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Remembering Together: Rhetorical Integration and the Case of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial

Victoria J. Gallagher

This essay explores the extent to which memorials that are connected with issues of national conflict can lead to the construction of shared memories or fictions of the past. In contrast to recent critical analyses that have focused on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, this study analyzes a Civil-Rights related memorial—the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial in Atlanta—through the development and application of the concept of "rhetorical integration." The findings demonstrate that even though rhetorical integration is elusive, memorials can, through aspects of form, function, symbolism and location, provide space, motivation and inventional resources for continued engagement.

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> ". . . it is sometimes necessary to focus the thoughts of a group upon some past person or event, to get people *to remember together,* perhaps because we have a new and common enterprise in mind which demands that we act together, but often, simply because the unity of the group is thereby affirmed, and in that way kept in strength and readiness inasmuch as social unity is called upon subtly during every moment of community life. . . Such historical images are souvenirs, too, . . . of confusions society has implicitly determined to hold in common; of lies society has decided to tell itself until they become the national truth. Both public and private monuments have as much to do with these fictions as with the dead they presumably memorialize, and the ideals they are said to enshrine" (Gass 1982, p. 130-131)

Scholarly interest in cultural memory, memorials, and monuments has reached a level that demands the attention of rhetorical critics. At the risk of oversimplifying, there are two basic approaches. One explores the processes and rituals that perpetuate the possibility of shared memory and, thereby, shared values, within a culture (e.g., Bodner, 1992; Katriel, 1993,1994; and Radley, 1990). The other analyzes the symbolic, architectural, and/or textual aspects of artifacts to determine the ways in which they impact both the people who come into contact with them and the larger society of which those people are members (e.g., Blair, Jeppeson, and Pucci, 1991; Foss,

1986; Gass, 1982; and Morris, 1990). Both approaches share an interest in the instructional and political aspects of public memory: the manner in which memorials, monuments, museums, and other artifacts and rituals structure social order and are thus linked to the power relations in a society. This may explain why so much scholarly attention has been given to the Vietnam Veterans memorial—certainly there are issues of power at stake there. However, it does not explain the lack of such attention to memorials dedicated to the Civil Rights movement or its leaders.[1]

Both the Vietnam War and the Civil Rights movement provided paradigm cases of conflict between consensual values and state power. In each case, citizens were galvanized by apparent contradictions between widely held American values, claims, and national policy. In both cases, claims of government-sponsored oppression were articulated. Efforts to memorialize aspects of either case might fit into what James Young (1992) refers to as the tradition of "mea(memorial) culpa," wherein combined remembrance and self-indictment are in conflict (p. 271). Morris (1990) and Blair, Jeppeson, and Pucci (1991) provide some sense of how the Vietnam Veterans Memorial deals with this contradictory state of affairs—how the nation's misdeeds are recited even as the struggle for national existence is commemorated. This paper seeks to explore how and whether similar contradictions are dealt with by a particular Civil Rights-related memorial, the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial in Atlanta.

In any discussion of public, as opposed to private, memorializing there is a tendency to look for the transcendent, to explore the extent to which interpretations and meanings are or may be shared by numerous individuals. As Gass suggests in the passage quoted at the beginning of this paper, even if such transcendence is a fiction, memorializing provides a way for a society to transcend confusions and contradictions, to preserve the illusion of the one which is made up of the many, or the whole which is made up of the parts. It is this result of transcendence, namely integration, that is the dream of the idealist, and, often, of the critic. This has traditionally been the role of art where conflicts that cannot be resolved in society are worked out aesthetically. This struggle has not spared today's postmodern critic, who, in his or her struggle against metanarratives and determinate meaning, dreams of becoming one with the other if only to be reminded of the ever-illusive and problematic nature of the task.

Integration is also the key term for the Civil Rights movement in general and for Martin Luther King, Jr. in particular who believed that all things were naturally interrelated and must, therefore, be integrated for all to flourish. In critically analyzing the King Memorial as a moment of public memorializing, this paper thus seeks to explore rhetorical transcendence by exploring the interanimation of the symbolic and cultural levels of integration.[2] This is followed by an expanded discussion of current rhetorical analysis of memorials and monuments with particular application to the King Memorial. Finally, the implications of the analysis developed. It is the thesis of this paper that aspects of form, symbolism, and location clash in such a way as to prevent the King Memorial from achieving rhetorical integration. This clash is, however, productive, and offers insights as to the possibility and actuality of integration, both rhetorical and racial.

