



If these stones could speak: War memorials and contested memory

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ABSTRACT

This article explores how war memorials engage with the contested nature of public sculpture and commemoration across historical, political, aesthetic and social contexts. It opens with an analysis of the Australian commemorative landscape and the proliferation of Great War Memorials constructed after 1918 and their 'war imagining' that positioned it as a national coming of age. The impact of foundational memorial design is explored through a number of memorials and monuments which have used traditional symbolism synonymous with the conservative ideological and aesthetic framework adopted during the inter-war years. The authors then analyse international developments over the same period, including Great War memorials in Europe, to determine the extent of their impact on Australian memorial and monument design. This analysis is juxtaposed with contemporary memorial design which gradually echoed increasing disillusionment with war and the adoption of abstract designs which moved away from a didactic presentation of information to memorials and monuments which encouraged the viewer's interpretation. The increase of anti- or counter-war memorials is then examined in the context of voices which were often excluded in mainstream historical documentation and engage with the concept of absence. The selection of memorials also provides an important contribution in relation to the ideological and aesthetic contribution of war memorials and monuments and the extent of their relevance in contemporary society.

KEYWORDS

Aesthetics, Historical Commemoration, Counter-Memorials, History, Memorials and Monuments, Memorial and Monument Design

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In an article published in the *Guardian* in 2021, Gary Younge did little to hide his disdain for the proliferation of statues of historical figures. He dismissed them as lazy, ugly and a distortion of history. Regardless of whether they celebrated saint or sinner, he believed that they should be destroyed. They are “among the most fundamentally conservative expressions of public art possible”, are “erected with eternity in mind”, and “mistake adulation for history, history for heritage and heritage for memory.” In short, they are bad history, for they “attempt to set our understanding of what has happened in stone, beyond interpretation, investigation or critique” (Younge, 2021). Younge’s ‘solution’ was merely a more extreme take on an issue that has been bubbling away for years but which reached a crescendo in the wake of the killing of George Floyd by Minneapolis police in May 2020. The iconoclastic fury that this murder unleashed in the United States spread beyond the issue of commemorating slave owners, Confederate heroes, and Christopher Columbus. Statues to King Leopold II in Brussels, the slave trader Edward Colston in Bristol, Jean-Baptiste Colbert, Finance Minister for Louis XIV and author of Code Noir in France, and Italian journalist and fascist propagandist Indro Montanelli in Italy, all got short shrift from protestors.

Clearly, the second half of 2021 is an opportune time to edit a special theme issue on war memorials, as the editors acknowledge. Yet as they are academics working at an Australian university, it would be difficult to conceive of a time when this would not be the case. War memorials are the most common form of public sculpture in Australia, and though they are far from being unique to this country, they have become something of an Australia icon. The proliferation of war memorials across Australia (in the early nineties, it was estimated that there was one civic memorial to every 30 soldiers killed in The Great War) is illustrative of the extent to which the national story is grounded in war. It is a connection that is officially endorsed by both major political parties and through their aegis is widely disseminated through schools and during public commemorative services.

War memorials in Australia have rarely attracted sustained opposition on anything other than aesthetic grounds. In 1966 twenty women laid flowers at the Second World War Memorial near the Shrine of Remembrance in Melbourne in a respectful protest at the sending of conscripts to Vietnam. So unique was this protest that Ken Inglis (1987), the most prominent historian of Australian war memorials, suggested that they might legitimately lay claim to being the pioneers of a female counter tradition. Three years later, 400 people held an anti-war protest on the parade ground in front of the Australian War Memorial (AWM) in Canberra. As if to show the malleability of memory, members of the neo-Nazi organisation, the Nationalist Socialist Party of Australia (NSPA) attended and waved pro-war banners. The Anzac memorial in Sydney was likewise the site of an anti-war ‘sit in’ in 1970, it had ‘Women march for Liberation’ painted on it in 1975, was the central focus of a ban the bomb protest in 1983 and was vandalised in 2005 and 2007. Plans for a \$500 million extension of the AWM attracted some passionate opposition in 2020 and 2021, interestingly emanating from both the defenders of the Anzac tradition and its critics. Nevertheless, politically motivated physical attacks on memorials are rare in Australia, though not entirely unknown. In 2017 a group helpfully identified by a local paper as religious fanatics removed the sword from the Cross of Sacrifice on the war memorial in Toowong cemetery in Brisbane in a rather quixotic attempt to ‘beat swords into ploughshares.’ In the same year, a war memorial in Warrandyte, Victoria was spray-painted with anarchist symbols and the words ‘war is murder.’ In 2020 the West Ulverstone’s Tobruk Park war memorial in Tasmania was spray painted with the words ‘f---whites’, ‘f--- White Pride’ and the Anitfa symbol.

