, 1994). Its location at the head of O'Connell Street competed with the Nelson column situated centrally along the thoroughfare. Designed as a figurative statue O'Connell is perched at the apex of the pedestal, surrounded below by a series of figures supporting Catholic emancipation and pivoted by the female allegory Hibernia; the base is crowned with four winged victories. The design combines classical motifs with Celtic iconography (figure 2). Unlike Sri Lanka where statues associated with empire were removed and replaced with statues of nationalist leaders after independence (Duncan, 1990), in Dublin both types of statue existed simultaneously, the confrontational nature of Irish politics at the time was reflected in the statue-building on the streets of the capital and elsewhere (Johnson, 1994). Collective memories were being consciously aroused in stone and bronze. Statues did not necessarily merely reflect the values of a particular social class as in the case of Vienna (Schorske, 1979) (indeed many were heavily criticised on artistic grounds), their imposition was a means of negotiating and contesting popular nationalist politics. Their design, funding, location, and unveiling were well publicised events reported in the popular press (Murphy, 1994) and in some instances they created great controversy (O'Keefe, 1988). The ability to shape public commemoration and negotiate the geography of public ritual had important implications for the various political interests of the city.

The Parnell monument was first proposed in 1898, the year of the centenary celebrations of the 1798 rebellion (see Johnson, 1994). As he was one of the most contentious political leaders in modern Ireland, the proposal to erect a monument to him generated considerable discussion. Dublin Corporation were of the view "that no statue should be erected in Dublin in honour of any Englishman until at least the Irish people have raised a fitting monument to the memory of Charles Stuart Parnell" (quoted in Murphy, 1994, page 206). The Irish people, however, were not of one mind when it came to assigning Parnell's role in the public memory.



Figure 2. The O'Connell monument, O'Connell Street, Dublin (courtesy of the Lawrence Collection, National Library of Ireland).

The Irish Parliamentary Party, which he effectively led before the revelation of his adulterous affair, split into a number of factions, with supporters of Parnell coalescing under the leadership of John Redmond (Foster, 1988). The Parnell episode marked a period of intense public and private debate conducted “with all the venom of a fratricidal feud” (O’Keefe, 1984, page 7). A powerful worm’s-eye view of the controversy is found in the Christmas dinner argument in Joyce’s *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. The commemoration of the leader, therefore, would not necessarily be a peaceful affair, although the primary organiser of the monument, Redmond, hoped that it would heal the wounds of conflict between ‘Irishmen’. Unlike the centenary of the 1798 rebellion where the memory of the rebellion could be reinterpreted by influential parties such as the Catholic Church (Johnson, 1994; O’Keefe, 1988; 1992; Turpin, 1991), in the case of Parnell, the recency of his death and the widespread press coverage of his ‘affair’ rendered revisionist interpretations much more difficult.

At the laying of the foundation stone at the northern end of O’Connell Street in 1899, it was clear that unanimity of opinion was far from achieved. The absences at the unveiling ceremony were significant. From over eighty elected members of the Irish Parliamentary Party only a handful attended, no Catholic clergy participated, which contrasts with the 1798 celebrations, and other civic leaders such as city and county magistrates were thin on the ground (O’Keefe, 1984). The occasion was

marred with incident—hecklers interrupted speeches, fist fights broke out, and in general it was a disorderly affair. The Irish Republican Brotherhood saw the event as “a direct challenge to their own campaign to honor the father of Irish republicanism, Wolfe Tone, who had died more than a century before” (O’Keefe, 1984, page 8). According to Gillis (1994) modern memory stems from, amongst other things, “an intense awareness of the conflicting representations of the past and the effort of each group to make its version the basis of national identity” (page 8). Redmond’s hegemonic influence in the face of republican-minded nationalists certainly prevailed in the first decade of the 20th century.

Amidst a siege of criticism and dissent, Redmond decided to raise funds for the monument in the United States, fearing that the Irish public might be unwilling to foot the bill. Parnell, whose mother was American, was popular in the USA and Redmond broadened the fund-raising activities to include the building of a headstone on Parnell’s grave and the acquisition of the ancestral home in Avondale, County Wicklow. Although the effort was not wholly successful, Redmond did manage to raise some funds especially from Richard Croker, boss of Tammany Hall. The second objective in the United States was to find a sculptor, preferably with connections to Ireland, to design the monument, and reinforce Parnell’s lineal connection with the USA (O’Keefe, 1984). The geographical base of Irish nationalism went far beyond the shores of the island, and was cultivated periodically in the process of memory making.