MEMORIALIZING KING

The King Memorial on Auburn Avenue in Atlanta is one of two national means of memorializing King—the other being the Martin Luther King, Jr. national holiday in January—and is unique because it shares its location with both the king Center for Nonviolent Social Change and the Sweet Auburn National Historic district. The difference between the Memorial and the holiday as means of memorializing is clear when one considers that the national holiday impinges on the lives of most, if not all, citizens by virtue of its inclusion on calendars and in school schedules. No matter what the qual-

ity, quantity, or social slant of one's memories of King, all citizens may be said to participate in the holiday in one way or another simply by living through the day. Certainly, this is not the case with the Memorial since those who participate must actually travel to and experience a place which is made up of, to use Radley's (1990) terms, "artifacts" and a "fabricated environment" that are "a tangible expression of the basis from which one remembers" (p. 49).

The Memorial and the holiday do, however, share some elements in common. The national holiday, by virtue of its form as a designated day of cultural memory that honors a prominent figure, relegates King to our past even as it perpetuates particular aspects of his legacy. These are aspects that fit seamlessly into popular memory and thought which as Young (1992) puts it, tend to "naturalize the values, ideals, and laws of the land itself" (p. 270). The King Memorial also participates in defining the past and shaping the future by creating a context for action through its coupling with the Center for Nonviolent Social Change. While physical elements (the tomb, the reflecting pool, the eternal flame, etc.) and location serve to evoke memories of what happened in historical time, they provide a visual context that suggests timelessness and permanence. King's words lose their situational anchorage in the quasi-sacred ambiance of the Memorial and Center.

In addition, both the national holiday and the Memorial have spawned annual celebrations and programs that attempt to apply King's values, beliefs, and practices to contemporary issues. The King Center for Nonviolent Social Change is host to numerous ongoing programs including the Chaplain's program, the Early Learning Center, and the Housing and Community Development program as well as annual events such as the Summer Institute on Nonviolence. In most large cities throughout the country, the national holiday is marked by specific events including speeches, religious services, workshops and so on. The difference here is that the programs of the King Center are tied to a special site (the Memorial and its surrounding environment) while the programs that take place to celebrate the national holiday are held in various kinds of places and locations throughout the country. This difference has implications for the way in which remembering and memorializing occur. Radley (1990) argues that the character of long term cultural memories is biographical and dependent "upon the physical setting for how people remember the course of events leading up to the present" (p. 49). In fact, it is the "material aspect of the setting which justifies the memories" (p. 49) constructed through objects and artifacts. Thus the setting for the Memorial within the Sweet Auburn Historic district and with the King Center provides for particularly poignant constructions of memory. These constructions will be different from those evoked by the memorializing that occurs in Los Angeles, Detroit, Louisville, or any other city across the nation. These two *national* means of memorializing King (there are many regional and local King Memorials but they are not considered here), and the similarities and differences between them, are suggestive for considering the extent to which integration can be accomplished on a variety of levels.

THE CHALLENGE OF INTEGRATION

For King, racial integration was best understood through his concept of the Beloved Community which assumes a deep sense of integration that reaches far beyond the legalistic definition of the 1950s and 60s. For most of his career at least, King taught that all human beings are morally interrelated and interdependent. In addition, he assumed that such a sensibility and community could be achieved within human history.[3] In America society, racial desegregation was mandated by law just as the King holiday was nationally mandated. All citizens participate, one way or another, in both legal desegregation and the national holiday, yet racial integration has not yet been achieved on the level of individual sensibility or communal action.

Achieving a sense of interrelatedness within and between individuals is also understood to be an essential goal of rhetoric. Kenneth Burke's use of the term "identification" as the source for his definition of rhetoric is based on the notion that achieving consubstantiality or the sharing of substance (if only momentarily) is necessary for communication to occur. Burke (1966) viewed human beings as essentially divided from one another physically and therefore symbolically, but he also described the means by which people manage to symbolically transcend such division to achieve understanding and influence (p. 4-45). The possibility of transcendence is based on a "new way of defining the individual's identity with relation to a corporate identity" (Burke 1959, p. 337). It is this "new" way of identifying and the resulting "new" identity which enables us to conceive of integration, of unity, of completeness, of the whole.