Statues and memorials are more regularly the target of random vandals, as distinct from those motivated by political or religious concerns. For example, the war memorial in Collie in Western Australia was vandalised in 2012 by four boys aged 11 – 13 years old, Ulverstone’s cenotaph in Tasmania was vandalised four times in three years beginning in 2013, the war memorial in Tamworth, New South Wales was targeted twice, Adelaide’s Field of Remembrance was vandalised four times in a single week in the lead up to Remembrance Day 2020 (a similar memorial in Queanbeyan, Canberra was damaged in 2019), and a statue in Moore Park in Bundaberg had its bayonet broken off in 2021. At an anecdotal level at least, a sizeable proportion

of the damage appears to be the result of drunken behaviour rather than protest. For example, one man was arrested in 2018 for removing the flowers from a wreath at a war memorial in Martin Place, Sydney and placing them in the hands of the statue. He then rather ruined the effect by placing a cigarette lighter on the statue's arm, putting a cigarette in its rifle, and pouring beer on its feet. Five young men damaged the same statue while climbing on it after a night on the town in May, 2021. Gladys Berejiklian, the New South Wales premier promised that those involved “would face the full force of the law”, noting that the perpetrators “don't appreciate the sacrifices many Australians made, who lost their lives and lost their livelihoods over many, many decades for our freedoms.” Accepting without question the didactic value of public sculpture, she argued that it is “incumbent on us to make sure that every single Australian citizen is aware and grateful for the sacrifices made by our ex-servicemen and women.” Her police minister described them as “sick individual[s]” whose actions were both “criminal and morally bankrupt” (Wondracz, 2021). Their words were far more tempered than the Australian Defence Association who described the people who vandalised one memorial as “scum” (Butler, 2017).

Whatever the motivations, much of the damage to war memorials, which is usually superficial, is met with almost universal condemnation. In spite of the distress caused to the local communities affected, and it can be significant, it is far from being a *damnatio memoriae* (condemnation of memory). Even where attacks are political, they are generally focused on memorials or statues related to European settlement and exploration rather than wars fought on foreign soil. Though not generally considered war memorials, statues to colonial era figures are increasingly linked to the Frontier Wars that ended in the often murderous dispossession of indigenous Australians. Two statues of Captain Cook in Sydney were vandalised in separate attacks in June 2020, while one to Governor Lachlan Macquarie in Windsor's McQuade Park was spray-painted, with the word ‘murderer’ particularly prominent. In response, Berejiklian made the link between history and citizenship explicit:

I wish it didn't come to this and I want to stress that it's only a very, very small percentage of the population that's engaging in this activity, the vast majority of us don't condone it, we think it's disrespectful, it's un-Australian. (Kozaki, 2020)