The sculptor chosen was Augustus Saint-Gaudens, a well-established name in American sculpture (for example, the Shaw memorial). His credentials were ideal, born of an Irish mother and French father who emigrated to the USA during the famine (O’Keefe, 1984). In the midst of various financial crises and personal difficulties Saint-Gaudens completed the monument which was finally unveiled in October 1911. The figure in bronze of Parnell (figure 3), clothed in a frock coat, arm outstretched as if he is in the act of speaking, and standing beside a table draped in a flag of Ireland, was designed according to Saint-Gaudens “as simple, impressive and austere as possible, in keeping with the character of the Irish cause as well as of Parnell” (quoted in O’Keefe, 1984, page 17). The backdrop to the statue was a triangular shaft, constructed of Shantalla granite and inscribed with a brief passage, deliberately chosen by Redmond, from one of Parnell’s more extreme versions of his political aims. It reads “No man has a right to fix the boundary to the march of a nation. No man has a right to say to his country—thus far shalt thou go and no further. We have never attempted to fix the ne plus ultra to the progress of Ireland’s nationhood and we never shall”. For those reading the inscription Parnell’s nationalism appears unequivocal. The use of this quotation might be seen as an attempt to reconcile the public’s distaste for his personal life with their admiration of his public one. As Savage (1994) noted in the context of the American civil war monument, a selective reading and representation of the past served to heal the wounds of a society divided; the same was hoped for in the context of Parnell. The use of swags and ox heads on the monument attempted to make it visually compatible with the motifs decorating the nearby Rotunda. Statue design was not an isolated activity separated from the context of an existing streetscape (Schorske, 1979).

By 1911 Redmond’s popularity had risen since the days of laying the foundation stone. Over fifty MPs and some Catholic clergymen attended the unveiling ceremony and the public disorder of a decade earlier had all but disappeared. Parnell, at last, it would seem, had been embraced by Dubliners, but only in the shadow of a rising militancy among the working class (Rumpf and Hepburn, 1977). A railroad strike and a baker’s strike were held during the day of the unveiling, a precedent to the

well-documented 1913 lockout in Dublin. A small but significant socialist movement was taking hold in the capital (Foster, 1988; Lyons, 1979). The monument at the northern end of O'Connell Street completed what Yeats referred to as the triumvirate of 'old rascals'—O'Connell, Nelson, and Parnell. Ironically O'Connell Street's General Post Office, overlooked by Nelson would be the pivotal node for the 1916 uprising, an expression of republican nationalism, from which would emerge a new coterie of heroes, whose sacrifice would later be commemorated in stone and bronze.

O'Connell Street today has lost its Nelson pillar, dynamited by republicans in the 1960s, but it retains its O'Connell and Parnell, supplemented by other statues including Anna Livia Plurabella. New memories have been aroused since the heady first decades of this century, new definitions of national identity have been articulated.



Figure 3. The Parnell monument, O'Connell Street, Dublin (courtesy of the Lawrence Collection, National Library of Ireland).

Conclusion

In this paper I have sought to highlight the usefulness of public monuments as a source for understanding the emergence and articulation of a nationalist political discourse. The location of statuary reveals the ways in which monuments serve as the focal point for the expression of social action and a collectivist politics, and the iconography of statues exposes how class, 'race', and gender differences are negotiated in public space. Although historians have devoted considerable attention to the role of public statuary especially in the context of war memory, geographers are

just beginning to examine the relationships between the memorialisation of the past and the spatialisation of public memory. Using Anderson's (1983) thesis that nations are 'imagined political communities' as a guiding principle, I have argued that an examination of public statues enables the researcher to gain some insights into how the public imagination is aroused and developed in the context of the ongoing task of nation-building. Statues, as part of the cityscape or rural landscape, act not only as concentrated nodes but also as circuits of memory where individual elements can be jettisoned from popular consciousness. Their role in the geography of the city as points of physical and ideological orientation requires much further research. In the case of Belfast, anthropologists and communications theorists have powerfully elucidated some of the ways in which divided identities are structured and maintained in the geographies of everyday life through analyses of public art, popular parade, and ritual. In so doing they have elided the tendency to treat nationalism as an ideology and a practice born out of the preoccupations of a privileged intelligentsia and have instead treated it as one of the dominant discourses to emerge from a complex web of political, cultural, and economic inequalities.

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