Rhetorical integration is thus another way of operationalizing what Burke refers to as the principle of perfection. While identification offers momentary transcendence of division, the fact that we can achieve such transcendence leads us to strive for perfection, namely rhetorical integration, wherein every aspect of a communication event works together to create an on-going, overlapping understanding or shared sensibility out of which common ground continually emerges. Yet there are always limitations to integration due to past symbol-use which focuses our attention in one direction rather than another and ensures that we have multiple kinds of experiences rather than one shared experience of living. This is the conclusion reached by Dionisopoulos, Gallagher, Goldzwig, and Zarefsky (1992) in their study of rhetorical trajectories in King's Civil Rights and anti-Vietnam War rhetoric. The study highlights the difficulties an individual speaker has in achieving rhetorical consistency or completeness, and thus rhetorical integration over time.[4]

In terms of racial integration, laws represent one kind of transcendence since they provide a way of aligning and realigning individual and corporate identity. Desegregation laws brought about a new way of defining the identity of black Americans in relation to the corporate identity of the culture—black Americans were to be equal under the law with white Americans. Yet, as mentioned earlier, most would agree that integration and equality have yet to be fully achieved. Monuments and memorials represent another kind of transcendence wherein images, structures, and symbols combine to create the fiction of a shared experience of the past. How does this occur? Specifically, what factors combine to lead to shared or transcendent experience of a memorial? To what extent can the fictions of the past created through such experiences actually *be* shared and sustained? The next two sections explore these questions in an attempt to better understand both rhetorical integration and the King Memorial as rhetorical artifact.

ANALYZING MEMORIALS AS RHETORICAL ARTIFACTS

Arguments as to the rhetorical nature of memorials and other visual images are based on the extent to which such artifacts are intended by their creators and/or perceived by audiences to perpetuate values, admonish as to future conduct, and affirm or challenge existing power relations. For instance, Blair, Jeppeson, and Pucci (1991) claim that all public commemorative monuments are rhetorical products by virtue of the fact that they "select from history those events, individuals, places, and ideas that will be . . . [considered sacred] by a culture or a polity" and that they "instruct their visitors about what is to be valued in the future as well as the past" (p. 263). There is some disagreement or at least difference among critics, however, as to the importance of authorial intent vs. the social construction of meaning in the interpretation and analysis of such artifacts. Some critics, like Foss (1986), argue that intentionality is what allows for the rhetorical experience of a work of art or visual image. However others, such as Radley (1990) point to the way in which artifacts, particularly those that are cre-

ated or set aside to memorialize, "survive in ways unintended by makers and owners to become evidence on which other interpretations of the past can be reconstructed" (p. 58). It is this latter approach which is most productive for considering the potential for *transcendence and integration* of a public memorial such as the King Memorial since public commemoration is based on the possibility of social definition of meaning. As Radley puts it, "the material world is ordered, is constraining, is formative of our subjectivity through bringing us into definite relationships" (p. 56). Thus, the world of objects in general and memorials in specific become "a plane in which culture can be read" (p. 55) and out of which individual attenders can construct experience.

A second, and related, issue concerns the terms "form" and "function." In one sense, these two terms mark the link as well as a distinction between the architectural and the rhetorical, and in an even more profound sense, between the modern and the postmodern. The modernist dictum that form follows function was based on the desire to achieve the perfect functional form that was unambiguous, efficient, and pure (e.g., Blake, 1977)). In contrast, postmodernism rejoices in ambiguous forms that resist closure and lead to multiple interpretations and functionalities. The point is that form and function are related despite the fact that the correspondence between them may be various and not immediately apparent. For instance, Morris argues that "function discloses itself specifically through the form in which the memorable is symbolically but partially represented (1990, p. 200). Radley argues that memorials and other objects made specifically to help us remember work because of their form and location (p. 48) And Blair, Jeppeson, and Pucci (1991) point to the form of the two parts of the Vietnam Memorial to suggest both the interpretive implications of each separately as well as the ambiguity that arises from their combination. In each case, these critics are interested in the resources of the material object which individuals draw upon to make meaning.