The reason why Berejiklian was confident that her stance was in step with the majority of the electorate is explored in Alison Bedford, Richard Gehrman, Martin Kerby, and Margaret Baguley's article *Conflict and the Australian Commemorative Landscape*. The authors begin by establishing how central war is to Australian national identity, before exploring the role played by memorials in communicating an officially endorsed version of Australian history. The reverence for these memorials and the ideology they espouse, whether it be the Anzac mythology or colonial history, is evident in the language used to condemn the vandalism of statues and memorials. People often explicitly position it as an act of defiling and desecrating a sacred object (Atfield, 2017; Nine News, 2020), “an utterly disgraceful demonstration of contempt and disrespect for our past and current defence members and community” (Douglas, 2020) and “a personal attack on all members of the community” (Wondracz, 2021). The responses can be quite earthy, ranging from “absolutely disgraceful” (Matthews, 2021) to “bloody disgusting” (Bastow, 2021). As Taree RSL Sub-branch president Charles Fisher observed when viewing significant damage to a ‘digger statue’, “I'm bloody pissed off” (Douglas, 2020).

Bedford, Gehrman, Kerby, and Baguley's exploration of the first great wave of memorial construction immediately after 1918 highlights the extent to which the Australian reaction to its first experience of a major war (the Frontier Wars notwithstanding) differed from many of its allies and enemies. Europeans saw in the Great War a “manifest disintegration of old orientations” (Gerster, 1987); indeed, the Ottoman, Austro-Hungarian, German, and Russian empires collapsed in the wake of defeat. Even the British, for whom the war represents the greatest military victory in their history (Sheffield 2002), remember the war as little more than “poets, men shot at dawn, horror, death, waste” (Todman, 2005, pp. 158-160). Nothing, it seems, can penetrate “the popular shroud of death, waste, and futility”; indeed, no generation since the 1920s has questioned this imagining of a lost generation led to its destruction by an arrogant and incompetent leadership

caste (Spiers, 2015; Hynes, 1991). This is a pervasive belief that is seemingly immune from the efforts of numerous historians with enviable professional reputations who continue to question this predominantly literary view of the war, notably Bond (2002), Ferguson (1998), Gregory (2014), Reynolds (2014), Sheffield (2002), and Terraine (1984). As Todman (2005) observes, historians have argued persuasively against almost every popular Great War cliché:

It has been pointed out that, although the losses were devastating, their greatest impact was socially and geographically limited. The many emotions other than horror experienced by soldiers in and out of the front line, including comradeship, boredom, and even enjoyment, have been recognised. The war is not now seen as a 'fight about nothing', but as a war of ideals, a struggle between aggressive militarism and more or less liberal democracy. It has been acknowledged that British generals were often capable men facing difficult challenges and that it was under their command that the British army played a major part in the defeat of the Germans in 1918: a great forgotten victory. (Todman, 2005, p. xii)

Rejection of the conflict as futile has never found fertile ground in Australian war literature. War in the Australian imagination is not a “destroyer of civilisation” (Rhoden, 2012, p. 1). It is an “epic model of national achievement” (Gerster, 1987, p. 14) and a “constitutive dimension of our public morality” (Chouliaraki, 2013, p. 316). It has also proved to be an adaptable mythology, for gone now is its “anachronistic, patriarchal, [and] militaristic” roots (Beaumont, 2011, p. 7). The newly reconfigured Australian soldier is a “kinder, gentler figure”, one that is both a national archetype and a “moral vision of humanity” (Holbrook, 2016, p. 19; Chouliaraki, 2013, p. 316). There is also a greater preparedness to reassess the Great War’s impact on Australia, at least in academic circles. For in spite of the popular understanding of it as a national coming of age, its impact was in fact catastrophic (Kerby & Baguley, 2020). Pre-war Australia was “a world of glorious possibilities” marked by progressive social, industrial, and economic legislation (Hetherington, 2013, pp. xi). The exertions made in pursuit of victory and the trauma generated by four years of war, industrial unrest, the rising cost of living, sectarianism, and the continuing divisions laid bare by the conscription campaigns of 1916 and 1917, had by November 1918 left Australia a broken nation (Beaumont, 2013).