Similarly, issues of location and context are central to rhetorical analyses of memorials and monuments. While some critics like Gass (1982) focus on the monument or memorial without reference to context (Gass argues that a monument increasingly becomes a symbol of itself, p. 136), others such as Blair, Jeppeson, and Pucci (1991) focus on the memorial and the context as inseparable parts of a larger text (p. 270). Critiques of post-industrial societies such as Baudrillard's give added significance to the concern with context. Baudrillard (Poster, 1988) argues that contexts are simulated by the media and therefore have no referent, source, or ground. In addition, an excess of information is presented in a manner that precludes any response by the recipient other than silence or passivity (p. 7). Thus, in Baudrillard's perspective, the construction of public space, of space in which shared memory and rational debate are made possible, is increasingly difficult to achieve. In contrast, Burke (1959) proposes a view of context that is both fluid *and* grounded. Meaning is contextually generated and fixed via social processes. And the process of meaning making, in turn, creates contexts grounded in motives (if it is a symbolic context), values (if it is a social/political context), or experience (if it is a physical context).

Burke's perspective also provides a basis for understanding the relationship between context and location. Location, for the purposes of our discussion, is best understood as the simultaneously physical and symbolic space that is both created and occupied by an artifact. It is said to be occupied by the artifact because the location is a pre-existant symbolic and physical space which is selected out to contain the artifact. However, both the artifact and the location are transformed or re-created by this displacement since, as Radley suggests, "These material displacements . . . produce the object as . . . a 'historic artifact' *with* which to define the world of which it was (and is now) a part . . ." (p. 57). The location thus becomes a context out of which the artifact emerges and becomes meaningful and to which the artifact gives meaning. In evaluating the King Memorial, its location is therefore analyzed in light of contextual issues of

motive, values, and experience. In addition, aspects of form and function are analyzed in order to explore the manner in which the Memorial frames interpretations of meaning.

ANALYSIS OF THE KING MEMORIAL

The Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Center was established in Atlanta in 1968 with the organization of its first program, the Library Documentation Project.[5] Additional plans for programs and buildings were announced in January 1969 at the first annual birthday observance by Mrs. Coretta Scott King, but it was not until 1975 that ground was broken for the Memorial itself. By the time the Memorial was dedicated in 1977, the King Center had launched numerous programs including an annual conference on nonviolence in 1971, the Community Service Awards Program in 1972, the Martin Luther king, Jr. Nonviolent Peace Prize of 1973, the Annual Summer Institute on Nonviolence in 1976, the Labor/Management/Government Social Responsibility Breakfast for 1976, and the Annual Interfaith Service of 1977. Thus, the King Memorial has always been tied to the Center and its programs both physically and historically.

The fact that the Memorial and the Center share a location and a history and are therefore, in many ways, inseparable gives an explicitly political cast to the Memorial. This is not to say that all memorials don't have a political function—they do in the sense that they attempt to "possess the present and the future by first shaping and possessing the past" (Morris, 1990, p. 217). Whereas many memorials and other public commemorative activities stress the "desirability of maintaining the social order and existing institutions" (Bodnar, 1992, p. 19), the King Memorial explicitly challenges the social order not only by memorializing someone who brought about social change but by suggesting a continued commitment to (and therefore need for) social change: the entrance to the King Memorial is marked by metal letters attached to a cement wall that form the words, "Martin Luther King, Jr. Center for Nonviolent Social Change."

Seen from the street, the Memorial is, however, easily mistaken for simply a public structure named after Martin Luther King, Jr. This impression is highlighted by the fact that across the street from the Memorial is a Community Center named after King and behind that, a natatorium also named for King. The naming of hospitals, schools, freeways and other public structures after prominent individuals has been referred to as "the most purely modernist commemorative tendency" (Blair, Jeppeson, and Pucci, 1991, p. 271) by virtue of the fact that it stresses and therefore reflects modernism's concern for functionalism. And there is much about the form of the King Memorial that focuses attention on function.

Most of the structures that make up the Memorial are explicitly labeled as to their function. The Memorial is entered by ascending brick stairs that begin at sidewalk level on Auburn Avenue adjacent to Ebeneezer Baptist Church. The stairs lead to a brick terrace. Directly ahead, across the terrace, is the Interfaith Peace Chapel, a square cement alcove that can be entered by a doorway with an iron gate swung open to the side. Besides the label (which is composed of large black letters on the cement wall of the chapel), there is little else that provides a frame for meaning except the structure's location at the foot of a large, rectangular reflecting pool. It is, perhaps, this very lack of symbols that might suggest reflection regarding the emptiness or lack of something and/or someone but the label—Interfaith peace Chapel—sets a particular expectation as to the function of the structure (a place to go experience reverence, peace, to contemplate God and human existence, etc.).

To the right, as one faces the Chapel is a cluster of flagpoles and behind both these and the Chapel the start of a covered brick walkway labeled "Freedom Walkway." As with the Chapel, the cover of the walkway is an arched ceiling of cement "brick" and

there are cement columns placed at regular intervals along the walkway. The walkway extends along the far side of the reflecting pool ending at a large brick building that forms the far left boundary of the memorial and is labeled "Freedom Hall." This label is somewhat ambiguous as compared to labels found elsewhere in the Memorial. What makes this square brick and glass building a hall of freedom? It bears a physical resemblance to libraries, schools, and office buildings visible in many communities throughout the country and in fact this building houses an auditorium, meeting rooms, a gift store, and a cafeteria. There is another building at a right angle to Freedom Hall which is labeled only on the street side as "Martin Luther King, Jr. Center" but is referred to in Memorial literature and by staff as the Administrative, Program and Archives Building (it houses archives, exhibition halls, and offices). The combination of these two buildings, the walkway and the reflecting pool, when shorn of their labels evokes images of modern downtown courtyards made up of office buildings of one sort or another. This image is disrupted, however, by the presence of King's tomb on a dais in the reflecting pool at the end by the Chapel. The tomb is also labeled—King's name and the dates of his birth and death are carved in the tomb as well as the words "Free at Last. Free at Last. Thank God Almighty I'm Free at Last." The only structure besides the reflecting pool not labeled is directly across from the tomb on the brick terrace: the eternal flame.

The eternal flame is one of several features of the Memorial which are symbolic and offer the possibility of multiple readings or at least a less functionalist, dictated meaning-making process. The flame itself is somewhat difficult to see since it is raised only about afoot above the ground in a cement and brick circular dais which is surrounded by a low iron gate. There is no wall or other kind of backdrop against which the flame might be clearly visible, but the presence of a heat generating element is discernible and suggests many interpretive possibilities: the flame of righteousness that will not be quenched, an inner flame or spirit that exists beyond death, the religious symbolism of an eternal flame, and so on.

Other symbolic elements include the terracing of the reflecting pool and the ceiling of the Freedom Walkway (the walkway itself inclines gradually upward towards Freedom Hall which is perhaps where it gets its name since the Freedom Walkway must culminate at a destination). This terracing plus the positioning of the tomb at the lower end of the reflecting pool mean that the water in the pool (and from the three fountains located in the top end of the pool) is continually flowing down towards the tomb and may evoke memories of King's "I Have a Dream" speech: "'til justice rolls down like water and righteousness like a mighty stream." Even these symbolic aspects, however, when taken with the tomb and the Chapel, tend to play into the functionalist frame by mimicking the form of a mausoleum.

The form of the Memorial is thus permeated by a functionalism which combines elements connected with mausoleums as well as elements connected with modern office buildings, educational centers, and libraries. Unlike structures such as the Washington Monument and the St. Louis Expansion Arch which are compelling to many because of their sheer magnitude, these more familiar forms are not necessarily compelling in their own right. They become compelling because of the purpose or function which they serve: the one to house the remains of the dead loved ones, the other to house information or knowledge one may be interested in gaining. One does not usually visit a mausoleum or an educational center with no sense of personal purpose. The impetus comes from something other than the form, something which is inseparably connected with certain functions and with an individual's experiences, both personal and social. Thus, if one has never considered what it means to be white in America and what it means to be black in America, the form of the Memorial is less than compelling. It is simply a tomb and an educational center serving one group of people, of whom the individual may or may not be a part.

Given the functionalism of the Memorial's symbolic context and the level of individual motivation required, the social/political and physical contexts, particularly, the issue of location, becomes central to the interpretive process. Whereas the structure of the Memorial suggests a particular, passive reading of a finished "work"—the only real chance for active participation is the purchase of souvenirs or inspirational momentous from the gift/book store—the location and the Memorial together provide a larger "text" that engenders different levels of participation and multiple interpretations based on those levels of participation. Put another way, the location of the Memorial is ignored in any reading of the Memorial *only with great difficulty* because the context and location are *not* "other" or outside the work, despite the functionalism of the Memorial's structure. Rather, the social/political aspects of the Memorial, including its location and connection with the center for Nonviolent Social Change, mandate an expanded reading of an open text rather than of a finished work in isolation.[6]