Bedford, Gehrmann, Kerby, and Baguley’s article moves beyond the Great War to more modern attempts at commemoration. They acknowledge what Garton (1996, p. 45) characterises as the “artistic tyranny of the Anzac myth” before exploring recent attempts to construct a “new breed of abstract and, often, therapeutic memorial” (Stephens, 2012, p. 146). Without a shared artistic language such as the one provided by Edwardian classicism, some of these newer memorials have attracted considerable criticism on aesthetic grounds. To an audience more comfortable with heroic monuments that communicate a singular ideology, abstraction is often incomprehensible. For by being unmoored from a widely understood repertoire of symbolic forms, modern memorials can find themselves fighting a two front war waged on aesthetic as well as ideological grounds. In their article *The spectre of the thing: Sydney Gay and Lesbian Holocaust Memorial*, Kerby, Bywaters, and Baguley explore how one designer used a mix of abstraction and realism to sidestep this challenge. Though this proved relatively successful in terms of aesthetics, the ideological issues were another matter entirely. Situated in the centre of Sydney, the memorial was initially conceived in 1991 as a means of commemorating the male homosexual victims of National Socialism. This initiative was inspired by similar efforts in Europe, Israel and the United States, though in this instance the Holocaust link quickly proved a formidable barrier to fund raising. AIDS and continuing violence against gays and lesbians appeared far more pressing concerns to the Sydney community than an historical commemoration. As the early supporters of the memorial were replaced on the committee or drifted away from the project, or in a number of cases died of AIDS, the Holocaust link was increasingly subsumed into the wider story of the persecution of both gays and lesbians. These ‘second generation’ supporters quickly recognised that the memorial’s appeal needed to be broader if it was to succeed.

The decision to position the Holocaust as emblematic of the destruction wrought by all forms of racism and intolerance challenged the traditional Australian reticence to make the imaginative leap to their own history, particularly in the matter of genocide (Moses, 2003). In reality however, by the time it was completed in 2001, it was not an issue. By then the focus of the memorial had shifted from commemoration to protest; the memorial would be a “visible and permanent reminder to the heterosexual population that we will not forget those who hide their love in China, those imprisoned in Angola or those who face vilification and loss of work in Tasmania” (‘Why the triangle’, n.d). Though certainly a counter memorial that challenges hegemonic constructs of history, it does this through a balancing of the abstract and the literal. The memorial is comprised of a pink triangular glass prism, a symbol once used to identify and humiliate male homosexuals, but which is now embraced as a symbol of gay pride. The experience of lesbians and the connection with the Jewish Holocaust are present in a black triangle in the form of a triangular grid of black steel columns intersecting the prism, with the two triangles appearing as a fractured Star of David. For those preferring literal representations in their memorials, overlaid on the pink triangle is an iconic image of Jews being rounded up by the Nazis.

Though the evolution in the memorial’s purpose might in other circumstances have consigned it to oblivion, the ambiguity in just who it commemorates has worked in its favour. The City of Sydney Council, who by 2018 were responsible for the memorial, preferred a narrow view of its commemorative function but expanded the description of the people it included. Three decades after it was first conceived, it is officially recognised as a commemoration of the “thousands of LGBTQI people persecuted during the Nazi regime in Germany, including thousands murdered in concentration camps” (City of Sydney, 2018). The Jewish community continue to make use of it during commemorative activities on Holocaust Remembrance Day and notably during a visit for the delegates at the 25th Jewish LGBT+ World Congress in March 2019. Yet beyond that, it has struggled to find a place in the commemorative landscape.