In terms of the social/political aspects, the Memorial is located within the context of the black experience. This is a definite departure from other national memorials which are generally located in areas thought to be universally accessible to all types of experience—the Mall in Washington D.C., for instance—but which are, in actuality, more accessible to the experiences of white Americans.[7] The King Memorial, by contrast, is located in the Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic District, which is, in turn, embraced by the Sweet Auburn Historic District. From the 1890's to the mid 1900's, Sweet Auburn was a thriving black neighborhood, sometimes referred to as "the righest Negro street in the world" (Burns 1991, p. 112). King grew up in this neighborhood and the Memorial is located in between the church where King's father served as minister and the home King lived in as a boy. For black Americans, the location plays an important role in any remembrance or experience of what was: it is a "sweet" memory, and thus a location that bespeaks accomplishment, pride and leadership, despite, or perhaps, because of, its history as a segregated community. It is a location close to the heart of the black experience.

The Sweet Auburn of desegregation, particularly from the 1970's on, is beset by and embodies the contradictions of the "New South" and the present-day black experience. According to Bullard and Thomas (1989), Sweet Auburn Avenue still serves as "the center of black business activity in Atlanta," despite the fact that black entrepreneurs have "broadened their geographic base of operations" (p. 92). The Sweet Auburn of today is next door to a public housing project and near to areas of central Atlanta which, as a result of poverty, unemployment and crime, are stark evidence of the reality that the "economic renaissance" of the 1970's was largely concentrated "in the mostly white suburban counties that encircle the city." This state of affairs leaves many central-city residents "isolated from . . . employment and housing opportunities" (p.96) and is consistent with Bullard's findings of increased unemployment and decreased housing opportunities for many black Americans in cities throughout the South.

The location of the Memorial in a place that was once sweet and is now harsh is, in many ways, ironic. A once thriving, albeit isolated neighborhood is now an area in need of relief from the isolation and violence of poverty. How can the Memorial and Center offer compelling models for social action when the social changes for which King is memorialized have so visibly, at least in this community, fallen short? The form and symbolism of the Memorial as well as its location within the historic district may be interpreted as consigning King to the past, to a history that in many ways seems brighter and more promising than the present. Yet such a reading clashes directly with the coupling of the Memorial and the Center for Nonviolent Social Change, and the location of the Memorial within a larger community in need of social change. On the one hand, there is an uneasy sense of, as Katriel (1994) puts it, "empowerment and self-doubt" due to the memorialized greatness of the man and his deeds in a context and location of continued social inequities (p. 8). On the other hand, there is an uneasy sense of

detachment and confrontation: it is a Memorial after all, and should therefore contain these issues, but its explicitly political aspects continue to push them into consciousness.

Experiences of the Memorial thus reflect and play into the larger cultural confusion and uncertainty over issues of racial integration and equality. The form, the symbolic aspects, and the location make the experience of the Memorial something of a ritual for many black Americans and an experience of having to be both participant and observer for many white Americans who must re-learn and re-think history in order to participate in the memorializing. But from both perspectives, the Memorial is somewhat problematic. If King is consigned to the past, what models are to be drawn upon for the future? If he is to be memorialized as a continuing social force, what about the ironies of social change? How are they to be rationalized in the present and worked out in the future? And where, in all of this, is the transcendence, the remembering together, that leads to the possibility of engagement in a common enterprise based on *the fiction of a shared past*?

The King Memorial is not a monument that allows competing metanarratives to be embraced; instead, they continue to clash discordantly. Unlike Young's (1992) prescription for a mea(memorial) culpa, the misdeeds of the nation are readable in the larger text of the Memorial but the notion of a *common* struggle for national existence is less retrievable. Struggling for a different kind of national existence (social change) is understood by many as not the same as struggling for national existence (protecting and maintaining what is). Social change is thought to be threatening to continued national existence rather than a necessity for achieving it. This is particularly true for those who have only indirect involvement with the black experience, indirect involvement with experiences of oppression and want. The struggle is theirs not ours, yours not mine.

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

The above analysis of the King Memorial's form, symbolic aspects, and location suggest the following conclusions. First the Memorial does not offer an ambiguous and/or transcendent form that can be experienced in and of itself, divorced from function and location. Instead, it is inextricably connected to social/political, and experiential aspects that, while potentially open to all through a broader sense of the interdependencies and interrelationships of human experience, are directly participated in only by some. This leads to multiple readings and experiences of the Memorial and renders it less able to transcend the differences between direct and indirect human experiences of oppression and want.[8]

Because of its inability to transcend these differences, the functionalism of the Memorial is, ironically, the only available means for potentially achieving rhetorical integration. All visitors can find common ground in interpreting the function of the tomb and the educational facilities: here is someone who died and had an impact on society; here is a space for accumulating and disseminating knowledge about that person and his impact on society. But such common ground does not necessarily enable the construction of a shared fiction of the past or a continuously overlapping, shared fiction of the past or a continuously overlapping, shared sensibility of experience. Instead even these basic areas of potential agreement are obscured by the conflicting emotions, positions, levels of motivation and insensitivities that mark the difference between direct and indirect experience of the man and the problems he addressed. Yet such conflict can and does force debate. Ironically, then, it may be the Memorial's inability to achieve rhetorical integration outside of basic agreement as to its function that allows it to construct a context for action. Common ground and shared understanding may yield one kind of debate but difference and division force another.

While other memorials may enable a more complete level of transcendence than the King Memorial (e.g., Foss 1986 and Gass 1982), the fact that rhetorical integration is never fully achieved my simply suggest that there is always an opening for further rhetorical invention. But what does this mean in terms of racial integration? Racial integration depends on the possibility that visions like King's can be re-created, that new ways of speaking and constructing civil rights and social change can be invented to deal with the flux of the past, present, and future. A utopian rhetorical invention might achieve elusive yet meaningful goals. Perhaps it could articulate an interrelatedness which is not a regimented sameness but rather an engagement wherein different ways of being are welcomed in dialogue. Because they create a space and thereby force attention on issues of form, function, symbolism, location, and motivation, material rhetorics such as memorials and monuments are crucial to this kind of continued rhetorical and cultural engagement.[9]

NOTES

[1]In the review of literature for this essay, no critical works were located that dealt with local or national civil rights monuments, local or national Martin Luther King, Jr. monuments or any related topics. In contrast, there are numerous articles and at least one book devoted to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial or related means of memorializing including Foss (1986), Morris (1990), Morris & Ehrenhaus (1990), Blair, Jeppeson, and Pucci (1991).

[2]This is not to say that symbolic and cultural integration are somehow separate kinds of integration. In fact, one of the prevailing assumptions of this paper is that symbols create culture and culture creates symbols—the processes are constantly intertwined. Yet, for purposes of analysis, we can distinguish between an artifact and its symbolic elements and the larger culture out of which an artifact emerges and upon which it exerts influence.

[3]According to Kenneth Smith and Ira Zepp, Jr. (1986), "Martin Luther King was acutely aware that the Beloved Community is 'not yet,' but in the future, perhaps even the distant future" yet "he believed it would be actualized within human history" (p. 140).

[4]The term rhetorical integration was used by Dionisopoulos, Gallagher, Goldzwig, and Zarefsky to get at the issues involved in the development of a consistent character or personae as perceived by multiple audiences (for use of the term in that article, see p. 96, 105, & 106). Interestingly, in that same issue of WJC, Foss (1992) also spoke of integration although in a slightly different context. Her definition, however, overlaps somewhat with that offered here: "achieving a sense of authenticity and completeness in terms of political viewpoint and life perspective" (p. 131).

[5]The dates and programs referred to here are taken from unpublished documents provided by the King Center including, "Selected Highlights in the Development of the King Center" (1978) and "Highlights in the History of the King Center" (1989).

[6]See Blair, Jeppeson and Pucci, p. 296-270 who use Barthe's distinction between "work" and "text" to claim that postmodern architecture incorporates the physical and cultural contexts of a structure as an inseparable part of the architectural text whereas modern architecture sets up boundaries as to what is inside and outside: what is of the work and what is other. The argument here is not that the King Memorial is a postmodern structure but rather that the explicit and implicit social and political aspects involved make possible different readings.

[7]Consider the number of black Americans honored by memorials along the mall, as compared to white Americans, as well as the history of black American's voting rights and participation in national government.

[8]See Radley (1990) who argues that a social psychology of remembering must "look beyond the idea of a single cognitive faculty which people have in common" to the proposition that people's ways of remembering may be different "depending upon their relationships to their community, including the world of objects it produces . . ." (p. 49).

[9]Young's (1992) essay on counter-memorials provides some indication of how such continued engagement might be accomplished in ways that bring about participation and involvement of multiple audiences. See particularly the discussion of the "Harbourg's Monument against Fascism" p. 272-284.

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