The Gay and Lesbian Holocaust Memorial remains outside of officially endorsed versions of Australian history, and it is more interesting both ideologically and aesthetically as a result. Traditional Australian war memorials can also be aesthetically powerful, notably Rayner Hoff’s memorial arch in Adelaide, “the most sculptural, the most innovative and the most dramatic” of all the major memorials in Australia (Hedger, 1995, p. 35). His work on the Sydney Anzac Memorial, a huge art deco shrine opened in 1934, is equally impressive. One looks in vain, however, for a similar artistic sensibility in other Australian memorials built during the inter-war years, though the Melbourne *Shrine of Remembrance* can lay claim to being one of the largest structures ever built to commemorate the Great War. It is not just stone memorials through which the past is made to speak to the present and to the future. Daniel Maddock’s *Triumph of the Will: A Memorial in Film* explores Leni Riefenstahl’s propaganda masterpiece filmed at the 1934 Nazi Party Congress in Nuremberg. Maddock, an award winning documentary maker in his own right, argues that Riefenstahl’s documentary remains one of the most enduring reminders of Hitler’s vision for Germany and the world. Even with the passage of over 80 years, it remains compelling viewing. Yet as Maddock argues, when viewed with the benefit of hindsight, the documentary is really about absence. For it is the millions of victims of the regime who, paradoxically, now dominate the footage. It is their absence that haunts the viewer long after the torchlight parades and the pastiche of mysticism and religion fade from memory.

For all his bombast and predictions for a thousand year Reich, Hitler was denied the final word. Germany’s abject defeat and the war crimes trials ensured that judgment, however flawed, was well and truly passed. But what of memorials that celebrate victory and which have never witnessed the arrival of a conquering army? Traditional heroic memorials, like those constructed in Australia during the 1920s and 1930s, avoided this type of calamitous re-evaluation and instead “obey the logic of the last word, the logic of closure.” Changing ideas and tastes can often be subsumed into existing mythology for the memorials have already stripped the “hero or event of historical complexities and condense the subject’s significance to a few patriotic lessons frozen for all time” (Savage, 2009, p. 10). For in spite of the importance of the Great War in the construction and maintenance of Australian conceptions of national identity, there is not a

commensurate understanding of what it meant, and continues to mean, for other nations. Although the war made extraordinarily complex demands on the nations involved, the battlefield remains the “most poignant site of the war imaginary” (Chouliaraki, 2013); for Australians, that means Gallipoli and the battlefields of the Western Front. The war on the Eastern and Italian Fronts, in the Balkans, at sea, in Africa, and even in Palestine where the famed Australian Light Horse served, make few inroads into the popular Australian understanding of the war.

An article such as Daniele Pisani’s *Politics of Relics: On the Celebration of the Fallen of the First World War during the Interwar Period in Italy* offers a welcome counter to the insularity of that understanding, one which rarely acknowledges that it was a world conflict involving 32 nations who mobilised 70 million military personnel. Though much has been made of the extent of Australian per capita casualties, the comparative figure for Italy still makes for sobering reading. Between 600 000 and 700 000 dead, a million wounded, and a country effectively bankrupted by war explains the Italian anger at what it perceived as *vittoria mutilata*, or mutilated victory. Given that there was little widespread support domestically for involvement, it is hardly surprising that the war revealed deep divisions in Italian society. It was a watershed in Italian history, bringing about a profound rupture, one which altered the very fabric of government:

Between 1914 and 1918, a new political mentality came into being. This grew out of a desire for a different political model, an alternative to the liberal-democratic system, the proponents of which had been accused of mishandling the transformations which the war had brought about. What made this new mentality so particularly original was the way in which it militarized politics and demonised its adversaries. (Ventrone, 2011, p. 90)

The Socialists and Catholics felt that their opposition to the war had been vindicated by the appalling cost, while the military and the right blamed them for all that had gone wrong, and in terms of Italy’s experience of war, much had indeed gone wrong (Reynolds, 2014, p. 48). As Pisani observes, the rising Fascist movement nevertheless made the appropriation of the war’s legacy one of its priorities. A public memorial, as the Fascists well understood, “speaks to a deep need for attachment that can be met only in a real place, where the imagined community actually materialises and the existence of the nation is confirmed in a simple and powerful way” (Savage, 2009, p. 4). The interment of the *Milite Ignoto* (Unknown Soldier) in 1921, the year before the Fascists came to power, is indicative of just how profound this experience can be, particularly if it is “sanctified by sacrifice” (Tognasso, 1922, p. 43). This mirrors at least at a superficial level, events in Australia. In the post-war years, the conservatives likewise took control of the powerful Anzac legacy and subsequently established a dominance of Australian political life that continued into the 1970s (Gammage, 1990).

Unlike Australia, however, the Italians generally buried their dead in their native soil, either in smaller cemeteries or from the mid-1920s onwards, in memorials known as *ossuarii*. These were massive buildings located along the northeastern front comprising two elements, a lower part for the burial of the dead and an upper one acting as a monumental landmark. From the 1930s these were replaced by *sacrari*, a collection of burial sites situated on enormous open expanses. Pisani makes it clear that this was a highly politicised evolution in memorialisation:

All macabre content was removed. Light was cast on everything. The focus was no longer death, but transfiguration: *sacrari* in fact did not have the purpose of witnessing the tragic loss of young soldiers, but of glorifying their sacrifice; therefore, they concealed the grisly mortal remains of the fallen in order to better present death-in-war as an ultimate ideal to the Fascist youth. This became even more imperative with the approach of the Second World War ... [it became] necessary to prepare for the nearing day when Italian youth would have to, again, “sacrifice” itself for the Fatherland.

Not all memorials are sweeping, grand political statements that dominate city centres or rise from the mists of so many Great War battlefields. Other are smaller, semi-private, and in that sense they are often remarkably moving. In *‘Splendid Patriotism and Heroic Self-Sacrifice’: First World War*

memorials in Welsh metalworks, Gethin Matthews, who has written extensively about war memorials in Welsh chapels, has now turned his attention to memorials in Welsh metalworks. His research is a welcome addition to the literature on mourning and commemoration which has, at least in the academic world, generally focussed on civic memorials (Scates & Wheatley, 2014). As most of the metalworks memorials were commissioned within three years of the Armistice, there is little evidence of any attempt to create a memorial “without the value bearing abstractions, without the glory, and without the large scale grandeur”. Instead, the language of 1914 still dominates - Patriotism was ‘splendid’; self-sacrifice was ‘heroic’; the memory of the fallen was ‘glorious’ (Hynes, 1991, p. 282). Forty thousand dead from a population of 2.5 million made finding meaning in the sacrifice a pressing issue, as Matthews observes:

The men’s identity as employees was highlighted in the numerous memorials which noted their position within the company. They had an identity as steelworkers or tinplaters, as well as their identities as men of their home town, and as Welshmen, Britons and sons of the Empire.

When memorials challenge orthodoxy, they become even more politically charged. Marco Dräger’s *Monuments for deserters: A particularity of German memory culture* explores the rise of counter-monuments in Germany after the Second World War. Somewhat surprisingly, the few German memorials dedicated solely to the Fallen erected after 1945 were not anti-war. As Dräger observes, the iconography and military rituals of commemorative events often prevented a call for peace or a recognition of grief. By the 1980s, calls to recognise the forgotten victims of National Socialism led to the construction of ‘counter monuments’ which compel the viewer to reflect on issues of meaning and significance. Abstraction is better placed to challenge hegemonic views of the past than traditional forms and better able to deal with the complexity of historical events. The *Vietnam Veterans Memorial* in Washington D.C and the *Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe* in Berlin are two prominent examples where abstraction has been employed to good effect. As Dräger explains, designers of counter memorials “beat monuments at their own game by making use of the same medium.” In contrast to traditional memorials, counter monuments resist closure and fixity, and instead embrace an ideological ambiguity. Memory production can therefore flourish in a counter-hegemonic vein while simultaneously “following the inexorable imperative: to remember” (Mitchell, 2003, p. 457).

The response to the imperative to remember facilitated by counter memorials alters the role of the viewer. They are expected to participate in the construction of memory by becoming “active producers of plural pasts and multiple memories, rather than consumers for whom a single, collective memory is fashioned ‘in stone’” (Mitchell, 2003, p. 448). Memorials such as those explored by Dräger aim to implicate the viewer by transforming them into a participant, thereby effecting a change in that person (Crampton, 2001). Sci (2009) argues that a memorial’s continued relevance and potential impact is therefore dependent on its ability to engage the viewer in a process that is “both cognitively stimulating and affectively touching” (p. 43). This is common to many contemporary memorials that have been informed by the success of the *Vietnam Veteran’s Memorial*. They engage viewers mentally and sensually and seek to affect change by inviting them to think rather than dictating what to think: “They are polysemic, engaging visitors in critical reflection about their own values since these memorials do not offer easily consumed or understood political ideological or cultural messages” (Sci, 2009, p. 45). Mitchell (2003) posits that “resisting and/or transforming dominant forms of memory production is a little easier when the city in which these forms are located is in a state of upheaval and flux” (p. 453). This is not true of Australian cities, unlike a European capital such as Berlin which Mitchell (2003) describes as the ultimate urban palimpsest - a “city text frantically being written and rewritten” (Huysen, 2003, p. 49). The deserter monuments explored by Dräger have themselves been rewritten. Where once they had seemed so provocative, they now engender reactions ranging from acceptance to indifference.

It is not just memorials that have altered since the 1980s, but the actual act of researching them. For as academics who commenced their university studies before the advent of online databases

can attest, memories of library research are dominated by card indexes (indeed, an entire floor of the main library at the University of Queensland was given over to card catalogues when one of the editors began his study there in 1985), physical searches for material, and spare time on-campus spent in the library reading and writing. The advent of the internet, however, has had a profound impact on libraries and librarians (Garcia & Barbour, 2018). Academic libraries now require staff to have qualifications in areas such as digital technology (Choi & Rasmussen, 2009) and to act not as information providers but rather guides or facilitators (LeMaistre et al., 2012). This evolution in the profession is evident in Baguley, Kerby and Andersen's *Counter memorials and counter monuments in Australia's commemorative landscape: a systematic review*. Baguley and Kerby (who once ran a large secondary school library) are academics at the University of Southern Queensland, while Andersen is an Open Education Content Librarian at the same institution. A systematic literature review such as the one they conducted is an important contribution to any research that will be subsequently undertaken on counter memorials. It has a clearly articulated criteria and follows a set protocol which included multiple databases and grey literature. The articulation of the protocol ensures this systematic literature review is therefore valid, reliable and repeatable (Xiao & Watson, 2019). The databases used by Baguley, Kerby and Andersen were EBSCO MegaFile Complete, JSTOR, Web of Science, Taylor and Francis, and Scopus. What is explored in the article is a clear process that can be replicated, and over time, enlarged and updated. It is a worthy final addition to this special theme issue, acknowledging as it does that history is not set in stone, any more than the memorials with which we attempt to explain it.

In 2001, two of this special theme issue editors visited the Musée Picasso in Paris with a Rhodesian born, South African friend then working as a dentist in London. He had enjoyed what he acknowledged was a very English style education in pre-independence Rhodesia before relocating to London via South Africa. He found little in Picasso's work that appealed to him and was politely dismissive of the hundreds of artworks he strolled past in an increasingly desperate search for the exit. When he found a single artwork that "looked the way it should" he gave it the ultimate accolade: "Now that is art." He had been raised in Africa during the death throes of the British Empire. He knew of the battles at Trafalgar and Waterloo, but little of historical figures from his own upbringing such as Nelson Mandela or Steve Biko. He had very set ideas about the way things should look, ones that remained steadfastly anachronistic, though he was disarmingly self-aware. What the editors and authors have attempted to achieve in this article and across the special theme issue as a whole is to engage in an exploration of what people need or expect to see in a piece of public art that might encourage them to exclaim "Now that is a war memorial."

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